

WALES AND THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC: EXPRESSIONS AND
PERCEPTIONS OF WELSH IDENTITY DURING THE COLD WAR

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines relations between Wales and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) during the Cold War period of 1949 to 1990. Previous studies have investigated who in Britain interacted with the GDR and their motivations for doing so. The appeal of particular groups and demographics to the GDR authorities - in pursuit of foreign policy objectives - are also well documented. This study is driven by two research questions:

- i) the identity and motivations of Welsh individuals or organisations approaching and engaging with the GDR and considering to what extent their ‘Welsh identity’ influenced their positioning vis-à-vis the GDR and the Cold War;
- ii) the extent of Welsh acceptance of any overtures made by a socialist state, including the likely resonance of the GDR’s self-promotion as an anti-fascist, egalitarian state, which sought to protect and develop the rights of its own Sorbian minority culture.

The research approach adopted for the thesis has considered how multiple projections of ‘Welshness’ influenced the expression of, and thus the GDR’s perception and understanding of Welsh identity. The findings from this research suggest that the most intriguing and recurrent interactions between Wales and the GDR occurred as a result of concerns for the status of the Welsh language during the Cold War period, encouraged by the GDR’s domestic policy for its own Sorbian minority. This study thus contributes a further category of Welsh-speakers to those identified in the existing scholarship as having interacted with the GDR. Notwithstanding Welsh-Sorbian interactions, this research also determines that other facets of Welsh life sought to engage with the GDR, including representatives of the friendship movement, the Welsh proletariat and left-leaning politicians who believed that establishing relations with the GDR would facilitate détente and peaceful co-existence. Existing assumptions in the field are further strengthened by this thesis’ findings, including the GDR’s methods and approaches for cultivating relationships with the West. Varying projections of Welsh identity prompted different (and often confused and inappropriate) responses from the GDR authorities. By evaluating a range of Welsh-GDR interactions throughout the Cold War period, the findings of this research contribute an alternative Welsh narrative to the field of British-GDR relations.

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I Michael a fy rhieni, gyda diolch am y gefnogaeth. Roedd y daith yn hir ond roedd y ffydd yn gyson drwyddi draw. Gwerthfawrogwyd yr anogaeth ddi-flino yn fawr.

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GLOSSARY AND ACRONYMS

Anerkennungspolitik	Policy of recognition
Aussenpolitische Kommission beim Politbüro der SED	Foreign Affairs Committee of the SED's Politburo
Abteilung Aussenpolitik und internationale Verbindung des Zentralkomitees der SED	The Central Committee's department of Foreign Policy and International Relations
Besuchsdiplomatie	Diplomacy through delegation
BRIDGE	Britain Democratic Germany Information Exchange
British Wales	Welsh identity type: 'more ambivalent, largely in the East and the South Coast'
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
CfWM	Council for Wales and Monmouthshire
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR)	The German Democratic Republic / East Germany
DEBRIG	Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft (GDR-Britain Friendship Society)
Domowina	An organisation representing the Sorbian people
Entspannungspolitik	Policy of détente
Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (FDGB)	Federation of German Trade Unions (of the GDR)
Freiwilligkeitsprinzip	Principle of voluntariness
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany / West Germany
Friedensbewegung	Peace movement
GDR	German Democratic Republic
Grundlagenvertrag	Basic Treaty
Hegemonialmacht	Hegemonial power
Imagepflege	Image cultivation
Liga für Völkerfreundschaft (LFV)	League of International Friendship

Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten (MfAA)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MP	Member of Parliament
Nachkontaktpflege	Maintaining subsequent contact
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NFG	National Friendship Society
Nichtanerkennungspolitik	Policy of Non-recognition
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
Ostpolitik	FRG Chancellor Willy Brandt's 'Policy towards the East'
Plaid Cymru	Welsh Nationalist Party
Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED)	Socialist Unity Party of Germany (The ruling governmental party of the GDR)
SWMF	South Wales Miners' Federation
TUC	Trade Unions Congress
TWM	Three Wales Model
TWW	Television Wales and the West
Volkseigener Betrieb (VEB)	People's Own Company (GDR state-owned company)
Vier-Mächte	The four post-War powers of the USA, Britain, France and the Soviet Union
Volkskultur	Folk culture
Warsaw Pact	Military alliance between the Soviet Union and other Eastern European states
Welsh Wales	Welsh identity type: 'Consciously Welsh, but not Welsh speaking in the South Wales Valleys'
Y Fro Gymraeg	Welsh identity type: 'The Welsh speaking heartland of the North and West'

INTRODUCTION

This thesis considers relations between Wales and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) during the Cold War period of 1949 to 1990. It contributes a new focus to the existing scholarship on British-GDR relations – a field which has considered a range of official and informal networks engaging with the GDR against a backdrop of otherwise widespread British indifference to the Eastern Bloc state. This research addresses an under-developed aspect of the field, which has only briefly considered the role played by Wales in wider GDR relations. Considering Wales specifically provides an opportunity to determine if Welsh-GDR interactions were consistent with those already identified within an overarching British context, or whether there were nuances and elements specific to Wales offering a different perspective to the study of the GDR's relations with the West. Relations during this period are explored in the context of Welsh identity; by considering what constituted 'Welshness' (and its expression) as a mechanism for analysing interactions. As Welsh identity is usually considered from the viewpoint of interactions with and in relation to Britain, this research also contributes a further, international perspective. This thesis also establishes whether representatives of the GDR could perceive a distinct Welsh identity in their overall exchanges with Britain. Multiple understandings and interpretations of Welsh identity within Wales alone would have generated a fragmented and multi-faceted projection of Wales and 'Welshness' to representatives of the GDR. The examples of engagement and interactions considered in the thesis demonstrate that representatives of the GDR held perceptions of Wales and what it meant to be Welsh. These perceptions evolved over time, were significantly influenced by the GDR's foreign policy objectives and were occasionally subject to misunderstandings and confusion, particularly in the 1980s, towards the end of the Cold War. This research also contributes further to the scholarship of GDR historians on the effectiveness of the GDR's policies abroad, outside the traditional context of the 'Big Four' post-war powers.

Review of Existing Scholarship and Literature

In this section, the principal contributions of the existing literature on British-GDR relations are evaluated, including the identification of themes and assumptions for use in a study specific to Wales. Although no previous work has ever definitively considered relations between Wales and the GDR, existing literature and scholarship on the subject of the GDR's relations with the West do provide a foundation to build upon. Considering the post-war political and historical context which led to the founding of the GDR is imperative for understanding the contributions, findings and limitations uncovered in the existing literature. Cold War alliances were shaped by the rivalries between communism and capitalism and both German states were tied to a respective 'hegemonial power' - the GDR to the Soviet Union and the FRG to the Western alliance. Such ties were of greater importance than the relationship with each other; remaining consistently so during the entire Cold War period.¹ That the GDR attempted to establish western relationships is in no doubt however; arguably in order to assert a measure of independence from its own hegemonial power.² Identifying Britain's foreign policy considerations provides further context. As one of the four powers responsible for the division of Germany (and of course, Berlin) into western and eastern zones, an official British position on the status of the GDR carried particular political resonance. Britain, France and the Benelux countries agreed to a joint policy of non-recognition of the GDR in 1949, taking a 'hostile attitude' against the state. Any participation by the GDR in international organisations, 'all of which, either directly or indirectly, [were] likely to involve the question of recognition' was prevented.³

By the early 1950s, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Greece, Portugal and Italy had all adopted the same position, and in the same year the British government used its influence with Commonwealth countries, Latin America and Switzerland.⁴

Understanding the motivations behind this position is crucial for analysing the subsequent dynamics in relations between Britain and the GDR, which would always be subject to, and influenced by Britain's responsibilities to the FRG. Larres highlighted British support for the FRG's Hallstein Doctrine, whereby the FRG would threaten to reject diplomatic relations with any state acknowledging the existence of the GDR, a position which was continuously supported in London.⁵ The British government did not only discourage diplomacy amongst the GDR's immediate

¹ Bauerkämper, A. (2002) *Britain and the GDR: Relations and Perceptions in a Divided World*, Berlin: Philo, p. 8.

² McAdams for example, believed that as a result of *Ostpolitik*, the GDR was 'no longer forced to submit [itself] to the role of a lowly satellite within the socialist bloc but could now assume an enviable position as Moscow's junior partner. See: McAdams, A.J. (2008) *East Germany and détente: Building authority after the Wall*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 3.

³ Howarth, M. (2000) 'The Business of Politics, The Politics of Business. The GDR in Britain before and after Diplomatic recognition', in Hall, C. and Rock, D. (eds.) *German Studies Towards the Millennium*, Berne, p. 11.

⁴ Howarth, 'The Business of Politics', p. 11.

⁵ Larres, K. (2002) 'Zwischen allen Fronten. Grossbritannien und der Konflikt um die Anerkennung der DDR in der "Dritten Welt" und bei Internationalen Organisationen', in Bauerkämper, *Britain and the GDR*, p. 130. For further context, see: McAdams, *East Germany and détente*, p. 12.

neighbours, it also played a key role in its international isolation by using its influence to call on other governments to follow suit. Hoff also cited British support for the policy of non-recognition (*Nichtanerkennungspolitik*), achieving support from commonwealth countries and former colonies too.⁶ These findings are complemented by Berger and LaPorte's contribution, who evaluated how Britain remained loyal to the FRG until the FRG's execution of *Ostpolitik* (a policy initiated by the FRG's Willy Brandt to foster relations between the two German nations), remaining always 'tactfully one step behind' the FRG's policy.⁷ This may well have been the official governmental position and indeed, diplomatic actions of this type prevented discourse and activity on an official basis; but rather than assume a widespread conformance to the governmental directive, the literature comprehensively demonstrates that unofficial attempts were made on both sides to form relations outside the diplomatic arena. 1973 is widely understood as a watershed year for the international recognition of the GDR, principally due to the FRG's *Ostpolitik*. Britain, again being tactfully a step behind the actions of the FRG, finally withdrew its policy of non-recognition and formed diplomatic relations with the GDR. Such a shift in policy should have led to a greater normalisation of relations with the GDR and an elevation of its status in British foreign policy considerations. Howarth maintained however, that the triangular relationship remained in place until the 1980s, with Britain continuing to defer first and foremost to the FRG.⁸

Pre-recognition, the GDR's primary foreign policy objective was to overcome the limitations posed by the Hallstein Doctrine and non-recognition in the West. A common theme in several studies has been the GDR's desire for diplomatic legitimacy and recognised sovereignty, which were initially sought without 'the classic instruments of diplomacy'.⁹ As Berger and LaPorte stated, 'all of the GDR's international relations were dominated by the omnipresent objective of etching East Germany onto the post-war map of Europe,'¹⁰ with the pursuit of diplomatic recognition executed on a variety of levels.¹¹ McAdams declared:

Uncertainties surrounding East Germany's existence could never be resolved unless those both outside and inside the GDR's borders were somehow forced to recognise the existence of a socialist German state and to take its government seriously.¹²

⁶ Hoff, H. (2001) "'Largely the Prisoners of Dr. Adenauer's Policy'" – Grossbritannien und der DDR (1949-1973) in Pfeil, U. (ed.) *Die DDR und der Westen: Transnationale Beziehungen 1949-1989*, Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, p. 191.

⁷ Berger, N. & LaPorte, N. (2005a) 'Britische Parlamentarierkontakte nach Osteuropa 1945-1989: Zwischen fellow travelling und ostpolitischer Erneuerung', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 45, S. 25.

⁸ Bauerkämper, *Britain and the GDR*, p. 14.

⁹ Golz, H-G. (2004) *Verordnete Völkerfreundschaft*, Leipzig: Leipzig Universitätsverlag, S. 3.

¹⁰ Berger, S. & LaPorte, N. (2010) *Friendly Enemies: Britain and the GDR 1949-1990*, New York: Berghahn Books, p. 3.

¹¹ Pfeil, *Die DDR und der Westen*, S. 17.

¹² McAdams, *East Germany and détente*, p. 22.

Though diplomatic relations had been established with the Soviet Union and other members of the Warsaw pact by 1955, thus granting the GDR its 'sovereignty', the GDR could only claim some 'diplomatic headway' by the 1960s, mostly through its attempts to engage with newly decolonised states in Africa.¹³ The Hallstein Doctrine prevented any significant achievements and until *Ostpolitik*, any widespread success was notably absent. Lemke identified three key phases of early GDR foreign policy strategy:¹⁴

Phase 1 (Autumn 1949 – Middle of 1951): the formation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MfAA) with a remit of defining the nascent GDR's identity as a Worker State, pursuing equality in a socialist sphere.

Phase 2 (Middle of 1951 - 1956): the establishment of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the SED's Politbüro and the Central Committee's Department of Foreign Policy and International Relations, with a remit of establishing full relations with other socialist countries and founding cultural and economic exchanges.¹⁵ Additionally, the GDR sought a greater focus on India, Egypt, Syria and Sudan. By now, the newly formed (1955) Hallstein Doctrine was creating diplomatic difficulties.

Phase 3 (1956/57 - 1966): A key period following the formation of the Warsaw pact in 1955. Due to resource constraints, the GDR focused on key areas of interest: Western European countries (as an attempt to break the Hallstein Doctrine restrictions), the Middle East (Egypt, Iraq, Syria) and India-Pacific (India, Burma, Indonesia) and from 1960 onwards, African countries.¹⁶ Though Lemke did not specifically provide any in-depth analysis on the GDR's foreign policy objectives post-1966, the identification of Britain as a key target during this period provides a basis from which to assume proactive engagement activity.

Hoff specified 1955 as the year in which the GDR's attentions towards Britain commenced, with political, economic and cultural relations systematically built.¹⁷ The specific interest in Britain came not only as a result of recognition and legitimacy concerns, but owing to the particular significance of Britain as one of the 'Four Powers' in post-war Germany.¹⁸ Pfeil suggested that Western recognition of the GDR would have afforded the SED leadership greater room for manoeuvrability against the

¹³ Howarth, 'The Business of Politics', p. 9.

¹⁴ Lemke, M. (2001) 'Die Aussenbeziehungen der DDR (1949-1966): Prinzipien, Grundlagen, Zäsuren und Handlungsspielräume' in Pfeil, *Die DDR und der Westen*, S. 73.

¹⁵ *Aussenpolitische Kommission beim Politbüro der SED and Abteilung Aussenpolitik und internationale Verbindungen des Zentralkomitees der SED.*

¹⁶ Lemke, 'Die Aussenbeziehungen der DDR', S. 78.

¹⁷ Hoff, H. (2002) 'Die Politik der DDR gegenüber Grossbritannien 1949-1973' in Bauerkämper, *Britain and the GDR*, S. 268.

¹⁸ Howarth, M. (2001) 'Die Westpolitik der DDR zwischen internationaler Aufwertung und ideologischer Offensive (1966-1989)' in Pfeil, *Die DDR und der Westen*, S. 87. One of the four powers in post-war Germany (Britain, France, the United States and the Soviet Union).

Soviet Union,¹⁹ yet in reality, the GDR had ‘no effective means of breaking through or lifting the doctrine of isolation’.²⁰ Such difficulties prompted a pursuit of alternative approaches. The GDR effort was therefore ‘devoted to subverting the non-recognition policy and to attempt to secure recognition by the back door’.²¹

Documenting the activity of informal contacts and networks between Britain and the GDR forms a significant proportion of the existing literature. Howarth referenced Ingrid Muth’s assessment of the efforts made by the GDR on both the social and non-governmental levels, indicating a multi-faceted approach to establish relations.²² Further contributors have identified multiple categories and networks of unofficial, non-diplomatic contacts. Berger & LaPorte’s study considered the ‘surprisingly strong’ network of British ‘friends’ below the governmental level.²³ Hoff outlined multiple types of contacts; specifically identifying politicians, trade unionists, journalists, sportsmen and artists.²⁴ Bauerkämper also identified similar contacts in Labour Party politicians and included both pacifists and church representatives.²⁵ Politicians (again, primarily those of the Labour Party) were also identified by Golz as being amongst a broad spectrum of contacts targeted by the GDR for its foreign propaganda. The GDR’s principal contacts were amongst the working class, the Trade Union organisations and members of the cultural, educational, economic and technical intelligentsia.²⁶ Some methods employed to foster relations included establishing contacts with MPs, using trade links, engaging in friendship society activities and publishing information material regarding the GDR, its actions and policies for wider dissemination. Such methods were also identified by Howarth as having been deployed in several other countries of interest to the GDR.²⁷ These categories of identified contact groups and the strategies described lend themselves for comparative use in this thesis.

Relations between the GDR and British members of parliament feature heavily within the existing literature, principally due to the GDR’s supposition that diplomatic recognition would be facilitated if MPs could be encouraged to lobby accordingly at Westminster. The attempts made to interact with MPs demonstrate how the GDR strategically pursued and sought agents to champion its cause. Although Childs provided an early (1992) interpretation of the attitudes of the British political left on the GDR and the question of recognition, this area was further developed by Berger and LaPorte’s study of the perceptions held by Labour MPs of the GDR. Berger and LaPorte highlighted the appeal

¹⁹ Pfeil, *Die DDR und der Westen*, S. 11.

²⁰ Lemke, ‘Die Aussenbeziehungen der DDR’, S. 78.

²¹ Howarth, ‘The Business of Politics’, p. 12.

²² Howarth, M. (2004) ‘Projecting the Self – Reflecting the Other: Scotland, Wales and the GDR’ in Fischer, J., O’Dochartaigh, P. O. & Kelly-Holmes, H. (eds.) *Irish-German Studies, Yearbook of the Centre for Irish-German Studies 2001/2002*, Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, p. 88.

²³ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 18.

²⁴ Hoff, ‘Die Politik der DDR’, S. 186.

²⁵ Bauerkämper, *Britain and the GDR*, p. 10.

²⁶ Golz, *Verordnete Völkerfreundschaft*, S. 207.

²⁷ Howarth, ‘Die Westpolitik der DDR’, S. 83.

of Labour Party members to the GDR's SED government, rather than the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), owing to the CPGB's limited influence as a 'domestically insignificant' party in Britain and ideological divergences. Berger & LaPorte's article concluded that the support of the Labour Party was a more rational choice for the GDR to pursue, as a political party of trade union and left-wing origins, with closer proximity to governmental power.²⁸ Until after the conclusion of the Basic Treaty (*Grundlagenvertrag*) between the FRG and the GDR in December 1972 however, the official Labour Party position was to reject recognition of the GDR.²⁹ Lilleker and Berger considered how individuals and groups of left-wing members went much further in their engagement with the GDR than their leaders officially sanctioned. This article only evaluated the period up to 1973 however, without elaborating on how relations developed post-recognition.

Hoff indicated that the perception of the GDR held by several British parliamentarians ranged from 'total rejection as a totalitarian dictatorship to almost complete endorsement as a socialist model'.³⁰ No more than a few MPs subscribed to a 'complete endorsement' of the GDR and though several MPs were cited as having recognised the appeal of 'actual-existing-socialism', this would not necessarily have meant championing the GDR's political model. Instead, specific elements of socialist provisions (such as welfare), as promulgated by GDR propaganda, were respected as valid and even worthy of imitation. Many MPs pragmatically understood that both the FRG and the GDR were at the frontline of the Cold War and establishing relations with both States could support a decrease in political tension and bring stability to the region. Welsh MPs were cited by Berger and LaPorte as having engaged with the GDR for the purposes of overcoming Cold War tension.³¹ Howarth also identified a fraction of left-wing MPs supportive of the GDR's aims of developing trade links, a feature of broader appeal to a wider cross-section of parliamentary MPs than other arguments for recognising the GDR.³² Such examples are representative of a wider body of material demonstrating how some MPs often defied official party policies by interacting with and travelling to the GDR.

Inviting Western delegations to experience the GDR's 'actual existing socialism' was encouraged by Walter Ulbricht, General Secretary of the SED from 1950 to 1971, who considered diplomacy through delegation (*Besuchdiplomatie*) a key facet of the policy for recognition.³³ Officially considered a mechanism for achieving peaceful co-existence,³⁴ arranging delegations overcame the

²⁸ Berger, S. & LaPorte, N. (2008) 'In Search of Antifascism: The British Left's Response to the German Democratic Republic during the Cold War', *German History*, 26 (4), p. 541.

²⁹ Berger, S. & Lilleker, D. (2002) 'The British Labour Party and the German Democratic Republic during the Era of Non-Recognition', *The Historical Journal*, 45 (2), p. 438.

³⁰ Berger, S. & LaPorte, N. (2005b) *The Other Germany: Perceptions and Influences in British-East German Relations, 1945-1990*, Augsburg: Wissner-Verlag, p. 14.

³¹ Berger & Lilleker, 'The British Labour Party', p. 441.

³² Howarth, 'The Business of Politics', p. 14.

³³ Berger & LaPorte, 'Britische Parlamentarierkontakte', S. 15.

³⁴ Berger & LaPorte, 'Britische Parlamentarierkontakte', S. 15.

GDR's 'inability to hold official, governmental-level dialogue with Western states',³⁵ and was a strategy already developed by the Soviet Union in the 1930s.³⁶ Golz estimated that around 240 delegations from 50 countries visited the GDR in 1968.³⁷

British delegations to the GDR followed a uniform pattern which always included visits to concentration camps and factories and meetings with trade unionists and party representatives. If, at the end of these visits, the British guests were willing to go on record to praise the GDR's antifascism and its 'socialist achievements', their hosts were happy, as they could rely on such statements, published in the GDR press, producing waves of annoyance across the border in West Germany.³⁸

Golz described delegations as highly structured with typically exhaustive and demanding schedules and very little (if any) free time for individual, personal activities.³⁹ Such formal, detailed itineraries not only served to project a constructive image of the GDR, but also facilitated the supervision of foreign delegates and ensured their isolation from 'ordinary citizens'.⁴⁰ References in the existing literature do not comprehensively elaborate on the itineraries of visits and delegations. Limited analysis is presented on any consequential achievements (as considered by the GDR authorities), other than noting their use for domestic propaganda in the GDR and for causing annoyance to the authorities of the FRG.

Another oft-referenced method of the GDR's *Anerkennungspolitik* was the efforts it made to contrast itself with the FRG, which it portrayed as military, revanchist and expansionist. This was a portrait it sought to particularly promulgate during the period of West German re-armament, also drawing attention to the rise of anti-semitism in the FRG in the 1960s.⁴¹ By contrast, the GDR depicted itself as a morally better, peace-loving and antifascist state, which asked no more of the international community than to be legitimately recognised.⁴²

[...] the British public [was fed] additional information on the Nazi past of leading West Germans alleging that West Germany was the true heir of fascism whilst only East Germany was genuinely antifascist. Once again this message was particularly well received on the left; where antifascism had been a personal experience for many in the 1930s and 1940s.⁴³

The 'shocked outrage' displayed at West German rearmament in the early 1950s⁴⁴ and the declaration of several MPs against it,⁴⁵ provided fertile ground for exploitation by the GDR. This episode strengthened the GDR's claims that the FRG remained entrenched in national socialist ideology,

³⁵ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 91.

³⁶ Berger & LaPorte, 'Britische Parlamentarierkontakte', S. 15.

³⁷ Golz, *Verordnete Völkerfreundschaft*, S. 32.

³⁸ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 315.

³⁹ Golz, *Verordnete Völkerfreundschaft*, S. 32.

⁴⁰ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 15.

⁴¹ Hoff, 'Die Politik der DDR', S. 188.

⁴² Berger & LaPorte, 'In Search of Antifascism', p. 537.

⁴³ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 312.

⁴⁴ Childs, D. (1992) 'British Labour and Ulbricht's State. The Fight for Recognition', in Birke, A & Heydemann, G. (eds.) *Grossbritannien und Ostdeutschland seit 1918 / Britain and East Germany since 1918*, Munich: Saur, p. 97.

⁴⁵ Berger & LaPorte, 'Britische Parlamentarierkontakte', S. 10.

whilst the GDR had progressed to a higher moral path. Notwithstanding public declarations of its moral superiority over the FRG, overt symbolic gestures were made to promote its anti-fascist position, such as awarding medals to British survivors of the International Brigade.⁴⁶ In practice, the effectiveness of such claims and the level of credence afforded to them by those whom the GDR targeted were not, according to Berger and LaPorte, sufficiently robust to sway British foreign policy, but were enough to give the GDR's recognition claims an 'audible public voice' prior to *Ostpolitik*.⁴⁷ As time passed however, 'the crude dichotomy between an antifascist GDR and a fascist FRG cut less and less ice with British observers of the two Germanys'.⁴⁸

The existing literature implies a direct correlation between the passing of time and the strength of calls made in the British parliament for the GDR's recognition, being greater in the 1960s in comparison to the 1950s.⁴⁹ Howarth attributed the calls for recognition, which came in 'thick and fast both in the House of Commons and in the political press' to the pressures brought by returning MP delegations.⁵⁰ By the 1970s, a British Committee for the Recognition of the GDR had been established by several MPs.⁵¹ In March 1970, a specific motion calling for the GDR's recognition was made in parliament. Interestingly, Berger and Lilleker state that this motion, by a total of 70 MPs, was made on a cross-party basis, highlighting how Liberal and Conservative MPs were also drawn to the cause for recognition, albeit on a very limited basis.⁵² Such efforts imply at least a partial success of the GDR's strategy. Though there is evidence of cross-party support for the GDR's aims, regional variances in support are rarely analysed. Only two Welsh MPs have been definitively identified as having professed strong opinions on the GDR, though their motivations have been subject to limited analysis.

Desmond Donnelly (Labour MP for Pembrokeshire 1950-70) was wholly unconvinced by the GDR's claims of being a peace-loving state. Previously in opposition to the rearmament of the FRG, Donnelly later visited the GDR as a delegate, which prompted a reversal in his original opinion. Donnelly returned convinced of a need to re-arm the FRG, 'within a defence system we can control',⁵³ as he considered the 'communised' GDR a Soviet-controlled police state⁵⁴ and a 'dictatorship in which there is only one version of the truth'.⁵⁵ Donnelly's robust rejection of the GDR's self-promotion as a peace-loving, anti-fascist nation indicates how the concept of diplomacy through delegation was not a fail-safe approach in convincing visitors of the alleged utopian nature of the

⁴⁶ Childs, 'British Labour and Ulbricht's State', p. 100.

⁴⁷ Berger & LaPorte, 'In Search of Antifascism', p. 547.

⁴⁸ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 312.

⁴⁹ Berger & LaPorte, 'Britische Parlamentarierkontakte', S. 15.

⁵⁰ Howarth, 'The Business of Politics', p. 18.

⁵¹ Berger & Lilleker, 'The British Labour Party', p. 450.

⁵² Childs, 'British Labour and Ulbricht's State', p. 101.

⁵³ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 61.

⁵⁴ Berger & LaPorte, 'Britische Parlamentarierkontakte', S. 13.

⁵⁵ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 61.

GDR. In contrast to Donnelly's views however, S.O. Davies (a left-wing NUM-sponsored Labour MP for Merthyr Tydfil between 1934-1972, 'whose visit to the Soviet Union in 1922 left a profound and lasting impact on him'⁵⁶) was recognised as having prominently defended the GDR in parliament during the time of the 1953 uprising, accusing covert CIA agents and Nazi agitators from the West as being responsible for the uprising disturbances.⁵⁷ Despite this position damaging his political credibility, such a provocative statement was made in faith and in support of the GDR; invaluable propagandistic support at Westminster.⁵⁸ Both MPs demonstrated a notable contrast of opinion, but such a small sample of views does not contribute sufficient material to conclude which was most typical of views held by Welsh MPs generally. That both have been afforded attention within the existing literature may signify that their respective viewpoints were sufficiently extreme as to have been worthy of comment and that in reality, the majority of Welsh MPs were centrally positioned or were apathetic to the GDR and its claims.

Delegations of Trade Unionists were overtly targeted and frequently invited to the GDR by the SED as a further facet of *Besuchdiplomatie*. The refusal of the British Trade Union Congress to establish relations with its GDR equivalent, the *Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (FDGB), until 1973, forced the FDGB towards targeting individual trade unions directly. Trade Unionists formed the most significant proportion of delegation types during the period of the GDR.⁵⁹ The approach by the FDGB of directly contacting British unions offers a further comparative element for this study.⁶⁰ In a region as deeply-rooted in left-wing politics and as overtly unionised as the South Wales coalfield, due consideration must be given to the strong likelihood of relations between Welsh labour organisations and the GDR. Berger & LaPorte cited Campbell & Mellroy's (2005) description of how Abe Moffat of the Scottish National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and Arthur Horner of the South Wales NUM 'had been highly successful in turning the Scottish and Welsh sections of the NUM into bastions of Communism. Their support for Soviet-style communism in Eastern Europe was frequently expressed in public statements, which made plain a fervent belief that these regimes were more progressive than Britain'.⁶¹ The activities of the Scottish NUM, in 'vociferous support' of the GDR have also been documented. In support of recognition, a delegation was sent to the GDR 'as early as 1961' and a call was made in its annual congress in 1970 for Scottish MPs to pursue international recognition of the GDR at Westminster.⁶² The South Wales branch of the NUM – the most prominent union in Wales during this period - is therefore an interesting test case from which to analyse the extent of

⁵⁶ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 70.

⁵⁷ Berger & LaPorte, 'Britische Parlamentarierkontakte', S. 12.

⁵⁸ Berger & Lilleker, 'The British Labour Party', p. 441.

⁵⁹ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 12.

⁶⁰ Berger & LaPorte, 'In Search of Antifascism', p. 541.

⁶¹ Quotation from Berger, S., Croll, A. & LaPorte, N. (eds.) *Towards a Comparative History of Coalfield Societies*, Burlington: Ashgate, pp. 267-80 as referenced in Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 138.

⁶² Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 147.

international proletariat solidarity between Wales and the GDR and one which has only been afforded a passing interest in the literature thus far. A specific example cited by Berger and LaPorte described how in 1963, the ‘Communist Trade Unionist’ David Francis wrote to Ulbricht on behalf of the South Wales NUM to condemn the erection of the Berlin Wall.⁶³

We believe such drastic actions at the Wall, the wounding and loss of human life is absolutely unnecessary and that – completely regardless of who is responsible – must be condemned.⁶⁴

Analysis is required to identify whether an existing relationship between the GDR/FDGB and the South Wales NUM provided a basis from which to offer such opinions or whether this was an independently formed view of the GDR, representative of typical NUM (and wider Trade Union) positions. Further scope exists for undertaking an in-depth analysis of the use of trade union delegations by the GDR and evaluating whether the political heritage of the South Wales coalfield was in anyway influential on the likelihood of engagement.

Throughout the Cold War period, the GDR sought to promote the ‘international prestige of the socialist system’⁶⁵ and its ‘social, cultural and economic achievements’.⁶⁶

[...] legitimising the GDR by presenting it as a modern, industrial state with a generous cradle-to-the-grave welfare state, a comprehensive, equal-opportunities education system, free of unemployment and inequalities of the ‘capitalist’ FRG and last but not least, a force for world peace.⁶⁷

The need for such an approach was undoubtedly influenced by the perception of the GDR by many in Britain as a ‘very predictable satellite of the Soviet Union’.⁶⁸ Despite the GDR’s considerable efforts in promoting ‘actual existing socialism’, this negative perception remained throughout the Cold War period. Berger and LaPorte suggested that the GDR’s discrediting of the FRG as a ‘bulwark of Nazism, militarism and reactionary sentiments’ proved more successful than the presentation of its socialist achievements.⁶⁹ Any impact of what was only ‘sporadic’ cultural links in reality was perceived by Wallace to have largely been ‘confined to a small group of left-wing sympathisers’.⁷⁰ Any strategy deployed for developing cultural relations was limited by its one-sided execution; the merits of the GDR would be projected to Britain, but not vice versa.

There was no serious attempt to bring British culture and ideas to the GDR. Quite the contrary, every contact with the West was to be avoided as far as possible. [...] From the GDR’s perspective, contacts with the West had to be carefully controlled and managed at all

⁶³ Berger & LaPorte, ‘In Search of Antifascism’, p. 545.

⁶⁴ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 100.

⁶⁵ Wallace, I. (2000) ‘The GDR’s Cultural Activities in Britain’, *German Life and Letters*, 53 (3), p. 394.

⁶⁶ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 9.

⁶⁷ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 11.

⁶⁸ Bauerkämper, *Britain and the GDR*, p. 27.

⁶⁹ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 166.

⁷⁰ Wallace, ‘The GDR’s Cultural Activities in Britain’, p. 398.

times. Those allowed to travel to the West and make contact with Westerners were hand-picked and often had links to the Stasi.⁷¹

The role played by friendship societies and the subsequent cultural impact has been one of the most evaluated elements in the existing scholarship on British-GDR relations. The societies of BRIDGE⁷² (later renamed the Britain-GDR Society) and DEBRIG⁷³ have been described by commentators as attempts to inform and educate the British public of the GDR and its attributes. Golz described these organisations as the GDR's 'PR Apparatus'.⁷⁴ Of primary influence behind the strategy and activities of both DEBRIG and BRIDGE/Britain-GDR Society was the GDR's *Liga für Völkerfreundschaft* (LfV), founded in 1961.⁷⁵ Golz noted a developed shift in the LfV's mission from the 1970s onwards, away from being an instrument of the recognition movement to being an effective tool for pursuing *Imagepflege* (or image cultivation).⁷⁶ *Imagepflege* was, according to Howarth, the main objective of the GDR's policy towards Britain and the West in the 1980s.⁷⁷ This change of approach followed the achievement of recognition, with resources then diverted to improving the negative image of the GDR abroad. The fundamental purpose of the friendship societies was to identify and approach useful contacts for the GDR authorities, particularly targeting individuals of influence in British political, cultural and economic life.⁷⁸ A further activity was reviewing and assessing the opinions of various political organisations, trade unions and also the peace movement.⁷⁹ Golz described DEBRIG as an organisation with a purpose of promoting the GDR as 'the German state which had broken away from the disastrous politics of German militarism and imperialism and was a reliable friend of the peaceful British people'.⁸⁰ This demonstrated once again how the GDR deployed a strategy of promoting an anti-fascist position (specifically in contrast with its description of the FRG), to demographics beyond politicians and MPs. BRIDGE (or the Britain-GDR Society) was London-based, and sought to establish contacts with MPs, Trade Unions, Teachers, Local Government Officials, Journalists and 'ordinary citizens'⁸¹ – a network from which to form a co-operative 'friendship circle'.⁸² Ever remaining a 'small, communist-dominated organisation without public profile',⁸³ Berger and Lilleker identified the types of people active and present within the BRIDGE community, including Trade Union representatives, CPGB members, Labour Party MPs and representatives of Co-operative-

⁷¹ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 318.

⁷² Britain-Democratic Germany Information Exchange (based in London).

⁷³ Deutsch-Britische-Gesellschaft in der DDR (a sister organisation, based in the GDR).

⁷⁴ Golz, *Verordnete Völkerfreundschaft*, S. 9.

⁷⁵ League of International Friendship. Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 13.

⁷⁶ Golz, *Verordnete Völkerfreundschaft*, S. 37.

⁷⁷ Howarth, M. (2002) 'The Berlin Triangle: Britain and the Two German States in the 1980s' in Bauerkämper, *Britain and the GDR*, p. 196.

⁷⁸ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 7.

⁷⁹ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 7.

⁸⁰ Golz, *Verordnete Völkerfreundschaft*, S. 165.

⁸¹ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 13.

⁸² Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 118.

⁸³ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 13.

Women- and Peace movements.⁸⁴ Bauerkämper highlighted specific efforts made by friendship organisations to promote the GDR, such as the arrangement of information conferences, language courses and trips for the wider British public to visit the GDR.⁸⁵

[Disseminating] a positive image of East Germany by developing a wide range of cultural exchanges, holding exhibitions, film shows, language courses and the distributing English-language literature [...] Above all, it promoted dialogue at the local level, such as town twinning, and developed contacts supportive of the anti-nuclear 'coalition of reason'.⁸⁶

During this period, those who travelled to the GDR were considered 'fellow travellers of the Communist party, crypto-communists, or even agents of the Soviet Union', individuals 'whose deep-seated beliefs made them develop an ideological attachment to the communist world'.⁸⁷ Bauerkämper also suggested that sympathisers of 'socialist experiments' were often stigmatised as 'fellow-travellers' of the communist powers in eastern Europe.⁸⁸ Visiting the GDR as part of a delegation or being an active friendship society participant therefore meant making (or at least be perceived to be making) an overtly political statement. If this was the case, then the success of the GDR's strategies would always remain limited – activities promoting the GDR and socialism were predominantly reaching those who were overwhelmingly already converted to much of what the GDR authorities were promulgating. This limitation was particularly acute if they themselves had minimal scope for influencing others. Despite the engagement of the friendship societies and the significant resources and efforts deployed, the literature often highlights how the GDR remained the 'second' German state for the British public, continuously dismissed as a satellite entity of the Soviet Union, as exemplified by Bauerkämper's summary of the traditional British perception of Germany - focused on the past and coloured by war.⁸⁹ Although most studies have predominantly considered friendship activity as a co-ordinated pursuit between a centralised London base and the LfV offices in Berlin for the majority of the Cold War, the 1980s witnessed a change in policy.

In 1981, the leading figures in the Liga and GDR-Great Britain Society, Brasch and Hahn, met with Embassy staff to develop an initiative to extend the Britain-GDR Society's social and political profile. Instead of dealing exclusively with the London-based Executive Committee, East Berlin decided to work directly with the Society's local branches. This policy, co-ordinated by the GDR's embassy in London, led not only to the formation of new provincial branches but to the inception of the Scotland-GDR Society and the London-Berlin Committee.⁹⁰

Some focus has been afforded to the effectiveness of friendship societies operating 'regionally', yet this has predominantly considered the establishment and activities of the Scotland-GDR Society.

Though attestations have been made that a branch of the Britain-GDR society existed in Wales, there

⁸⁴ Berger & Lilleker, 'The British Labour Party', p. 448.

⁸⁵ Bauerkämper, *Britain and the GDR*, p. 18.

⁸⁶ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 13.

⁸⁷ Berger & Lilleker, 'The British Labour Party', p. 445.

⁸⁸ Bauerkämper, *Britain and the GDR*, p. 32.

⁸⁹ Bauerkämper, *Britain and the GDR*, p. 25.

⁹⁰ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 246.

has thus far been no specific analysis of its agenda, the motivations of its participants, nor any comprehensive evaluation of its activities and influences.⁹¹

The concept of town twinning (such as the arrangement between Coventry and Dresden)⁹² and its perceived uses for the GDR authorities has been considered within the literature. The work completed thus far has contributed several opinions on the successes and limitations of the twinings, as well as the motivations of the GDR and its British partners for such arrangements. According to Wallace, twinning partnerships were considered by the GDR authorities as an 'effective form of cultural contact with western countries' with more links established with Western countries than with Eastern Bloc partner states.⁹³ Howarth considered how twinning partnerships were an effective form 'of applying pressure on national governments from below whilst also projecting an acceptable, peace-loving image to local and regional public opinion'.⁹⁴ Berger and LaPorte suggested how twinning arrangements were perceived as a method for facilitating East-West dialogue and contributing to reducing Cold War tensions.⁹⁵ Some analysis within the literature indicates that twinning activity was most likely to occur in areas where left-wing political representation was strongest.

[...] the intersection between the milieus of the communist-dominated local branches of the BGS [*Britain-GDR Society*] and the 'old' left of the Labour Party running a significant number of British cities during the 1980s was striking. The correspondence between the Liga and the BGS details how leading local officials, such as Graham Smith (Glasgow), Ray Hill (Gwent), Margaret Chambers (Birmingham) and Hilda Baruch (Bradford), used their contacts with Labour councillors to promote the interests of the GDR.⁹⁶

This suggests, unsurprisingly, that twinning arrangements had a greater probability of success in locations where public representatives were supportive of the aims of the GDR or where active GDR friendship activity was present. From the early 1960s, representatives of the LfV engaged with municipal politicians, with the aim of establishing contacts with left-wing councillors.⁹⁷ Several contributors have dismissed the notion that any particularly notable successes were achieved as a result of twinning arrangements. Bauerkämper believed that twinings were not particularly significant for expanding relations. Wallace stated that such arrangements made a 'marginal impact' which when 'measured against the ambitious aims of [the GDR's] loudly trumpeted strategy [...] were

⁹¹ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 251. See also: Howarth, 'Projecting the Self – Reflecting the Other', p. 88.

⁹² Bauerkämper, *Britain and the GDR*, p. 23.

⁹³ Wallace, 'The GDR's Cultural Activities in Britain', p. 405.

⁹⁴ Howarth, 'Projecting the Self – Reflecting the Other', p. 98.

⁹⁵ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 282.

⁹⁶ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 284.

⁹⁷ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 115.

underdeveloped and ineffective'.⁹⁸ Berger & LaPorte also considered that twinning endeavours 'did not meet the high expectations that Liga officials initially invested in them'.⁹⁹

A Welsh example of a twinning arrangement is one of the most prominent in the literature, although never studied in depth. By 1986, a twinning arrangement had been established between the Borough Council of Blaenau (in Gwent) and the town of Bautzen near Dresden.¹⁰⁰ The existing focus on this specific twinning has undoubtedly been due to the association of Michael Foot (MP for Ebbw Vale 1960-1983, Blaenau Gwent 1983-1992) with Blaenau Gwent, which commentators argue would have contributed greatly to its significance for the LfV.¹⁰¹ With such close proximity to a prominent politician, establishing relations with Michael Foot's constituency would have been considered a coup by the GDR authorities, welcomed as part of its *Imagepflege* endeavours. The literature does not disclose whether the Blaenau Gwent/Bautzen twinning successfully functioned as that which was envisaged as a contribution to the sustainment of peace, or whether there were mutual benefits generated for both Bautzen and Blaenau Gwent as a result of the twinning partnership.¹⁰² Howarth is one contributor who has considered whether this twinning represented an increasingly decentralised trend for unofficial non-diplomatic contacts, away from a previously London-centric approach.

The image of Welshness projected to the GDR was strictly that of the minority fighting for recognition from a majority culture [...] the GDR may well have imagined a community, both within Scotland and Wales, based on a shared sense of oppression from a larger, more powerful and, above all, neighbouring state.¹⁰³

This assumption, coupled with the significance of the political representation in Blaenau Gwent at the time of the twinning arrangement, merits further investigation.

Existing scholarship on the friendship societies does not take a particularly nation-specific (i.e. Scotland & Wales) view outside an overarching British context, being predominantly focused on Westminster-targeted endeavours and the (original) London-centric organisations of the friendship groups. Most commentators originally considered the extent of activity and engagement in Scotland and Wales as a minor facet of British-GDR relations, though later articles have undertaken some analysis of GDR engagement with both countries, by looking at friendship groups and twinning activities in particular. Howarth considered how both Wales and Scotland offered different challenges for the GDR, being 'distinguished by a strong sense of national identity'.¹⁰⁴ Many in Wales and

⁹⁸ Wallace, 'The GDR's Cultural Activities in Britain', p. 395.

⁹⁹ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 299.

¹⁰⁰ Wallace, 'The GDR's Cultural Activities in Britain', p. 405.

¹⁰¹ For further background information on Michael Foot, see: Morgan, K.O. (2007) *Michael Foot: A Life*, London: Harper.

¹⁰² Berger & LaPorte, 'Britische Parlamentarierkontakte', S. 34.

¹⁰³ Howarth, 'Projecting the Self – Reflecting the Other', p. 98.

¹⁰⁴ Howarth, 'Projecting the Self – Reflecting the Other', p. 89.

Scotland sought to emphasise their ‘otherness’ to the GDR, having a desire to be perceived as ‘different from the rest of the UK and to promote this ‘otherness’ via activities linked with the expression of Scottish and Welsh identities’.¹⁰⁵ Howarth viewed any effort by the GDR authorities to accommodate this feature as a reversal of the GDR’s original approach to *Imagepflege*, which had the sole aim of raising the GDR’s profile by the most efficient (centralised) route.

Scotland

Studies of Scottish-GDR relations usually focus on friendship societies. Very limited information has been unearthed regarding trade union or parliamentary activity, with details of delegations specifically involving Scots usually referenced only in the context of friendship society activity. What specific Scottish-GDR relations did exist, appear to have gathered pace towards the latter stages of the GDR’s existence, which Howarth attributed to an increasing ‘trend towards regionalisation’ following a breakdown of relationships between the branch organisations of the British-GDR friendship society and the London Head Office.¹⁰⁶ This led to the establishment of a new, separate Scottish friendship society (the ‘Scotland-GDR Society’), asserting independence from London. The success of an annual Burns Night Supper¹⁰⁷ provided a ‘projection of a Scottish national image within the GDR’¹⁰⁸ which would have created a perception described by Howarth as ‘an oppressed culture fighting for distance from a neighbouring majority culture, [with] some interesting parallels to be drawn with perceptions by the GDR of its own situation’.¹⁰⁹ No attestation exists of a similar Welsh activity as that of the Burns Night supper or of any other overt expression of Welsh identity to the GDR. That is not to say that the GDR was unaware of a Welsh minority culture; examples of interactions with the minority Sorbian community in the GDR are referenced below. But whereas official Scottish-GDR relations developed through the establishment of a separate society, a comparable example for Wales is absent.

¹⁰⁵ Howarth, ‘Projecting the Self – Reflecting the Other’, p. 89.

¹⁰⁶ Howarth, M. (2005) ‘The Pipes of Peace: Projecting ‘Scottishness’ to the GDR’, in Berger & LaPorte, *The Other Germany*, p. 109.

¹⁰⁷ Howarth, ‘Projecting the Self – Reflecting the Other’, p. 95.

¹⁰⁸ Howarth, ‘The Pipes of Peace’, p. 116.

¹⁰⁹ Howarth, ‘The Pipes of Peace’, p. 120.

Northern Ireland

A further nation which has been afforded little attention in previous studies is Northern Ireland. Mac Con Uladh discussed Northern Ireland in the context of its initial use to the GDR as an overt demonstration of British imperialism. British involvement in Northern Ireland was initially criticised by the GDR as an act of colonisation, with its army portrayed as 'occupiers' and 'colonial masters'.¹¹⁰ This theme of anti-colonialism was echoed in other discussions with Labour MPs, where the SED 'constantly harped on peace, on opposition to racism and anti-colonialism'.¹¹¹ According to Mac Con Uladh, the GDR had initially identified Northern Ireland 'as a stick with which British imperialism could be beaten', though this stance was dropped when relations with Britain were considered of greater importance.¹¹² The GDR's early statements of opposition to anti-colonialism merit further evaluation however, particularly in consideration of whether the constitutional situation of Wales would have been appreciated by the GDR in a similar context.

Wales

Although a few specific Welsh attestations have been cited by contributors in the existing literature (in addition to the twinning activity mentioned above), none of these examples, or their significance, have been explored in depth. References to an awareness by the SED of a distinct culture in Wales are provided by Berger and LaPorte, such as the attempt by the SED to forge connections between Welsh representatives and the Sorbian minority. Several cultural exchanges are cited including visits of Welsh choirs and folk groups to the GDR and return visits of Sorbian ensembles to cultural events in Wales.¹¹³ In 1960, an invitation was accepted by a delegation of Welsh Labour MPs to make contact with representatives of the Sorbs,¹¹⁴ with the GDR 'keen to stress the alleged affinity between the Sorb and the Welsh people' and impress the amount of state support awarded to the Sorbs.¹¹⁵ This reference to the GDR attempting to use its own minority group as a foundation for establishing relations raises questions, primarily centred on what the GDR hoped to achieve by forging such specific cultural links. A further case of Welsh-GDR interaction cited in the literature is the delegation of Welsh Labour MPs and churchmen to the GDR during April and May 1957 to observe the extent of religious freedom in the country and who reported that the people of GDR were 'just as unconstrained' as the British, with no religious persecution.¹¹⁶

Despite a few occasional examples of GDR interaction with various groups and individuals in Wales, the literature reviewed demonstrates that the existing body of work on Welsh-GDR relations is very

¹¹⁰ Mac Con Uladh, D. (2005) 'Relations between the Left in Northern Ireland and the GDR', in Berger & LaPorte, *The Other Germany*, p. 95.

¹¹¹ Childs, 'British Labour and Ulbricht's State', p. 100.

¹¹² Berger & LaPorte, *The Other Germany* p. 18.

¹¹³ Berger & LaPorte, *The Other Germany* p. 13.

¹¹⁴ Berger & LaPorte, 'Britische Parlamentarierkontakte', S. 19.

¹¹⁵ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 126.

¹¹⁶ Berger & Lilleker, 'The British Labour Party', p. 454.

narrow. The lack of focus given thus far highlights how the majority of commentators have considered that associations between Welsh individuals or groups with the GDR were inevitably subject to wider British foreign policy and/or part of centralised British activity. Of all scholarship in this field, Wales - when considered - is always given a cursory glance rather than any in depth analysis. One of the most contemporary studies of British-GDR relations has a chapter on relations between Scotland and the GDR, as well as Northern Ireland, but material on Wales is only present in the introduction, with few examples cited and a statement confirming that an in-depth exploration of Wales and the GDR remains necessary.¹¹⁷ Ignoring Wales' role in British-GDR relations represents a missed opportunity, particularly when considering that later contributions to the literature have exemplified Scotland and Northern Ireland as cases where the GDR went beyond the well-trodden path of solely attempting to establish relations with British and London-based organisations.

¹¹⁷ Berger & LaPorte, *The Other Germany*.

Research Objective & Questions

Marianne Howarth determined how Wales (and Scotland), posed additional engagement challenges for the GDR by the 1980s, as a result of being ‘distinguished by a strong sense of national identity’.¹¹⁸ The primary research objective of this thesis is to test and develop this assumption by considering whether elements specific to Wales – such as its indigenous language and culture – not only influenced the likelihood of engagement with the GDR, but also the methods and approaches deployed by GDR agencies in pursuit of foreign policy objectives. Existing scholarship has so far determined that those most likely to engage with the GDR were overwhelmingly politically aligned to the Left, such as Labour Party members and Trade Unionists, as well as specific demographics such as teachers, the women’s movement and peace activists. This thesis considers whether perceptions and multiple interpretations of Welsh identity influenced the likelihood of receptivity to approaches from the GDR.

It has already been strongly established in the literature review that the GDR had two distinct foreign policy objectives during the Cold War period. Firstly, to pursue Western recognition of its sovereignty and secondly, to improve the image and standing of the GDR abroad once international recognition had been achieved. In pursuit of these aims, the GDR sought to engage with a variety of networks, both formal and informal. This thesis considers whether GDR agencies were sufficiently sophisticated in employing a specific strategy for Wales, tailoring its usual diplomatic and unofficial approach and communication methods. Existing assumptions regarding the GDR’s methods of interaction - albeit with a different target group - are tested, and the effectiveness of the GDR’s propaganda considered in the context of a Welsh audience. An analysis is undertaken of any variance in receptivity to the approaches made by the GDR authorities, depending on the various types of Welsh representatives (identities) engaging. The extent to which Wales and the GDR shared common values that enhanced feelings of solidarity across the ‘Iron Curtain’ is also determined, to assess whether aspects of the GDR were used as an example to follow in Wales and *vice versa*.

Welsh nationalist views (the strongest expression of Welsh identity) are overwhelmingly recognised as being tied to language and culture. The significance of the GDR engaging with representatives of a national minority culture is considered, to determine the perceived value of such interactions on the part of the GDR and whether varying expressions of Welsh identity influenced or even confused GDR approaches and methods for détente. Cultural interactions between a specific milieu of Welsh speakers and the GDR’s minority of the Sorbs has occasionally been referenced within the existing literature, but to a very limited depth and certainly not to the extent of analysing the social context, conducting oral interviews with Welsh-speaking participants and using Welsh language source material. By considering the opportunities pursued by Welsh-speakers to interact with the GDR (as a

¹¹⁸ Howarth, ‘Projecting the Self – Reflecting the Other’, p. 89.

result of its Sorbian cultural policies), this research offers a review of the status of the Welsh language during the Cold War, compared to another minority culture located in the Eastern Bloc. In respect of the connection between a strong Welsh separation identity and the Welsh language, this study determines whether Welsh-speaking circles had a different way of looking at the GDR and if there was a notable variance in the likelihood of Welsh-speakers engaging, compared to non-Welsh speakers.

This study also evaluates whether Welsh political influences played a contributory role in relations with the GDR. Existing literature demonstrates that of all mainstream British politicians, Labour Party members were most likely to engage with the GDR, particularly those from industrial areas. The unique nature of the South Wales coalfield's political environment (a melting pot of Communist and Labour beliefs, together with a long-standing non-conformist culture) would, it might be thought, have disposed many towards a more sympathetic view of the socialist GDR. A key area of analysis is determining the political allegiances and motivations of organised labour in Wales (using the South Wales NUM as a case study) and the importance (if any) of international solidarity for the Welsh proletariat, specifically with regard to their communist counterparts in the GDR. All identified interactions between the various Welsh identity types and representatives of the GDR are judged on their longevity, including the depth, impact and sustainability of exchanges.

In summary, the research aims of the thesis are as follows:

- To determine the identity and the motivations of Welsh individuals or organisations behind approaches made directly to the GDR and considering to what extent their issues and ideas to do with 'Welshness' and 'Welsh identity' influenced their positioning vis-à-vis the GDR and the Cold War.
- To analyse the extent of Welsh receptivity (with its overall non-conformist cultural and political heritage) to overtures made by a Socialist state including the likely resonance of the GDR's self-promotion as anti-fascist and egalitarian, seeking to protect and develop the rights of its own Sorbian minority culture.

Research Methodology

Understanding the various promulgations of ‘Welshness’ expressed during this period is the conceptual basis for this research. Several case studies of Cold War era Welsh/GDR interactions are considered between members of Welsh society (representing a variety of backgrounds, interests and contexts) and various agents of the GDR. For each case study, consideration is given to the purpose and incentive behind the interaction and the extent to which the motivation for engagement was influenced or determined by features of Welsh identity. The subsequent impact and magnitude of each interaction (if any) is also evaluated. A further exercise is considering the findings of each case study within the context of existing scholarship. This is undertaken by determining whether such findings conform to the overarching British assumptions or whether they unearth further interactions and identifiable demographics to supplement existing assumptions and knowledge.

The ‘Three Wales Model’ is a theory developed by the political scientist Denis Balsom in 1985, who sought to define and categorise different types of Welsh national identity. Balsom’s results were based on responses to two questions asked of a sample of the Welsh population in 1979: i) ‘Do you normally consider yourself to be Welsh, British, English or something else?’ and ii) ‘Do you speak Welsh?’.¹¹⁹ These results were used by Balsom to categorise respondents into the following three groups:

<u>Type 1</u>	<u>Y Fro Gymraeg</u>	The Welsh-speaking heartland of the North and West.
<u>Type 2</u>	<u>Welsh Wales</u>	Consciously Welsh, but not Welsh-speaking in the South Wales Valleys
<u>Type 3</u>	<u>British Wales</u>	More ambivalent, largely in the East and the South coast.

Table 1: Types of Welsh identity as defined in Dennis Balsom’s ‘Three Wales Model’ (1985)

¹¹⁹ Balsom, D. (1985) ‘The Three Wales Model’, in Osmond, J. (ed.) *The National Question again: Welsh political identity in the 1980s*, Llandysul: Gomer Press, p. 4.

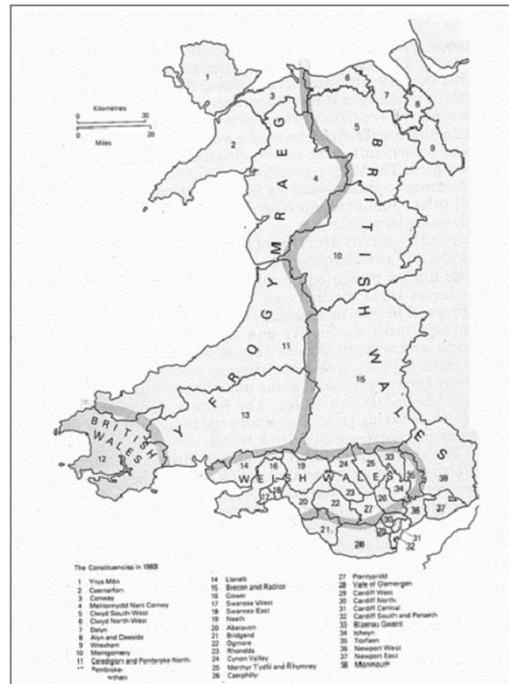


Figure 1: Balsom's 'Three Wales Model'¹²⁰

Balsom's approach was to use the data to divide the territory of Wales into three areas, to match the identity categories formulated. As summarised by Scully and Jones, 'the TWM [Three Wales Model] portrayed Wales in the late 1970s and early 1980s as containing distinct social groups who were politically substantially homogenous and who largely populated separate parts of the country'.¹²¹ The three identity types reflected social variances of the type which Moreno classed in his study as the results of 'differences of identity, history, language or traditions'.¹²² Balsom's work was designed to predict patterns of voting behaviour in elections, with the defined identity traits leading to assumptions about the likely political party supported by each category. A strong focus was given to the influence of the Welsh language: 'there exists in Wales an ethnic sentiment which relates to and affects partisanship. This sentiment is modified by linguistic and cultural conditions'.¹²³

Contemporaneously with Balsom, Moreno's work on dual identity (or 'compound nationality') also considered the way in which individuals identify themselves. Moreno conducted a study in July 1986 to determine how people living in Scotland saw themselves in terms of their nationality.¹²⁴ Describing differences in Scottish/British identity types a result of 'a variable manifestation of duality', Moreno stated that the more the 'ethnoterritorial [regional] identity prevails upon modern state identity, the

¹²⁰ Diagram from Balsom, 'The Three Wales Model', p. 5.

¹²¹ Scully, R. & Jones, R.W. (2012) 'Still three Wales? Social location and electoral behaviour in contemporary Wales', *Electoral Studies*, 31, p. 660.

¹²² Moreno, L. (2006) 'Scotland, Catalonia, Europeanization and the "Moreno Question"', *Scottish Affairs*, 54, p. 1.

¹²³ Quoted in Scully & Jones, 'Still three Wales?', p. 657.

¹²⁴ Moreno, 'Scotland, Catalonia, Europeanization', pp. 5-6.

higher the demands for political autonomy.’¹²⁵ In a Welsh context, this means that those with the strongest sense of Welsh identity during this period were those most likely to pursue Welsh self-determination, leading to a greater likelihood of this identity type (Type 1: *Y Fro Gymraeg*) displaying a strongly Welsh rather than British approach in their engagement with the GDR. Moreno’s findings also demonstrated that a significant proportion of respondents displayed ‘duality’ in their identity (i.e. being no more Scottish than British). English individuals would potentially have greater difficulties in ‘differentiating’ English and British identities, owing to Britain often being referred to as England outside Britain. Reverting to the categories provided by Balsom’s Three Wales Model, this would correspond with the *British Wales* type. Similarly to the approach of Balsom, some age, gender, class, geographical and party support variances were also noted by Moreno in his study, such as a higher number of participants stating an ‘exclusive’ Scottish identity in the East and North of Scotland.¹²⁶

Since its publication in 1985, the Three Wales Model has been considered a highly influential and oft-used approach for discussions relating to Welsh identity. More recently however, Scully and Jones drew attention to this ‘unchallenged orthodoxy’, publishing a critique of the model. Balsom’s emphasis on national identity and language as the principal variables for determining political choices was criticised, as by using this interpretation to try and categorise various parts of Wales: ‘the TWM assumed that political identification and voting behaviour follows – and to a large extent is determined by – social location’.¹²⁷ Scully and Jones argued that Balsom’s reliance on language and identity as the principal features in determining likely political affiliation was inadequate, claiming that Welsh voters were making conscious voting choices ‘based primarily on their evaluations of the competence of the different political alternatives; and much less as people with long term political allegiances that follow the dictates of their inherited or acquired social positions’.¹²⁸ Balsom’s interpretation of the data to generate three geographical territories was also criticised, with Scully and Jones indicating that the data illustrated that half of those categorised as being of the ‘*Welsh Wales*’ type was actually located in the ‘*British Wales*’ territory outlined by Balsom and although the majority of those identified as of ‘*Y Fro Gymraeg*’ (63%) were based in the nominated territory, they did not ‘remotely comprise’ (as 30% of the population) the majority. In practice, there were slightly more individuals identified as the ‘*British Wales*’ type living in this geographical area.¹²⁹

Scully and Jones also argued that the Three Wales model may be in need of refinement and development in the wake of the post-devolution (1997) political landscape of Wales. Yet, despite the recent criticisms of the model and its applicability, the data behind the construction of the model was

¹²⁵ Moreno, ‘Scotland, Catalonia, Europeanization’, p. 2.

¹²⁶ Moreno, ‘Scotland, Catalonia, Europeanization’, p. 7.

¹²⁷ Scully & Jones, ‘Still three Wales?’, p. 658.

¹²⁸ Scully & Jones, ‘Still three Wales?’, p. 659.

¹²⁹ Scully & Jones, ‘Still three Wales?’, p. 660.

collected during the Cold War period and is therefore a representation and reflection of the evaluated attitudes towards Welsh identity during the period in question. It is a product and interpretation of its time and as Moreno stated, measuring identity (specifically dual identity) is ‘far from simple’.¹³⁰ Although questions were also raised by Scully and Jones about the line of questioning and method of data measurement conducted by Balsom, I do not intend to use the identity and geographical categories identified by Balsom for the purposes of political forecasting. Instead, I am using the categories devised by Balsom, based on the response choices made by participants in how they perceived themselves: i) Welsh, ii) British, iii) English or something else and querying whether such self-perceptions led to different approaches when interacting with the GDR. Whereas the aim and purpose of Balsom’s model was to predict political choices, I am instead using the identity categories to determine likely behaviours displayed by the different identity types in their relations with various GDR agencies. I am thus considering whether i) an element of self-expression, understanding or a predominance of the recognised factors behind a certain Balsom identity type (such as the Welsh language) fuelled a likelier tendency to express a sense of Welshness in interactions with the GDR, and ii) whether specific events, interactions or circumstances caused by the Cold War influenced or created a significant deviation in the behaviour of the different identity types.

Supplementary to the identity types defined in Balsom’s model, this thesis considers whether the following methods of expression were employed by the different types:

- i) the projection of Wales as a minority culture, within the authoritative confines of a dominant British political structure, seeking independence and sovereignty;
- ii) as an integral, subscribed member of the British structure; a geographical construct;
- iii) as a key Welsh component of a wider international fraternity, with socialist political aspirations.

Possible assumptions which may have influenced the GDR’s understanding of Wales and an appreciation of Welsh identity are also considered for analysis:

- i) Through the understanding and perceptions generated by the constitutionally-protected Sorbian minority in the GDR;
- ii) In relation to the GDR’s wider interactions and foreign policy priorities with Britain and its later official diplomatic relationship;
- iii) In the context of the GDR’s own international standing and perceptions of its sovereignty.

Events occurring in Wales during this Cold War period are also considered for their potential impact on the attitudes and behaviours of the identity types, such as the Parliament for Wales campaign in the 1950s, the establishment of the Council for Wales & Monmouthshire, the protests surrounding Tryweryn, the 1979 referendum and the Welsh peace movements of the later Cold War period. Here,

¹³⁰ Moreno, ‘Scotland, Catalonia, Europeanization’, p. 8.

the thesis seeks evidence that relations between Wales and the GDR were mediated or affected by how several public figures involved in these events (and identified in this study as having engaged with the GDR), experienced and viewed the Cold War.

Despite the GDR being both geographically and politically at the forefront of the Cold War, it is imperative to stipulate at the beginning of the thesis that in line with the results of previous studies in this field, the majority of citizens from Cold War era Wales were not particularly incentivised or interested in interacting with the GDR. What this thesis investigates however, is who was prepared to engage and whether or not they did so as a result of their Welsh identity. A further limitation on a study of this type has been the consequences which followed the restricted ability of normal GDR citizens to pursue interactions during this period. Although citizens of Wales enjoyed unrestricted freedom of movement, the severe limitations placed by the GDR authorities on travel, particularly after the construction of the Berlin wall, clearly had an impact on the type of relations fostered. Consequential restrictions in the type and volume of material available for analysis are discussed in the following Sources and Source Criticism section.

Sources & Source Criticism

An analysis of exchanges and interactions between the two different nations requires a broad range of sources in multiple languages. For this thesis, primary source material has been considered in Welsh, English and German. Considerable use has been made of the material of the erstwhile GDR authorities in the Federal archives in Berlin as well as the extensive collections of the National Library of Wales. Although no doubt exists regarding the authenticity of these formal collections and whilst these have contributed a considerable amount of information, the completeness of the original deposit to the archives is an unknown factor. There are for example in the SAPMO section of the *Bundesarchiv*, references to several delegations for which there is no supporting documentation.¹³¹

A thesis constructed on the premise of evaluating perceptions and expressions faces difficulties - any exchanges and events generating such perceptions are inevitably subjectively interpreted. Relations which develop on an informal, gradual basis are not necessarily captured in formal, archived documentation. Oral interviews with those who engaged in the interactions identified in this thesis have therefore been of crucial importance. They have not only served to verify, corroborate or contradict the content of the official, archived documentation, but have also been vital for recording long-held perceptions and otherwise undocumented personal experiences; enriching the data available for analysis. Private papers have also provided significant illumination in this respect. A degree of caution has been applied to the conclusions derived from oral interviews - perceptions, erstwhile opinions and memories are inevitably subject to change, especially in recollecting events occurring many decades ago.

Specialist archives have been used for the collection of evidence specific to an identified interaction or which represent a particular element of Welsh or GDR society such as the archives of the *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (Stasi) or that of the Llangollen International Eisteddfod. Additionally, the content of national and local media sources has been considered – not only to identify the perceptions expressed by and to the readership, but to also appreciate what items were considered newsworthy and of sufficient merit or interest for inclusion. Whereas it has been feasible to investigate these sources in detail for a given period (e.g. up to several years at a time); for ease of reference, articles which have contributed to this study have mostly been linked to particular events and incidents. Undertaking a systematic study of all references to the GDR for the entire Cold War period - whilst arguably contributing a thorough understanding of Welsh media reporting on the GDR - would have been a wholly unfeasible exercise and unnecessary for the purposes of this thesis.

Although a great deal of analysis considers whether views held by both sets of representatives (Welsh and GDR) were tied to Welsh language and culture, one notable limitation is that the majority of

¹³¹ Foundation Archives of the Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR (*Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv*).

official, formal minutes (such as those of local authorities, councils, minutes of meetings) are predominantly in the English language. Extensive use has been made in this thesis however of Welsh-language media, private papers and oral interviews for capturing data and evidence in the Welsh language. Much of the official material relating to the Sorbian minority in the GDR is fortuitously (at least for the purpose of this study) in the German language, rather than Sorbian. All formal records stemming from the SED authorities are in German, as well as the national (SED-led) newspaper of the GDR – *Neues Deutschland*. Due to the widely-recognised propagandistic nature of this newspaper however and overwhelmingly, the suspicion that must be afforded to the veracity of much of the SED material, (the occasional bias in which raises questions for research); the records and evidence nonetheless assist with chronological facts and stated, strategic priorities. Considering the type, content and wording of messages which the GDR authorities and representatives sought to escalate to higher SED echelons, can itself be an illuminating and informative exercise. With regard to the perceptions and expressions of the Sorbian people, limited material exists for assessing the views of those not in SED or Sorbian leadership positions, especially in a language other than Sorbian. Subsequently, any research conducted on Sorbian activity in this period relies on the recorded views of the Domowina - an organisation representing the interests of the Sorbian people - and the GDR authorities.

Thesis Structure & Content

This thesis is structured into two sections, each comprising case studies of interactions between representatives of Wales and agencies of the GDR during the Cold War. Section 1 considers relations prior to the British recognition of the GDR in 1973 and Section 2 evaluates the period between 1973 and 1990, in which the GDR sought to improve its image and status abroad. The chapters are therefore arranged in chronological order. Each chapter's case study considers the purpose(s) of the interaction, evaluates the identity type of those seeking engagement, their motivations and activities, as well as considering what (if any) impact such an interaction may have had both in Wales and in the GDR respectively.

Section 1:

Chapter 1 – Welsh-speakers and the Sorbs: the pursuit of cultural equality (1958 – 1963)

&

Chapter 2 – From Lausitz to Llangollen: The Sorbs and the GDR visit Wales (1959 – 1963)

Arguably, one of the most engaging episodes in Welsh-GDR relations was the interaction between Welsh educationalists from Flintshire and the Sorbian minority in the area of Bautzen. Undertaken at a time of robust campaigning for the provision of Welsh-medium secondary education in Wales, it has been possible to demonstrate that these prominent Welsh individuals sought to learn from the practices of the GDR authorities in their provisions for the Sorbs. The institutional support and the constitutionally-protected rights made available to the Sorbs during this period, were for the Welsh-speaking visitors, a marked contrast to the frequent hostility and institutionalised indifference afforded to the Welsh language. This chapter considers the multiple delegations which occurred over a period of several years, initially led by the prominent Welshman, Huw T. Edwards; the expressions of national identity and concerns projected by the visitors to the GDR and the resulting impact to campaign efforts in Wales.

Chapter 2 continues the narrative from the perspective of the GDR representatives. Having fostered strong relations with the Flintshire delegates, a delegation of Sorbian performers and prominent GDR representatives visited Wales in 1959, nominally to compete in the Llangollen International Eisteddfod and to learn of bilingual education practices in Wales. This chapter considers whether the visitors from the GDR sought to exploit this and subsequent visits to Wales, by evaluating whether a specific strategy was employed by the authorities to maximise the opportunities afforded by their connections. The GDR's (exploitative) use of the Sorbian situation in pursuit of foreign policy objectives is explored, considering in particular whether this led to any misperception on the part of

Welsh-speaking contacts regarding the true status of the Sorbs in the GDR. This chapter also determines whether the presence of GDR delegations in Wales generated any hostility from other members of Welsh society, particularly considering the official purpose of the visits as promoting bilingualism.

Chapter 3 – Trade Union relations between the FDGB and the NUM (South Wales Area), (Mid 1950s – early 1960s)

This chapter identifies the interactions which occurred between the mining representatives of South Wales (specifically the South Wales Area of the NUM) and the GDR's FDGB¹³² during the earlier stages of the Cold War. Despite the British policy of non-recognition of the GDR, the South Wales area of the NUM considered the unions of the GDR an integral part of the international labour movement, representative of the traditions of internationalism supported by the South Wales mining union, as demonstrated by the strong participation of Welsh Miners in the Spanish Civil War. The evidence presented illustrates how the FDGB sought to engage the supposedly sympathetic 'Communist' leaders of the Union, who proceeded to sympathise with several of the stated aims of the GDR, such as its position on anti-fascism.

Multiple exchanges of mining delegations occurred during this period, for the purposes of co-learning and engagement, with common causes identified. One example was an incident specific to Wales - the training of FRG troops in Castlemartin, Pembrokeshire. Protest actions by the South Wales Miners were encouraged by the GDR authorities, with developments regularly published in the GDR media. Despite occasional fraternal co-operation, this chapter reconfirms however that the South Wales Miners were prepared to condemn the actions of the GDR when considered appropriate. Following the early 1970s, there is limited evidence of any continued interaction – perhaps symptomatic of the longer-term decline in the Union's prominence in South Wales and decreased efforts on the part of the GDR to maintain relations following British recognition of the GDR.

Section 2:

Chapter 4 - Cultural relations in the 1980s: assessing the identity of the Britain-GDR Society's Welsh branch (1980s)

This chapter explores the role and activities of the sole Welsh branch of the Britain-GDR friendship society, including its co-ordination of cultural and youth delegations to the GDR. Three specific delegations from Wales are considered in detail. Though the official aims and objectives of the delegations were similar, there was a notable contrast in the type of Welsh representatives participating. Twenty years after the delegation of Welsh-speaking Flintshire educationalists to

¹³² The Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (Free German Trade Union Federation of the GDR).

Bautzen, this chapter considers whether a further visit of Welsh-speaking visitors to the GDR indicated a continued concern regarding the status of the Welsh language. As bilingual secondary education was, by now, firmly established in Wales, the reasons behind what drew these representatives to Bautzen in order to learn of and from the Sorbian situation once again, are analysed. Further Welsh delegations continued to visit the Sorbian area by arrangement through the Welsh branch of the Britain-GDR Society, including delegates who had very little (if any) interest or attachment to the Welsh language. The variety in delegate type and interests is considered, particularly in the context of the declared aims and purposes of the delegations. The chapter evaluates the impact and influence of the *Liga für Völkerfreundschaft* (International League of Friendship) on the interactions and considers which type of delegation was most indicative of wider cultural relations between the two nations.

Chapter 5 – The Twinning of Gwent/Blaenau Gwent & Bautzen (1984-1987)

Chapter 5 evaluates the origins of a twinning arrangement between the borough of Blaenau Gwent and the town of Bautzen. The influence of the *Liga für Völkerfreundschaft* in promoting and facilitating the twinning is also determined. The chapter considers why Blaenau Gwent took the unusual step of twinning with an area behind the Iron Curtain, rather than the conventional British town twinning approach of establishing relations with a French or West German community. It also seeks to establish the motivations of the GDR authorities in pursuing twinning relations in Wales.

The twinning arrangement between Blaenau Gwent and Bautzen collapsed by 1988. Noting the restriction on freedom of movement allowed to the majority of the citizens of Bautzen, an assessment is made on the effectiveness of the twinning in practice. A traditional Labour Party stronghold, not all twinning representatives from the Blaenau Gwent area were supportive of its establishment or its continuation. This chapter analyses to what extent this conflict was due to the identity types and motivations of those involved in its implementation.

CHAPTER 1 - WELSH-SPEAKERS AND THE SORBS: THE PURSUIT OF CULTURAL EQUALITY

During the GDR's existence, its constitution and the laws of Brandenburg and Saxony included provisions to protect and preserve the language of its Sorbian minority, including support for the teaching of Sorbian in schools. Between 1958 and the early 1960s, delegations of Welsh educationalists from the county of Flintshire in North Wales visited the GDR to advance their knowledge and understanding of the provisions made by the GDR for the Sorbs. Reciprocal visits to Wales from members of the SED and the Domowina (an organisation representing the Sorbs) also occurred during this period. This chapter analyses the purpose and motivations behind the Flintshire delegations to the GDR, the activities undertaken, the personalities involved and the circumstances which fostered such a relationship. It evaluates how cultural and linguistic considerations and priorities in Wales during this period prompted these interactions, creating a specific interest in the GDR due to an appreciation for the way it supported its national minority. Consideration is given as to whether Flintshire delegates to the GDR could appreciate the context and magnitude of this state-sponsored support to the Sorbs and their language and whether any parallels or contradictions were drawn by these visitors in terms of comparable domestic state support granted to the Welsh language during the same period.

A Slavic minority, the Sorbs are based in the Lusatia (*Lausitz*) area of Germany, which lies in what was once the territory of the GDR. Upper Lusatia forms a part of the federal state of Brandenburg, with Lower Lusatia located in Saxony.¹³³ In a situation comparable to that of the Welsh language, which survives despite the exceptionally influential presence of English, Sorbian (a Western Slavonic minority language) has also been subject to extreme pressures from the stronger, more widely-spoken German. Stone summarised the position of the Sorbs thus: 'like almost any nationality in the modern world, they are constantly subject to assimilatory pressures from the majority in whose midst they live'.¹³⁴

¹³³ Hemminga, P. (2001) *The Sorbian language in education in Germany*. Mercator Education: European Network for Regional or Minority Language and Education. The Netherlands: Mercator-Education, p. 2

¹³⁴ Stone, G. (1972) *The Smallest Slavonic Nation - The Sorbs of Lusatia*. University of London: The Athlone Press, p. 2.

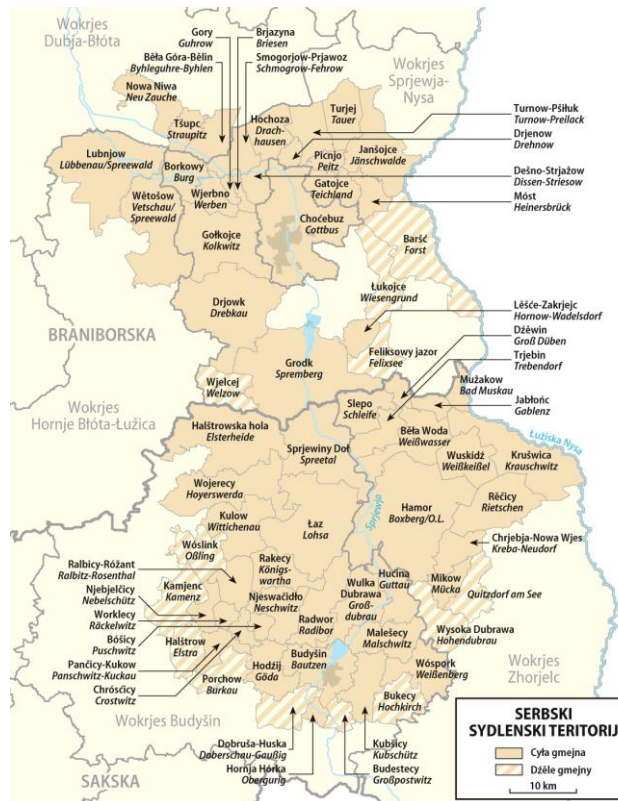


Figure 2: Map illustrating the Sorbian area.¹³⁵

The Sorbs have historically suffered oppressive political measures, implemented with minimal regard for the preservation of Sorbian identity and culture. In 1815, following the Congress of Vienna when Lusatia moved from Saxon to Prussian control, the use of Sorbian was restricted. German-speakers replaced Sorbian-speaking priests,¹³⁶ with the Sorbs denied the right to pursue their own form of religious worship.¹³⁷ Following the First World War, the pursuit of opencast mining for lignite impacted many Sorbian areas to the point of cultural destruction.¹³⁸ Under National Socialism, the Sorbs also suffered gross oppression including the prohibition of Sorbian institutions, clubs and associations as well as the expelling of Sorbian teachers from Lusatia. Several Sorbs were incarcerated in concentration camps.¹³⁹ These factors had a devastating impact on the status of the language, visibly highlighted by a decline in the number of Sorbian speakers (estimated at being only 140,000 by 1945).¹⁴⁰ In the aftermath of the Second World War, representatives of the Sorbs

¹³⁵ Image taken from the homepage of the Institut für Sorabistik, Universität Leipzig. Available at: <http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~sorb/cms/en> (Accessed: 13.02.2014).

¹³⁶ Barker, P. (2012) 'Sorbian Ethnic Interests, the GDR State and the Cold War', in Knight, R. (ed.) *Ethnicity, Nationalism and the European Cold War*, London: Continuum, p. 173.

¹³⁷ Lindseth, M. & Soldan, A. (2000) 'The Sorbian population before and after German reunification', *Debatte: Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, 8(2), p. 151.

¹³⁸ Barker, 'Sorbian Ethnic Interests', p. 173.

¹³⁹ Hemminga, *The Sorbian language*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁰ Hemminga, *The Sorbian language*, p. 8.

approached the new political order in the Soviet Zone, calling for their cultural and political rights to be recognised. The Sorbs demanded cultural institutions, rights to bilingual education, political representation, the establishment of Sorbian youth organisations and separate work brigades so that the Sorbian language could remain the language of the workplace.¹⁴¹

We, the Sorbian people of Lausitz, are the last of the Slavic people which have not yet achieved their freedom and we therefore demand our freedom and the renewal of our historically independent existence.¹⁴²

Though no independent sovereign status was granted to the Sorbian people,¹⁴³ the ‘language affinity’ generated some understanding from the Soviet occupying forces.¹⁴⁴ This led to an official SED position on the Sorbian question of differentiating its approach from the conduct and policy of the National Socialists as much as possible. Encouraged by the Soviet Union, the SED sought to support (both politically and economically) the establishment of Sorbian institutions, with a remit of preserving the Sorbian language and providing sufficient resources to empower the Sorbian people to take measures to promote and preserve their culture. ‘The Sorbian people [are to] receive any assistance required from the municipal and state bodies, in order to protect their cultural life and cultural institutions’.¹⁴⁵ The approach of absolutely and unambiguously differentiating official SED policy from that of the previous social order led to the establishment of the *Abteilung für Sorbenfragen* (Department for Sorbian Affairs). Concurrent with the formation of the GDR state, the provision of cultural and financial support to the Sorbs was enshrined in law. A Sorbian law was passed in Saxony in 1948 and also in Brandenburg by 1951, enabling the establishment of a bilingual school system and several Sorbian organisations such as the Sorbian People’s theatre in Bautzen, the Sorbian State Ensemble for Music and Dance and the Institute for Sorbian Ethnic Research.¹⁴⁶ Hemminga described these new Sorbian institutions as being in effect, ‘state organisations, administered, censored and completely financed by the state’.¹⁴⁷ As well as the local State laws, provisions were included in the GDR constitution of 1949 to protect the interest of minorities such as Article 11: ‘The foreign speaking parts of the Republic [...] must be supported’.¹⁴⁸ By 1968, the GDR constitution also included an explicit obligation to recognise and preserve the identity of the Sorbian

¹⁴¹ Barker, P. (2000) ‘From Wendish-Speaking Germans to Sorbian-Speaking Citizens of the GDR: Contradictions in the Language Policy of the SED’, *German Monitor*, 47, p. 44.

¹⁴² Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (Berlin) [henceforth: SAPMO-BArch], NY4036-741, ‘Memorandum der Lausitzer Sorben’, 01.06.1945, Bl. 1, [My translation].

¹⁴³ Barker, ‘From Wendish-Speaking Germans’, p. 44.

¹⁴⁴ Hemminga, *The Sorbian language*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁵ Barker, ‘From Wendish-Speaking Germans’, p. 45.

¹⁴⁶ Barker, P. (2008) ‘Dislocation and reorientation in the Sorbian community (1945 - 2008)’ *German Monitor*, 71, p. 186. See also Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*, p. 162: ‘During the 1950s and 1960s, in accordance with the terms of Article 11 of the old Constitution, further statutory provision was made both for the use of the language in bilingual areas and for the cultural and social advancement of the Sorbian population. The use of language is specifically authorised for meetings of local government bodies and their committees. Official pronouncements must be made in Sorbian as well as German’.

¹⁴⁷ Hemminga, *The Sorbian language*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁸ Lindseth & Soldan, ‘The Sorbian population’, p. 152.

minority: ‘Citizens of the German Democratic Republic of Sorb nationality have the right to cultivate their mother tongue and culture.’¹⁴⁹ The year 1947 saw the establishment of the first Sorbian school where, for the first time in a generation, Sorbian schoolchildren were able to receive education through the medium of their mother-tongue.¹⁵⁰ The newly-formed educational framework allowed Sorbian parents to send their children either to a school where Sorbian was the language of instruction or alternatively, a school where the language of instruction was German, but with Sorbian taught as a subject.¹⁵¹ By 1952, 78 Sorbian elementary schools and 4 Sorbian secondary schools had been founded.¹⁵²

The Domowina is an organisation which has historically represented the Sorbs and their political, cultural and economic interests. Established in 1912, yet prohibited from 1937 onwards, the Domowina was granted permission to reform in May 1945.¹⁵³ Priorities during the period of the GDR included ‘the advancement of creative cultural activity’, with the Domowina also playing a leading role in the formation of the education system.¹⁵⁴ As the official representatives of the Sorbian people, any visit to Lusatia by any delegates – Welsh or otherwise – to learn of Sorbian activity would be formally hosted by the Domowina. The organisation has been described as ‘an association of nationally conscious Sorbs, but [...] also a political organisation which worked under the direction of the SED’.¹⁵⁵ This is evident in the archival material; any correspondence, invitation and delegation itinerary which was either directed through or would require Domowina involvement, was subject to review and sanction by prominent SED internal governmental figures and departments, such as the Ministry of the Interior and/or Ministry for Culture. As such, it is difficult to determine whether any Welsh-Sorb engagement by the Domowina was due to a recognition of a similar cultural minority living within the political framework of a larger entity or whether this was instead a reluctantly followed requirement for the Domowina and the Sorbs to fulfil, regardless of interest, owing to pressures from State organisations.

Establishing why and to whom the status of the Sorbs would have been of interest in the late 1950s and early 1960s illustrates the identity type of those in Flintshire seeking to engage with the Sorbs. The pursuit of relations with the Domowina and the SED during this period of formal non-recognition of the GDR, was prompted by a specific set of circumstances. Concerns regarding the Welsh language at this time are therefore considered to assess why such issues encouraged interactions with

¹⁴⁹ DocumentArchiv (2013) ‘Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik vom 6. April 1968 (in der Fassung vom 7. Oktober 1974’). Available at: <http://www.documentarchiv.de/ddr/verfddr.html> (Accessed: 22.07.2013). [My translation].

¹⁵⁰ Barker, ‘From Wendish-Speaking Germans’, p. 46.

¹⁵¹ Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*, p. 164.

¹⁵² Hemminga, *The Sorbian language*, p. 9.

¹⁵³ Hemminga, *The Sorbian language*, p. 5.

¹⁵⁴ Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*, p. 180.

¹⁵⁵ Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*, p. 180.

institutions and representatives of the GDR. The late 1950s witnessed efforts by many Welsh-speakers to establish a formal role for the language in society and more specifically, to campaign for the provision of Welsh-medium secondary education. Until 1956, all secondary education in Wales had been provided through the medium of English. Although some Welsh-language primary schools had been established in the more recent past, few (if any) resources existed for bilingual secondary education due to a lack of popular demand and negligible institutional and official support. This period witnessed a dramatic census-recorded decrease in the number of Welsh-speakers in Wales. In 1951 for example, 715,000 persons (aged 3+) were recorded as Welsh-speakers, compared to a figure of 909,000 in 1931.¹⁵⁶ Williams considered how by 1958 (which also happens to be the year of the first delegation from Flintshire to the GDR), the nature of bilingualism in Wales had reduced the Welsh language to a local ‘small scale society’ status, used primarily at hearth and home. Conversely, English was Wales’ *lingua franca* for official purposes such as government, the law and all methods of formal administration.¹⁵⁷ The long-term (legislative) discouragement of the use of Welsh in education and professional arenas had effectively led to the decline in the number of Welsh-speakers with English being perceived as the language necessary to progress one’s circumstances and prospects in life. By the late 1950s however, a proficiency in the language was considered a defining element of Welsh identity. Williams stated that the shared use of a common language like Welsh could contribute towards the creation of a national consciousness, with the foundations of nationhood being linguistic rather than political. Despite the decline in the number of speakers with proficiency in the language, a new attitude towards the Welsh language was forming, which could secure its position and even promote its revival.¹⁵⁸ Jones and Griffiths corroborated this notion of a change in attitude towards the Welsh language, stating that by 1961, Welsh was no longer associated with ignorance. Proficiency in the language had instead become a form of status symbol and groups of individuals were now actively seeking to preserve and strengthen the language, particularly in areas where it was at its weakest.¹⁵⁹

Described by Khleif as an ‘instrument of ethnic revival and nationalist awakening’,¹⁶⁰ the establishment of Welsh-medium schools was ‘a response to a fermenting sense of suppressed national identity [promoted] by a new middle-class in Wales, who could devote time to [the] development of national ideology [...] a socio-economic elite, an intelligentsia with ideology-making proclivities’.¹⁶¹ Promoters of bilingual education were therefore part of a Welsh-speaking core who through education or public presence had established themselves within prominent social institutions and who sought to

¹⁵⁶ Williams, J. L. (1958) ‘The National Language in the Social Pattern in Wales’, *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 47(187), p. 250.

¹⁵⁷ Williams, ‘The National Language’, p. 253.

¹⁵⁸ Williams, ‘The National Language’, p. 253.

¹⁵⁹ Jones, E. & Griffiths, I.L. (1963) ‘A Linguistic Map of Wales: 1961’, *The Geographical Journal*, 129(2), p. 194.

¹⁶⁰ Khleif, B.B. (1976) ‘Cultural Regeneration and the School: An Anthropological Study of Welsh-Medium Schools in Wales’, *International Review of Education*, 22 (2), p. 181.

¹⁶¹ Khleif, ‘Cultural Regeneration’, p. 182.

use their positions to ameliorate the status of the Welsh language. Educational establishments became a method to achieve change by formally reviving a language and offering opportunities to create new traditions.¹⁶² Khleif considered how within twenty years of the establishment of the first Welsh medium secondary school, these new establishments served not just as the ‘embodiment of the very notion of Welshness itself’,¹⁶³ but also offered additional benefits to a Welsh schoolchild such as providing ‘two windows on the world’, and fulfilling ‘the need for roots and the link with the national heritage’.¹⁶⁴ Existing scholarship thus provides an established assumption that for anyone seeking to promote the use of and safeguard a language (whether to encourage a sense of ‘nationhood’ or otherwise), creating educational establishments to enable instruction through the medium of that language is fundamental.

The development of a policy for bilingual secondary education was specifically driven by pioneers in Flintshire; key individuals from the Education Committee of the County Council, led by B. Haydn Williams (Director of Education) and Moses Jones (Deputy Director). Crucial lobbying support was provided by Huw T. Edwards – a chairperson of the Education Committee but, more significantly, the then Chairman of the Westminster-established body representing the interests of Wales, the Council for Wales & Monmouthshire.

1956 witnessed the establishment of the first Welsh-medium secondary school, Ysgol Gyfun Glan Clwyd (Glan Clwyd Comprehensive School). By 1957, the Education Committee of Flintshire had published the following education policy:

- i. That Welsh be taught as a second language (not more than one period per day) to all English-speaking children in attendance at primary and secondary schools in the county where English is the medium of instruction.
- ii. That Welsh-speaking children [...] be taught through the medium of Welsh during the first two years of their school life in primary school, English being introduced thereafter so that both languages are freely used as a medium of instruction between the ages of 9 and 11.
- iii. That the Welsh-speaking children who have undergone such a bilingual training in their primary schools should continue to receive the same bilingual training at the secondary stage.¹⁶⁵

The innovative and pioneering nature of this policy should not be underestimated. It empowered the Welsh language in Flintshire (spreading later to other areas in Wales) and formalised its role in the

¹⁶² Khleif, ‘Cultural Regeneration’, p. 178.

¹⁶³ Khleif, ‘Cultural Regeneration’, p. 177.

¹⁶⁴ Pill, R. (1974) ‘Social Implications of a Bilingual Policy, with Particular Reference to Wales’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 25 (1), p. 98.

¹⁶⁵ Flintshire Record Office, FC/2/58, Minutes of the Flintshire County Council Education Committee, 10.09.1957, p. 275.

provision of state-funded education. That such a trail-blazing policy was formulated in one of the most Anglicised areas in Wales serves to highlight its significance, as well as the role played by key individuals and the strength of commitment behind its formation. The conflict which arose in Flintshire as a result of its implementation is considered below. With reference to Thones's identity definitions, there is merit in firstly understanding the type of individuals who promoted and lobbied for this policy and who independently sought to visit the GDR to learn of existing minority language practices. Thones's work considered the motivations of individuals persistently striving for the Welsh language despite possible resultant conflict, referring to this type of people as an 'elite':

[A] relatively small, adventitiously organised group, which legitimately or not, exercises authority, lays claim to exercise it or believes it should exercise authority over the other group with which it maintains a relationship, usually of a political or cultural nature. Elites claim for themselves a certain 'spiritual superiority' in that they consider themselves the tool of changing or preserving a specific social order.[...] The sense of mission is seen again and again in the writings and public comments of prominent figures who could be regarded as members of a Welsh-speaking cultural elite. The need to convert the majority to support for the language is a constant rallying cry, [e.g.] if the majority of parents could be imbued with the enthusiasm and sense of concern which seems to be the attitude only of those who are culturally aware. We need not worry greatly about those who are determinedly hostile; we must work on the great bulk of indifference [...] Many of its members already occupy important posts in the administrative and cultural life of Wales [...]¹⁶⁶

This policy was made against the backdrop of the drowning of Tryweryn, a political episode which galvanised many Welsh-speakers into actively campaigning for the Welsh language. In July 1957,¹⁶⁷ Liverpool City Council was granted the right to flood the valley of Cwm Celyn in Meirionethshire to supply water to the city. The effect of this action – overwhelmingly opposed by Welsh MPs – led to the destruction and dispersal of a Welsh-speaking community. Huw T. Edwards took a leading role in opposing the plans.¹⁶⁸ A 'cause célèbre' in Wales, this incident contributed to a growth in Welsh nationalism.¹⁶⁹

Despite resistance to the policy from other members of the Education Committee and hostility, protest and conflict from other prominent figures within the county, including the Member of Parliament and local parents, the goal of providing Welsh-medium education in Flintshire was resolutely pursued by B. Haydn Williams and his allies. Their activities conformed to Thones' definition; the clearly identifiable mission, the continuous pursuit of goals until they were achieved, as well as their prominent roles within Welsh public life. Their endeavours were recognised and celebrated by the majority of the wider Welsh-language 'elite' community – an article in *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* (a

¹⁶⁶ Thones' work is referenced in Pill, 'Social Implications of a Bilingual Policy', p. 105.

¹⁶⁷ Jenkins, G. (2007) *Prif Weinidog Answyddogol Cymru*. Ceredigion: Y Lolfa, p. 173. For further information on the Tryweryn episode, see also: Johnes, M. (2012) *Wales since 1939*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 212-16 and Jones, W. (2007) *Cofio Capel Celyn*, Ceredigion: Y Lolfa.

¹⁶⁸ Jenkins, *Prif Weinidog*, p. 146.

¹⁶⁹ Jenkins, *Prif Weinidog*, p. 145.

Welsh-language weekly national paper) expressed how the Education Committee was an admirable pioneer in its quest to establish Welsh-language schooling, especially when compared to other education authorities in Wales.¹⁷⁰ The contemporary political opposition faced by pro-Welsh educationalists was considerable, with complaints and disputes raised from multiple facets of Welsh public life, in this case displaying features typical of the ‘*British Wales*’ identity type. Though these are discussed in detail below, the primary opponents to Welsh-medium education expressed concerns on the increased need for resources and the potential consequential impact on the general standard of work in schools.¹⁷¹ Haydn Thomas, the headmaster of the first Welsh-medium secondary school and delegate to the GDR, recollected the claims made of Welsh-medium education being ‘a complete waste of money’, noting the considerable effort it had taken B. Haydn Williams to secure the establishment of the first school.¹⁷² Notwithstanding the political resistance encountered, significant resource challenges were also present including a lack of teachers capable of teaching through the medium of Welsh, a shortage of suitable coursebooks, text books or teaching materials in the Welsh language and negligible infrastructure, with no suitable or available buildings or facilities in which to locate the school.

Faced with such political and resource challenges, it is unsurprising that this nucleus of pro-Welsh educationalists sought to learn from the experiences and practices of similar minority cultures. During this initial period of effort, an area within the GDR was identified as also including a minority culture located within a wider ‘sovereign’ framework; the experiences of the Sorbian people having particular resonance with the situation in Flintshire. According to the archival evidence in the SED reports, the Flintshire delegates had been made aware of the Sorbian situation as a result of earlier visits by Welsh Labour MPs to the GDR.¹⁷³ It is reasonable to assume that this is a reference to a visit made by Welsh MPs and three church ministers to the GDR in 1957, all of whom had visited Lausitz.¹⁷⁴ In the late 1980s, Moses Jones indicated in an interview that his knowledge of the Sorbs had come in the mid-1950s following a *Cymrodorion* society meeting attended in Birmingham.¹⁷⁵ At least three delegations from Flintshire travelled to the GDR. The archival documentation confirms that the first principal delegation to Lausitz, as documented in the *Bundesarchiv*, was led by Huw T. Edwards in the name of the Council for Wales and Monmouthshire.

¹⁷⁰ ‘Un cam arall’, *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 12.01.1961, p. 5. ‘We continue to admire Flintshire County's Education Authority for being so far ahead of most of the local authorities in Wales in its efforts to have Welsh schools’ [My translation].

¹⁷¹ Flintshire Record Office, FC/2/57, Minutes of the Flintshire County Council Education Committee, 1957, pp. 465-466.

¹⁷² Thomas, H. *Ysgol Gymraeg y Rhyl*. Maes y Gad i Les y Wlad (Culturenet Cymru): (Transcript of audio recording from National Library of Wales website: ‘From Warfare to Welfare’), Available at: <http://www.myglyw.org.uk>, (Accessed 29.07.2013). [My translation].

¹⁷³ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/383, [Letter] Kurt Krenz to Peter Florin (ZK der SED), 03.02.1958, Bl. 89.

¹⁷⁴ ‘Taith drwy’r Almaen Gomiwnyddol’, *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 23.05.1957, p. 3.

¹⁷⁵ G. Jenkins’ Private Archive (1989) [Audio] Interview with Moses Jones.

<u>Date of Delegation</u>	<u>Participants</u>
9. – 17.4.1958 ¹⁷⁶	B. Haydn Williams, Moses Jones, Huw T. Edwards, T. Ceiriog Williams, Dyddgu Owen.
13. – 22.4.1960 ¹⁷⁷	B. Haydn Williams, Moses Jones, Haydn Thomas and other teachers in the Welsh language schools of the north-east of Wales during this period (both primary and secondary).
4. - 11.4.1961 ¹⁷⁸	B. Haydn Williams Rhys Jones - Headmaster of Ffynnongroew Primary School Norman Williams - Head of Science at Ysgol Glan Clwyd, Rhyl A. T. Williams - Headmaster of the Christ Church School, Rhyl. ¹⁷⁹

Table 2: Identified Flintshire delegations to the GDR

Clearly, participating in delegations and establishing relations with the GDR would not have been commonplace amongst most Welsh-speaking educationalists; to travel through the Iron Curtain in the late 1950s and early 1960s was no simple undertaking. An analysis of the rationale of these individuals for engaging with the Domowina and GDR is therefore imperative. By using archival material, media sources and interviews, it is possible to identify the individuals who participated on delegations and who welcomed visitors to Wales on a reciprocal basis. The lead delegates have all been described as nationalists or displaying nationalist views by commentators. Below is a biographical summary of each of the principal participants and a short analysis considering their individual motivations, in conformance with Balsom's 'Fro Gymraeg' identity type.

A crucial figure in the history of campaigning for the Welsh language, B. Haydn Williams, as the Director of Education in Flintshire, drove the formulation and implementation of the Education Committee's new policy. A German-speaker,¹⁸⁰ Williams was described as giving a 'dynamic lead to the administration of education in Flintshire',¹⁸¹ being 'an outstanding personality, dynamic and irresistible; a man with a mind of his own, possessing deep convictions, incredible moral courage and

¹⁷⁶ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/383, [Letter (German translation)] M. T. Jones to Frau Lessing, Undated - 1958, Bl. 101.

¹⁷⁷ Date specified in: BArch (SAPMO), DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Auswertung des Aufenthaltes der Delegation von Waliser Schulfunktionären und Lehrern in der DDR', 02.05.1960, Bl. 66.

¹⁷⁸ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/386, [Letter] M. Honecker to Genosse Sorgenicht, 25.04.1961, Bl. 202.

¹⁷⁹ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin/Sorbisches Kulturarchiv Bautzen, [henceforth: Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin] wobstatk/Bestand Domowina, D 117 4, [Letter] B. Haydn Williams to Kurt Krenz, 22.02.1961, Bl. 171.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Haydn Thomas. 03.04.2013.

¹⁸¹ 'Fervent Welshman and controversial Educationist', *The Flintshire Chronicle*, 05.06.1965, p. 5.

steadfast faith'.¹⁸² His deputy Moses Jones described Williams as 'completely fearless in the face of opposition and wholly uncompromising in his convictions'.¹⁸³ Haydn Thomas recollected his erstwhile Director of Education's keenness to establish Welsh-medium secondary schooling, concerned that schoolchildren who were leaving Welsh-language primary schools were being directed towards English-language secondary education.¹⁸⁴ As a consequence, these native Welsh-speakers were losing linguistic proficiency and the status of the language was becoming diluted.¹⁸⁵

Baner ac Amserau Cymru described Williams' endeavours to its Welsh-speaking readership, portraying Williams as a crusader battling for the interests of the Welsh language, despite apathy and challenges from other facets of 'today's Wales':

Only around 10% of Flintshire's children speak Welsh and he was soon convinced that the only way to protect the Welsh of this small minority, who live in the middle of a sea of English, is to ensure that they receive their education through the medium of their mother tongue [...] so that the Welsh children of Flintshire now have the opportunity to receive their entire school education in schools where respect and honour are afforded to their language [...] It is good to hear a man of his position announcing that Welsh children have particular rights which need to be recognised and catered for. Dr. Williams has not faced a trouble-free path in his efforts. He has had to battle against difficulties, prejudices and apathy and in today's Wales, this is only possible through determination and unrelenting perseverance, in order to succeed in putting the Welsh language in its rightful place in the official circles of Wales.¹⁸⁶

In another article dated 26.05.1960 (the year of the second delegation to Lausitz), *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* published Williams' views, justifying why teaching should be conducted through the medium of the Welsh language.

Dr. Williams first mentioned the 'national' debate, where Wales is a nation with a history of special tradition, able to contribute richly to the culture of Western Europe. He also discussed the exceptional efforts to preserve the language of the Sorbian minority in East Germany and the linguistic awakening in Ireland and Scotland. 'The Welsh language is the key to our characteristics as a nation and to our way of life' said Dr. Williams, 'and subsequently, we have a great responsibility to preserve it and teach it in our schools'. The cultural debate was entwined with the national debate, said the speaker. He said that Welsh literature, its institutions and its music to some extent, rely on the Welsh language. No longer was it sufficient to rely on the hearth and the chapel to keep the language. He drew the attention of his audience to the ever-increasing English influence on our society. There would be no future for our language he said, unless it is taught effectively in our schools.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Gwennan Davies, Head of Administration with *Yr Urdd*, quoted in: Lewis, E.C. (1985) *A Study of the position and development of Bilingual Education in Wales since 1927*, Cardiff: University College, p. 153.

¹⁸³ Jenkins, *Prif Weinidog*, p. 90.

¹⁸⁴ Thomas, H. *Ysgol Gymraeg y Rhyl*, p. 1.

¹⁸⁵ Morgan, G. (1988) 'The Place of School in the Maintenance of the Welsh Language', *Comparative Education*, 24 (2), p. 251.

¹⁸⁶ 'Portread - Dr. Haydn Williams', *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 20.06.1957, p. 3. [My translation].

¹⁸⁷ 'Dysgu Cymraeg fel ail-iaith', *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 26.05.1960, p. 3. [My translation].

By specifically identifying the situation of the Sorbs and expressing the considerable efforts made to preserve their language, Williams was making a direct comparison between the Sorbian people and Welsh-speakers, highlighting the Sorbs as a group which Welsh-speakers should aspire to emulate.

As Deputy Director, Moses Jones was regularly identified by the Welsh-language media as a key ally to B. Haydn Williams in the conflict-heavy forum of the Education Committee. A Plaid Cymru supporter and a prominent individual within the field of education in Wales, Jones was elected President of the Welsh National Union of Teachers in 1959.¹⁸⁸ Alongside B. Haydn Williams, Moses Jones was described as a dedicated nationalist, strongly in support of Welsh-medium education.¹⁸⁹ His participation in the 1958 and 1960 delegations appear not to have been his first experiences in the GDR - according to correspondence in the federal archives, Moses Jones had already visited the GDR in the previous year, though the purpose was undisclosed.¹⁹⁰ The evidence suggests that it was probably Moses Jones who saw a correlation between the situation in Flintshire and that of the Sorbs and was therefore the crucial link in arranging delegations and pursuing the relationship. In his autobiography, Huw T. Edwards recollected how Moses Jones had taken an interest in the problem of the Sorbs for some years and had visited Bautzen (in Lusatia), two or three times prior to the 1958 delegation, though there is no further evidence supporting this claim.¹⁹¹

Jones's enthusiasm for the Welsh language and his awareness of the difficulties it faced by the late 1950s was clear. In 1958, he highlighted the deterioration in the status of the Welsh language and suggested what was needed to resurrect it was to re-establish its use and increase its perceived importance in Welsh society.

Mr. M. J. Jones stated that the Welsh language had lost a lot of ground in Flintshire between 1939 and 1945. Evacuees came to Welsh-speaking homes whereupon Welsh stopped being spoken out of courtesy to the newcomer. There was a danger of the Welsh language disappearing from Flintshire within one generation, said Mr. M. Jones, but the Welsh schools came – seven of them – and taught the language to around 800 of the county's children. Now, there is hope that the ground that was lost has been reclaimed and that the history of the Welsh language in Flintshire is developing. 'The language is spoken in the nation's parlours today' said Mr. M. Jones, 'and not in the kitchen, and the challenge now will be to see the working-class embracing and using it'.¹⁹²

One of the most prominent public figures in Wales during this period, Huw T. Edwards, was a recognised Trade Unionist, a prominent Labour Party Member and (repeatedly re-elected) Chairman

¹⁸⁸ 'Cynhadledd UCAC', *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 16.04.1959, p. 4.

¹⁸⁹ Jenkins, *Prif Weinidog*, p. 89.

¹⁹⁰ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/383, [Letter (German translation)] M. T. Jones to Frau Lessing, Undated - 1958, Bl. 101.

¹⁹¹ Edwards, H.T. (1963) *Troi'r Drol*. Dinbych: Gwasg y March Gwyn Cyf., p. 80.

¹⁹² 'Difrod rhyfel ar iaith', *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 10.04.1958, p. 5. [My translation].

of the Council for Wales & Monmouthshire.¹⁹³ Described as a ‘socialist through-and-through’,¹⁹⁴ his formidable reputation and his influence throughout Wales saw him described as the ‘unofficial prime minister of Wales’.¹⁹⁵ Jenkins declared Edwards a ‘socialist of conviction and a fiery cultural nationalist’, two features indicating separate types of Welsh identity – the linguistic element of the *Fro Gymraeg* and also the political socialist features of the *Welsh Wales* type.¹⁹⁶ Such multiple elements of identity created personal tensions for Edwards. An article written by a friend in December 1958 (the year of his visit to the GDR) described how he was too much of a nationalist to be comfortable in the Labour Party and too much of a socialist to be completely happy in Plaid Cymru. ‘Huw T. is now walking some middle ground between the two parties, we do not know when he will leave this wilderness’ is how Jenkins summarised Edwards’ frustrations with the Labour Party’s attitude to Wales.¹⁹⁷ Although some Welsh MPs were favouring measures of devolution, others were fiercely against recognising Welsh nationhood, identifying socialism as an internationalist ideology and nationalism as a form of fascism.¹⁹⁸ Edwards himself later declared: ‘I am a socialist, that is in my blood, but I am ready to leave my socialism behind as I believe as a Welshman that my first responsibility is to my nation, hoping that when she achieves her freedom, she will see the enlightenment.’¹⁹⁹

By 1958, Edwards had been appointed Chairman of the Flintshire Education Committee,²⁰⁰ being effusively described by Councillor Dennis as an individual who would ‘bring great authority to the Chair as a result of his outstanding ability and wide experience and the position which he already occupied in the Principality [...] he has a deep and abiding interest in education and would devote great deal of time and energy to carrying out his duties’.²⁰¹ The influence of Huw T. Edwards within the Flintshire Education Committee should not be underestimated. It is debatable whether B. Haydn Williams and Moses Jones’ endeavours would have borne any fruit had Edwards not been present to argue their collective position. Ceiriog Williams (a fellow-delegate in 1958 to the GDR), recollected in his correspondence with Gwyn Jenkins in June 1990, how crucial Edwards’s involvement in the Education Committee had been during this time.

¹⁹³ Jenkins, G. ‘Edwards, Huw Thomas (1892-1970), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Available at: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/58293> (Accessed: 29.07.2013).

¹⁹⁴ Jenkins, R.T., Jones, E.D., Roberts, B.F. (2001), *Dictionary of Welsh Biography 1941-1970*, Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, p. 55.

¹⁹⁵ Jenkins, G, ‘Edwards, Huw Thomas (1892-1970)’.

¹⁹⁶ Jenkins, *Prif Weinidog*, p. 8. [My translation].

¹⁹⁷ Jenkins, *Prif Weinidog*, p. 172. [My translation].

¹⁹⁸ Jenkins, *Prif Weinidog*, p. 181.

¹⁹⁹ Jenkins, *Prif Weinidog*, p. 200. [My translation].

²⁰⁰ ‘Huw T Edwards yn gadeirydd’, *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 22.05.1958, p. 3.

²⁰¹ Flintshire Record Office, FC/2/59, Minutes of the Flintshire County Council Education Committee, 13.05.1958, p. 2.

You know of the Director of Education's enthusiasm for the Welsh language. He was trying to change things and got away with them because he had H.T. behind him [...] That was the start of the Welsh school and then Maes Garmon. There was plenty of opposition if the grumblers wanted to try it, but they knew, even those most against, of Huw T. They'd see him in the factory. There was one, Summers [typical of] narrow-minded Englishmen²⁰² [...] but they wouldn't dare challenge the Director because Huw T. was there. Summers was the owner of the steelworks. There's an example for you of their attitude towards the Welsh language.²⁰³

Edwards was strongly vocal on the extent of Flintshire's achievements - 'Flintshire', he said, 'held an enviable name in Wales for what it had done to foster the Welsh language'.²⁰⁴ With respect to his motivations for engaging with the Sorbs and visiting the GDR, his long-held, left-leaning political beliefs may also have played a role; later attestations in the Welsh media conveyed a pragmatic view of the need to recognise and engage with fellow world-citizens in the Eastern bloc. In his autobiography, his reason for visiting the GDR in 1958 was explicitly stated: 'for me [...] this opportunity to penetrate the iron curtain was one too good to miss.'²⁰⁵

Dyddgu Owen was one of the few female delegates to the GDR; an individual described as a nationalist of conviction and a key influencer of Huw T. Edwards' political positions.²⁰⁶ The Head Teacher of Ysgol Cyfronnydd, Montgomeryshire and a children's novelist,²⁰⁷ no pre-existing association with the GDR has been identified but her passion for teaching the Welsh-language to children is captured within her private papers. Being entirely convinced of a Welsh-speaker's personal responsibility for saving the language, Owen considered the only way of achieving this was to immerse children in Welsh and believed in the importance of schooling to support this challenge.²⁰⁸

The children will soon start to speak the language that they hear around them and if you live in an area where Welsh is not used, then you need to create that requirement within the school walls, that is by creating an environment where Welsh can thrive. Through the Welsh language, the children will not only learn about the idea of themselves but also of other people and the world.²⁰⁹

Owen clearly saw their efforts as delegates to the GDR as a step of leadership to safeguard the Welsh language. When recollecting her visit to the GDR to see how the Sorbs had secured the teaching of their language amidst the Russian and German, she stated, 'there was I thinking, that the future of the

²⁰² Note: the use of 'Englishmen' here does not necessarily mean 'of England'. Welsh-speakers occasionally mis-use the term to describe those who may be of Wales but are monolingual English-speakers.

²⁰³ G. Jenkins' Private Archive, [Letter] T. Ceiriog Williams to Gwyn Jenkins, June, 1990, p.1. [My translation].

²⁰⁴ Flintshire Record Office, FC/2/58, Minutes of the Flintshire County Council Education Committee, 10.09.1957, p. 280.

²⁰⁵ Edwards, *Troi'r Drol*, p. 80. [My translation].

²⁰⁶ Jenkins, *Prif Weinidog*, p. 147.

²⁰⁷ 'Nofelydd yn ddarlithydd', *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 30.04.1959, p. 5.

²⁰⁸ National Library of Wales [henceforth: NLW], *Dyddgu Owen Papers 1934-1991*. Book 27: 'Nodiadau darlith coleg ar lenyddiaeth Saesneg', p. 29.

²⁰⁹ NLW, *Dyddgu Owen Papers*, p. 28. [My translation].

Welsh language was so secure in the hands of four so strong and brave!²¹⁰ T. Ceiriog Williams (Headmaster of Ysgol Daniel Owen) has also been described as a staunch Welshman and a close companion of B. Haydn Williams and Moses Jones. All were members of Plaid Cymru, the Welsh Nationalist Party.²¹¹ In an SED report summarising a visit to Wales, Ceiriog Williams was considered by the GDR delegates as ‘very progressive’, a perceived communist in his locality because of the strength of his political views and also recognised as being closely associated with the lead representatives of Welsh language and culture such as Edwards et al.²¹²

A key element in each Flintshire delegation party was school teachers facing the practicalities of the new bilingual school system. These were individuals who had limited influence on educational policy, and had no specific interest in the GDR, its politics or the policies behind its support and resourcing of bilingual education, but were requested to participate in delegations by B. Haydn Williams, Huw T. Edwards & Moses Jones. This is not to say that the opportunity to observe an alternative reality of bilingual education practices and experiences would not have been considered worthwhile.

Throughout the history of Welsh-medium education, the early, pioneering Welsh medium teachers have been recognised as dedicated to their cause. Morgan’s work reviewing the first three Welsh-medium secondary schools provides supplementary context to the actions of these teachers: ‘[The schools] had energetic heads well aware of the value of publicity. The teachers tended to be young and given a chance to work for their ideals, they responded enthusiastically’.²¹³

In April 1957, Haydn Thomas was appointed the first headmaster of the newly-established Ysgol Glan Clwyd.²¹⁴ Prior to the formalisation of his appointment, Thomas had acted as temporary teacher-in-charge of the new school concurrent with his previous role in teaching the senior Welsh classes at Rhyl Grammar School – a commitment demonstrative of the efforts made by early Welsh-medium teachers to secure the language.²¹⁵ Thomas publicly voiced the need for Welsh medium education, citing examples of children fully immersed in English to the point that they had now lost awareness of their Welsh identity.²¹⁶ Speaking in 2013, this view remained: ‘The problem was that they were going

²¹⁰ G. Jenkins’ Private Archive, [Letter] Dyddgu Owen to Gwyn Jenkins, 04.05.1989, p. 3. [My translation].

²¹¹ Jenkins, *Prif Weinidog*, p. 147.

²¹² Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D IV/1/1/7. 99, ‘Protokoll-Bericht über die Reise der sorbischen Delegation (Wilhelm und Emmi Koenen, Kurt Krenz, W. Noack und Werner Deckers) unter der Leitung von Herrn Wilhelm Koenen nach England / Wales in der Zeit von 2. bis 19. Mai 1959’, 29.05.1959, Bl. 50. (Note: although members of the Sorbian delegation, Wilhelm and Emmi Koenen were not representative of the Sorbian minority).

²¹³ Morgan, ‘The Place of School’, p. 251.

²¹⁴ ‘Pennaeth Ysgol Gymraeg’, *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 11.04.1957, p. 6. For further information on education in Wales, see: Jones, G.E. & Roderick, G. (2003) *A History of Education in Wales*, Cardiff: UWP. A biography of Ysgol Glan Clwyd’s history has also been published by the school, see: (1996) *Ysgol Glan Clwyd: y deugain mlynedd cyntaf 1956-1996*, St Asaph.

²¹⁵ Flintshire Record Office, FC/2/57, Minutes of the Flintshire County Council Education Committee, pp. 360-361.

²¹⁶ ‘Galw am Addysg Gymraeg’, *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 01.06.1961, p. 8.

to Secondary school, meeting with others and the Welsh foundations were being destroyed. That was the argument and it was true'.²¹⁷ This was a scenario which effectively meant that children who would have naturally belonged to the *Fro Gymraeg* type were instead being educated within parameters most likely to mirror the interests of the *British Wales* identity type. Khleif described Welsh-medium teachers as 'tremendously dedicated people [with] a sense of mission'.²¹⁸ Witnessing how another culture managed to preserve its language and secure bilingual education would have been invaluable at a time when Welsh-medium teachers were facing such challenges and criticisms; they were under considerable pressure and scrutiny to demonstrate that bilingual education could work despite the critics and nay-sayers from other sections of Welsh society.

The political, cultural and resource challenges facing bilingual secondary schooling in Flintshire were issues which held particular resonance with the experiences of the Sorbs. Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the implementation of the Education Committee's new policy was the strong opposition of many Welsh-speaking Flintshire parents. The minutes of the Committee record the following incident where the local Member of Parliament published a public protest against the policy.

The Director submitted a copy of a letter which had appeared in the Press from Mr. Nigel Birch, the member of Parliament for West Flintshire, to the effect that he had been approached by a number of Welsh-speaking parents in great distress because their children had been compulsorily directed either to the Welsh Secondary School at Rhyl or to other Welsh Schools or Welsh streams against their own or their children's wishes. He stated that he was in favour of parents sending their children to Welsh Schools if they wished to do so, but went on to say that what seemed to have happened was that the money had been spent on providing Welsh education, for which there was no genuine demand and that the Authority had sought to justify the expense by the exercise of compulsion on Welsh-speaking parents. This, he said, was illiberal, damaging to the interests of the Welsh-speaking community and wasteful in money, apart from it being doubtful legally.²¹⁹

The strong contrast between the views held by many Welsh-speakers and B. Haydn Williams exposes the fragmentation of opinion even within the Welsh language community. This scenario lends weight to Khleif's interpretation of such a pursuit being the actions of a cultural elite with a resolutely-held 'sense of mission'.²²⁰ In some respects, it also demonstrates the limitations of Balsom's model when an identity type constructed on the basis of speaking the Welsh language (*Y Fro Gymraeg*) exists outside its Balsom-defined geographical area. Such opposing views may have been due to the influence of the *British Wales* identity type on Welsh-speakers outside the nominated heartlands of *Y Fro Gymraeg*. The greatest challenges came unsurprisingly from the more Anglicised parts of Flintshire. Considering this within the context of Balsom's model, Flintshire lay in a territory mostly

²¹⁷ Interview with Haydn Thomas. 03.04.2013. [My translation].

²¹⁸ Khleif, 'Cultural Regeneration', pp. 185-186.

²¹⁹ Flintshire Record Office, FC/2/58, Minutes of the Flintshire County Council Education Committee, 10.09.1957, p. 333.

²²⁰ Referenced in Pill, 'Social Implications of a Bilingual Policy', p. 105.

populated by those of the *British Welsh* identity type, nominally those with a lower probability of speaking the Welsh language and therefore less likely to promote or support it.

Colonel R. M. Fitzhugh of Maelor suggested that the decision of the Education Committee had surprised people. In their opinion, the Committee had not considered their wishes. The parents had completed a questionnaire and the responses, which represented 599 children, showed that 88.8% were against mandating Welsh in schools and that 11.2% were in favour. 'I do not think that there is a shadow of a doubt of the desire of the parents in this case', he said. 'The opinion in Maelor is that sentiment has held the upper hand over common sense and that there is a forcing of people to follow a policy that they wholly opposed'.²²¹

B. Haydn Williams' motivations lay with resurrecting the status of the Welsh language as one worthy of formal, official and social standing. He offered the following robust response in defence of the policy.

Dr. B. Haydn Williams went to the trouble of outlining and clarifying the situation comprehensively and patiently [...] It has already become apparent that the application of this policy through the majority of the Flint and areas similar to Maelor, which are anglicised, has been a great success. Dr. Williams argued that if the Education Committee changed its policy in one area, other areas would then, perhaps, also seek to change, with the result that the Education Committee would end up with no policy at all. Dr. Williams went on to say: 'It appears to me that we must come to the conclusion that much of this sentiment has been caused by the supposition that it is a sign of culture that you can talk some French and German but that it is a sign of social deterioration that you are asked to learn some Welsh.'²²²

Challenges from parents, other members of the Education Committee and the local Member of Parliament were publicised in the Welsh press, with B. Haydn Williams, Huw. T Edwards and Moses Jones' efforts recognised, 'we should etch on a monument the names of these heroes in the battle for our language'.²²³ Against this climate, a delegation to the Lusatia would have learnt of similar Sorbian experiences. Within the Sorbian area, two types of school had been established by the SED authorities – schools where Sorbian was the primary medium of instruction ('A' schools) and schools where Sorbian was taught as a subject ('B' schools').²²⁴ Parents (mostly of German origin, though including several Sorbian parents too) had previously expressed opposition to the 'forced participation' of their children in Sorbian classes. According to Barker, this objection was initially expressed in the mid-1950s, pre-dating the 1958 delegation and was at its strongest in the Lusatian town of Bautzen, where school officials allegedly placed greatest pressure for participation in Sorbian classes.²²⁵ A concept of *Freiwilligkeitsprinzip* (principle of voluntariness) was pursued by Sorbian parents who were concerned that children in 'A-schools' would be disadvantaged compared to those attending other schools. This led to requests by parents for natural sciences to be taught through the medium of

²²¹ 'Buddugoliaeth Pwyllgor Addysg Sir y Fflint', *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 07.03.1957, pp. 1 & 8. [My translation].

²²² 'Buddugoliaeth Pwyllgor Addysg Sir y Fflint', pp. 1 & 8, [My translation].

²²³ 'Clod i ysgol', *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 07.06.1962, p. 4. [My translation].

²²⁴ Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*, p. 164.

²²⁵ Barker, 'From Wendish-Speaking Germans', p. 50.

German, or that ‘B’ streams be introduced in the existing ‘A’ stream schools.²²⁶ The experience of the Sorbs was therefore comparable with the issues raised by opposing parents in Flintshire. A common feature in resisting vernacular provision was a concern for the perceived loss of ability in the language required to ‘get on’ and advance one’s circumstances. Queries and concerns raised in this area by the Flintshire visitors during the delegation in 1958 would have resonated with their Sorbian hosts.

In the late 1940s, the Domowina received funds from the state to establish a printing press with provisions made for the development and printing of learning materials, including textbooks in the Sorbian language. Yet within the Welsh language community, there was insufficient resource and expertise to immediately create Welsh language materials for the new secondary schools, particularly so in the case of Ysgol Glan Clwyd, which had been established very swiftly whilst momentum for the implementation of the education policy was strong. Although schoolteachers sought to create suitable materials independently, the low volume requirement was insufficient to tempt printing presses to publish, as any such activity was not economically viable. Haydn Thomas highlighted some of the challenges experienced.

We were very, very impoverished in terms of Welsh-language materials [...] The consequence of this of course, was that any free time I had was spent translating.²²⁷

The first few years were spent translating English-language texts into Welsh – there were no History or Grammar books. [...] The big issue was lack of textbooks, the other was that nobody had a suitable background to teach through the medium of Welsh.²²⁸

Lewis uncovered how even by 1984, Welsh bilingual education continued to be severely affected by a lack of resources, which ‘had limited the extent of its provision and the course of its development’, citing a ‘dearth’ of suitable Welsh-medium text books and revealing a lack of published material for teaching. This in turn was causing a situation whereby Welsh-medium classes saw students using English-medium texts to ‘amplify and reinforce’ their learning, including having to undertake translation exercises from English to Welsh.²²⁹

During the period of the delegations, the lack of materials and teaching resources became a nationally-recognised issue with public calls amongst elements of the Welsh language community for a greater quantity of textbooks.²³⁰ *Undeb Cymru Fydd* (the Future Wales Union: a patriotic society, whose membership comprised individuals seeking to promote the protection of Welsh culture and language) highlighted the need to address the lack of Welsh language textbooks for secondary schools. It provocatively described the situation thus: ‘In terms of its provision, Welsh schools are very similar to Marilyn Monroe’s costume – naked in the middle. Without the requisite tools for the

²²⁶ Lindseth and Soldan, ‘The Sorbian population’, p. 155.

²²⁷ Thomas, *Ysgol Gymraeg y Rhyl*, p. 2. [My translation].

²²⁸ Interview with Haydn Thomas. 03.04.2013. [My translation].

²²⁹ Lewis, *A Study of the position*, p. 129. (His comments relate to a survey undertaken in 1984).

²³⁰ ‘Cynnydd cyson yr ysgolion Cymraeg’, *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 24.03.1960, p. 2.

job, there is no point in expecting our teachers to contribute to Welsh-medium education'.²³¹ A delegation to Bautzen provided ample opportunity to understand and view in practice the methods and resources allocated to the Sorbian printing press and book production. Haydn Thomas recollected how the delegates were invited to see and take home a significant quantity of textbooks. The SED's own briefing reports state how a visit to the Domowina printing press generated a lengthy discussion as well as a question and answer session relating to the challenges posed by the production of Sorbian language schoolbooks.²³² B. Haydn Williams is cited as having taken a great interest in the variety of Sorbian textbooks available including translations of German textbooks for Sorbian schools.²³³ The SED representatives made the following statement in the briefing report: 'Mr. Williams and Mr. Thomas even asked for some translations of scientific books to use in front of their senior authorities as evidence, so that Welsh children could also benefit from similar support'.²³⁴ The use of the word 'evidence' rather than 'examples' here is intriguing, as it implies a need on the part of the Welsh visitors to convince their domestic authorities of the viability of bilingual education and minority language publishing. The lack of resources in Welsh language schools was also specifically noted by visiting SED and Sorb delegates during a later visit to Wales. Their report highlighted the severe financial restrictions experienced by Haydn Thomas in his school, 'fighting hard for every shilling'. A suggestion was made for printing a book about the Sorbs in the Welsh language. An English language manuscript would be sent to Wales for translation and then returned to the GDR. The GDR delegates reasoned that this would enable more to be learnt of the Sorbs (and therefore the GDR) in Wales and Welsh-speakers would benefit from additional teaching materials. Although the report noted a 'joyful' reception to the idea from the Welsh hosts,²³⁵ no further evidence has been found of its implementation.

Whereas the Sorbs benefited from the establishment of a Sorbian teacher training college, Welsh teachers had achieved their own training qualifications and existing teaching experience through the medium of English. The SED government had in comparison constitutionally guaranteed financial support for bilingual teacher training and also made provision for its infrastructure. In Flintshire, Ysgol Glan Clwyd started in temporary accommodation, without significant facilities or materials. Even by 1963, seven years after its foundation, Haydn Thomas mentioned in his annual report the dire need for a gymnasium, hall, laboratory and a workshop for the school.²³⁶ In the absence of a sufficient quantity of suitable teachers, bilingual schools were considering recruiting young female school-

²³¹ 'Addysg Uwchradd Gymraeg', *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 01.08.1957, p. 6. [My translation].

²³² SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Auswertung des Aufenthaltes der Delegation von Waliser Schulfunktionären und Lehrern in der DDR', 02.05.1960, Bl. 69.

²³³ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Auswertung des Aufenthaltes ...', Bl. 73.

²³⁴ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Auswertung des Aufenthaltes ...', Bl. 75. [My translation].

²³⁵ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D IV/1/1/7. 99, 'Protokoll-Bericht über die Reise der sorbischen Delegation...', Bl. 53.

²³⁶ 'Ysgol Uwchradd Gymraeg', *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 16.05.1963, p. 1.

leavers who had just left Ysgol Glan Clwyd to work as temporary assistants for younger children.²³⁷ Providing teaching in both the minority language and the dominant social language posed additional challenges, particularly when resources and material were so short in supply. In Bautzen, B. Haydn Williams requested and was given a teaching plan and a syllabus from his hosts, in order to study these at home.²³⁸ Delegates to the GDR would have observed a stark contrast between the financial position of Sorbian education and the challenges for adequate funding experienced in Flintshire.

Unlike the predominance of examples in wider British-GDR relations material where it is commonly the SED and its various organs that proactively pursue any viable (or often less viable) contacts in the West, the visit of the Flintshire educationalists to the GDR is particularly significant. It highlights a western-based contact directly requesting access to a facet of GDR society, with a willingness to maintain such a relationship over a period of several years. This raises the question of whether the SED considered such a new, unexpected forum for exchange - absent from any previous strategic planning - as not only enabling the use of the Sorbian situation as an opportunity for co-learning but also to simultaneously gain access to prominent political and cultural figures in the UK.

The initial request to visit the Sorbs was made in a very formal capacity, citing the proposed delegation as representatives of the Council for Wales & Monmouthshire. The Council was an institution established by the UK government in 1949 to communicate the interests of the people of Wales directly to Westminster.²³⁹ A benign institution, it only ever held an advisory remit and represented a compromise made in response to increasing calls for devolution by Welsh nationalists. It was dissolved when the role of Secretary of State for Wales was created in 1964. It had 27 appointed members representing multiple facets of Welsh life and established various panels and committees to investigate issues affecting Wales, including a Welsh Language Panel to study and report on the language. In reality, the only connection between the Council and Flintshire's Education Committee was that Huw T. Edwards was chairperson of both. The absence of material in the Council for Wales & Monmouthshire archive relating to the 1958 visit indicates that this delegation had no connection with the formal function of the Council and signifies that the Flintshire educationalists sought to strengthen the gravitas of their request by using the formalities of a public body.²⁴⁰ The Council for Wales & Monmouthshire was described in correspondence to the SED as a governmental organisation which 'acts in an advisory capacity to the central government' (i.e. Westminster).²⁴¹ It was similarly explained by Moses Jones in a letter to the GDR's Society for Foreign Cultural Relations in March 1958, as 'the channel in which Welsh opinion is conveyed to the Government in

²³⁷ 'Cynydd cyson yr ysgolion Cymraeg', *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 24.03.1960, p. 2.

²³⁸ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Auswertung des Aufenthaltes ...', Bl.74.

²³⁹ Jenkins, *Prif Weinidog*, p. 138.

²⁴⁰ There is no reference to interactions with the GDR within the archival material of the Council for Wales & Monmouthshire held in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

²⁴¹ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/383, [Letter] Sorgenicht to Grüneberg, 09.04.1958, Bl. 96.

London'.²⁴² This description of the Council as a government entity with direct links (in an advisory capacity) to Westminster would undoubtedly have generated interest within the SED, noting the other mostly futile attempts to influence other British political entities and personalities during this period. Here was one such organisation actively seeking contact. In reality, the Council was not particularly unique in its function; Jenkins calculated that around 700 governmental advisory bodies existed in Britain at this time.²⁴³ Yet the GDR authorities would not necessarily have been aware of this, especially considering the way in which the initial request was presented.

A provocative thought is considering whether Huw T. Edwards (the unofficial 'Prime Minister of Wales')²⁴⁴ had motivations beyond learning of the experiences of similar minority cultures and whether the undertaking of a sponsored international 'state' tour to the GDR and interacting with a foreign government helped to legitimise his role and the purpose of the Council, at a time when it faced doubt and criticism. His 'pressurised' resignation from the Council was to follow shortly after his return from the GDR, when he stated that: 'I have been driven to the view that Whitehallism has not the slightest prospect of ever understanding Welsh aspirations'.²⁴⁵ On reflection, it is more likely that the Flintshire party sought to use the name and official purpose of the Council to attract the attention and co-operation of the authorities in the GDR.

Delegations to the GDR were regarded by the SED as an opportunity for Welsh teachers to 'learn about the characteristics of the socialist school system with particular reference to areas with national minorities',²⁴⁶ demonstrating that the 'solution to the national question as well as all other spheres of social life was only possible under conditions where the workers and peasants had power'.²⁴⁷ Itineraries were subject to scrutiny and approval by the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry for Culture and the Central Committee, and were to include visits to Sorbian and SED institutions as well as discussions relating to a pre-determined set of propaganda objectives. Consistent with instructions typically made in arrangements for other delegations to the GDR, it was considered vital that:

[the] Welsh teachers should receive a true image of the democratic and peaceful nature of our real, existing and developing State, so that they are equipped to give a realistic impression of the true GDR to English [*sic*] public life.²⁴⁸

²⁴² SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/383, [Letter (German translation)] M. T. Jones to Frau Lessing, Undated - 1958, Bl. 101. [My translation].

²⁴³ Jenkins, *Prif Weinidog*, p. 121.

²⁴⁴ Jenkins, G, 'Edwards, Huw Thomas (1892-1970)'.

²⁴⁵ NLW, Council for Wales and Monmouthshire Records: 1949-1959, Minutes of the meetings of the Council.

²⁴⁶ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Studienplan für die Zeit des Aufenthaltes der Lehrer-Delegation aus Wales/England', 05.04.1960, Bl. 23. [My translation].

²⁴⁷ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D 117 4, 'Vorlage zur Dienstbesprechung am 05.04.1960: Studienaufenthalt einer Delegation aus Wales/England, Bl. 248. [My translation].

²⁴⁸ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Studienplan für die Zeit des Aufenthaltes der Lehrer-Delegation aus Wales/England', 05.04.1960, Bl. 23. [My translation].

Echoing the delegations referenced in the existing literature, each itinerary was comprehensive, fully structured and with minimal free time afforded to the delegates.²⁴⁹ All available itineraries within the *Bundesarchiv* contain broadly similar features including references to numerous visits to educational establishments such as schools and teacher training colleges, coupled with highlights of life in the GDR - its culture, industry, politics and what it referred to as its 'actual-existing socialism'. Positive aspects of GDR society were demonstrated, representative of the activities included as standard content in foreign delegation itineraries. The *Spreewald* was visited, the GDR's artistic merits were enjoyed via the Art Gallery in Dresden and a performance of *Madame Butterfly* at the Dresden State Opera; additionally, the GDR's economic achievements were highlighted through visits to the *Maschinen-Traktoren-Station*²⁵⁰ in Panschwitz and the *Schwarze Pumpe* (Black Pump Power Station). To ensure that the delegation's objective of experiencing the Sorbian education system was met, several specific features were included in the itineraries. A visit to the Teacher Training Institute (*Institut für Lehrerbildung*) was arranged where lectures were held on the GDR education system, as well as overviews illustrating Sorbian teaching methodologies and approaches to bilingual education. Numerous visits to various Sorbian schools were undertaken, where the delegates were afforded opportunities to participate in discussions with school teachers and leaders. Additionally, delegates visited the Sorbian Press and the Sorbian radio station where state-funded Sorbian language media provisions could be demonstrated.²⁵¹

Feedback reports were provided by SED representatives to the Central Committee following each delegation, which outlined the activities completed, the opinions shared by the visitors and the proactive strategies and measures undertaken by the authorities to secure further interactions.

Additionally, the presence of visitors from a capitalist country was used for domestic benefit. Huw T. Edwards recollected how he, Haydn Williams and Moses Jones participated in television and radio programmes and were generously financially rewarded by their hosts for their troubles.²⁵² Financial recompense for commentary by Western visitors is an unusual feature which has not previously been highlighted within the existing literature. The SED were clearly aware of the propaganda value of appropriate Western commentary on GDR territory and were prepared to compensate accordingly.

The SED hosts (and by proxy the Domowina) were keen for the Welsh visitors to witness only the most positive aspects of the GDR. SED reports go into some depth conveying (accurately or not) the impressions voiced by the delegates whilst in the GDR. As noted previously, this material needs to be viewed critically considering its second-hand nature, as well as questioning the motives behind how

²⁴⁹ One example is contained in SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Auswertung des Aufenthaltes ...', Bl. 67-68. See also: Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D 117 4, 'Vorlage zur Dienstbesprechung am 05.04.1960...', Bl. 247 - 250.

²⁵⁰ These were facilities where groups could borrow/hire communal machines for agricultural activities.

²⁵¹ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Auswertung des Aufenthaltes ...', Bl. 67-68.

²⁵² Edwards, *Troi'r Drol*, p. 83.

perceptions were interpreted and articulated. A notable highlight from one such report recorded how impressed the Flintshire delegates appeared by the extraordinary amount of state support for Sorbian schooling, frequently repeating sentiments such as 'if our mightier neighbour would apply only a small part of that understanding and support as your state does for the minority people of the Sorbs, we would lose many of our worries'.²⁵³ The content of the feedback reports also illustrate how delegates were keen to discuss topics beyond the core objective of bilingual education practices. One recorded example was the recurrent questioning by delegates of the employment situation in the GDR. The response of the hosts was to state how there was no unemployment in the GDR, with the delegates apparently willing to accept how this could only be possible in a socialist society and admiring 'above all things' the social benefits available for the workers and employees.²⁵⁴ Broader discussion on aspects of GDR society - supplementary to the provisions made by the GDR for the Sorbs – indicates the wider political interests of the delegates, presumably of Huw T. Edwards in particular.

An SED feedback report for the delegation of 1960 highlighted three events where it was considered that the image of the GDR portrayed to the visiting Welsh delegates may have been negatively compromised. The first, (reasonably benign) example was a criticism of the tour guide who led the delegates on a tour of Bautzen. This elderly tour guide was apparently not of a sufficiently high standard, his explanations often needed correcting and his jokes and (alleged) witticisms fell short in translation.²⁵⁵ Two further examples however indicate much more sinister consequences for those found to be compromising the image of the GDR.²⁵⁶ One notable event was an incident where a teacher of English from Dresden approached and joined the delegation at their breakfast table and offered to host a tour and accompany the group during their visit. The recorded SED response to this approach was to inform their visitors that this woman was unknown to them and was from their perspective quite intrusive, which was also allegedly the delegates' opinion. The approach by the unidentified woman was considered sufficiently serious to refer the incident to the Ministry for State Security.²⁵⁷ A further example of the caution exercised by the SED during the delegation in 1960 was an alleged confrontation between Mr. Griffiths, a member of the Flintshire delegation, and a drunken citizen. Whilst at the White Rose hostelry, Griffiths was reportedly approached by a drunken American GDR citizen (the presence of whom is itself notable) and who in his drunken state proceeded to address and cajole the delegate. The report outlines how this situation was resolved when a Comrade Schonefeld managed to take Mr. Griffiths away on the account of the drunkenness of the man. Again, the severity of this incident led to the Ministry for State Security being

²⁵³ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Auswertung des Aufenthaltes ...', Bl. 75. [My translation].

²⁵⁴ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Auswertung des Aufenthaltes ...', Bl. 76.

²⁵⁵ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Auswertung des Aufenthaltes ...', Bl. 70.

²⁵⁶ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Auswertung des Aufenthaltes ...', Bl. 72.

²⁵⁷ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Auswertung des Aufenthaltes ...', Bl. 72.

informed.²⁵⁸ References to those displaying undesirable behaviours being referred to the *Staatssicherheit* (Stasi) indicate how serious the authorities sought to manage the image of the GDR being conveyed to the visiting Welsh delegates.²⁵⁹ Unfortunately, no records of these incidents were found in the *Staatssicherheit* archive to determine the consequence of these referrals.

Having established that the Flintshire delegates were overtly concerned with the future and status of the Welsh language and predominantly subscribed to nationalist viewpoints, this next section considers how this identity influenced their perceptions of the GDR and its treatment of its own minority. When considering the likely perceptions of the GDR, the SED and the Domowina as held by the individuals identified in this chapter, there are two sources of material available for analysis. Firstly, the (written and verbal) attestations recorded by or attributed to the individuals themselves, and secondly, the SED reporting material containing feedback received from delegates during the delegations.

Moses Jones' identification and promotion of the Sorbs as a 'case study' for pursuit indicates his enthusiastic support for engagement, particularly considering his willingness to co-host a return delegation to Wales in 1959 and beyond. In a later letter to Kurt Krenz (Chairman of the Domowina) expressing gratitude for sympathies received following B. Haydn Williams' death in 1965, Jones warmly referenced their earlier visits to Bautzen and expressed hope that the relationship would continue.

We have derived great inspiration and encouragement from the official support which your Government is giving to bring alive the Sorbish language in your country [...] We hope that it will be possible for you and your colleagues to visit us in Wales again in the near future and it would be a pleasure for us also to revisit your country and see the progress that has been made since we were there last.²⁶⁰

B. Haydn Williams hosted a delegation of Sorbs and SED members to Wales in 1959, led a second delegation of Welsh-speakers to Lausitz in 1960 and made a third visit to the GDR in 1961. Following his visit in 1960, Williams corresponded with the Domowina: 'after a very enjoyable stay with you we have arrived home safely and soundly. We learnt much and hope that you learnt much from us too'.²⁶¹ 'We all feel', he confirmed in a further letter, 'that there has been established between us a great measure of understanding and sympathy and a deep feeling of personal friendship'.²⁶² B. Haydn Williams recognised the opportunity created for Welsh language educationalists in co-operating and nurturing a relationship with the Sorbs and the GDR authorities and crucially, believed Welsh-

²⁵⁸ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Auswertung des Aufenthaltes ...', Bl.72.

²⁵⁹ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Auswertung des Aufenthaltes ...', Bl.72.

²⁶⁰ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D 117 4, [Letter] M. J. Jones to Kurt Krenz, 29.06.1965, Bl. 13.

²⁶¹ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, [Letter (German translation)] B. Haydn Williams to Rudolf Schönfeld, 29.04.1960, Bl. 82-83.

²⁶² Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D117 4, [Letter] B. Haydn Williams to Kurt Krenz, 29.04.1960, Bl. 234.

medium education also offered reciprocal learning prospects for the Sorbs. ‘I quite agree that we still have a great deal to learn from one another and that comparisons of the educational systems in this county with your educational structure, particularly in relation to the language problem, can only lead to advantageous results on both sides’.²⁶³ References to the relationship in several Welsh newspaper articles indicate that Williams was willing to be overtly identified as the reason behind the presence of GDR citizens in Wales when hosting delegations.²⁶⁴ By citing the positive example of the Sorbs in a post-delegation speech promoting Welsh-secondary education, Williams was publicly expressing an opinion that the Sorbian/GDR education model was one of merit and one which could be followed in Wales.²⁶⁵

Haydn Thomas, interviewed in April 2013, provided oral evidence fifty-three years after the return of the 1960 delegation. Material generated so long after the interaction allows us to consider those experiences and impressions which have retained their potency and which therefore had greatest impact. The discussion unveiled several recollections, one of which was how the Sorbs had grossly suffered under the fascism of National Socialism and had experienced freedom in the GDR state.

Because of the situation similar to ours, because they battled and battled fruitlessly, because from what we heard, eliminating the Sorbs was part of Hitler’s policy and there was no place for dissension in the ranks [...] but then the Russians came, and naturally had an influence on East Germany and it was decided that the language needed to be recovered, to try and support it rather than suppress it and to that extent they were intending to do this and that and develop the concept that they were a people apart and yet also German. [...] They wanted to emphasise the fact that they had previously been oppressed but that they now had perfect freedom to do everything in their own language, which included the teacher training college.²⁶⁶

What this passage demonstrates is that key statements made regarding the oppression (note the use of the word ‘elimination’) of the Sorbs and the proactive actions of the GDR authorities were understood and remembered by visiting delegates. The observation of a ‘situation similar to ours’, conveys a perceived kinship between the Sorbs and the minority of Welsh-speakers. An emphasis on the lack of interest which the FRG would have displayed had the Sorbs been located in its territory was also recollected. ‘What remains a memory is that saving the language and also their way of life was important. West Germany had no interest, they would have had to concede to the reality that they would not get education or support and so on’.²⁶⁷ It is clear that a comparison was presented to the Welsh delegates of how the Sorbs would have fared under an alternative German government. As well as the core messages frequently conveyed by the GDR in its foreign relations such as protesting against FRG militarism and the retention of former National Socialists in key FRG positions, this

²⁶³ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D 117 4, [Letter] B. Haydn Williams to Herr B. Noack, 02.06.1961, Bl. 120.

²⁶⁴ These references are discussed further in the following chapter.

²⁶⁵ ‘Dysgu Cymraeg fel ail-iaith’, *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 26.05.1960, p. 3.

²⁶⁶ Interview with Haydn Thomas, 03.04.2013. [My translation].

²⁶⁷ Interview with Haydn Thomas, 03.04.2013. [My translation].

interaction with the Flintshire educationalists evidently contributed a further element to differentiate the GDR and the FRG: the supposition that no support for Sorbian language or culture would have been forthcoming from a capitalist state. The extent of the hospitality offered and the sense of kinship with the Sorbian people was also a specific recollection. ‘They were more than ready to be friendly and the hospitality was a display of effort. No doubt about that. There was an idea that there was something similar between Wales and their country, there was a feeling of warmth there’.²⁶⁸

Assuming that the latter statement refers to sentiments expressed by Sorbs rather than SED functionaries, the notion of a shared experience or a comparable situation between Welsh-speakers and the Sorbs was considered a key feature of the relationship. This is further reinforced by Haydn Thomas’s perception that invitations for the later delegations were made directly by the Sorbs rather than originating from the GDR authorities, despite the archival material clearly demonstrating that the relationship was governed by the SED in pursuit of its strategies and interests.²⁶⁹

Letters to the Domowina leadership from other delegates conveyed gratitude for the welcome received, admiration for what the Sorbs had achieved and a clear intention of furthering relations.

Dyddgu Owen wrote in 1958:

[Huw. T. Edwards] is very, very busy, but neither he nor I will ever forget the kindness we received at Bautzen. It was just like a delightful fairy tale - too good to be true - and it WAS true. We are looking forward to welcoming you to Wales and hope that you will come soon. 'Hanka' the beautiful doll is in the Tourist Board window in the main street of Cardiff, telling the whole world of the bond of friendship that exists between the Sorbs and the Welsh.²⁷⁰

T. Ceiriog Williams’ correspondence drew comparisons between the situation of the Sorbs and the fate of the Welsh:

Greetings from the land of song to you and all your Sorb people who in many ways are like my people. [...] I was discussing the Domowina with Herr Edwards last night and we decided that that is what we want for Wales. It would be a great step forward to have such a body to advise the government on our needs. Herr Edwards is Chairman of the Council for Wales but it is a nominated body and such has no power. A representative body would be far more effective. [...] we are asked about East Germany and can assure you that we think very highly of everything that you are attempting to do and are doing.²⁷¹

Of significance is how both correspondences were directed towards the Domowina, not the GDR authorities (such as the Ministry of Culture for example, which organised the 1958 delegation). The sentiments referring to the bond between the peoples were based on a perception of the Sorbs as a minority themselves, rather than as GDR citizens. Ceiriog Williams’ dismissal of the effectiveness of the Council for Wales & Monmouthshire for the people of Wales and their interests, mirrors the

²⁶⁸ Interview with Haydn Thomas, 03.04.2013. [My translation].

²⁶⁹ Interview with Haydn Thomas, 03.04.2013.

²⁷⁰ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D 117 4, [Letter] Dyddgu Owen to Kurt Krenz, Undated (c. April 1958), Bl. 237-238.

²⁷¹ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D 117 4, [Letter] T. Ceiriog Williams to Kurt Krenz, 28.04.1958, Bl. 235-236.

description contributed by Jenkins: ‘it is possible to see a patronising attitude in the records of the government of this period towards Wales and the Council - which bordered on being offensive. It could almost be described as being the attitude of the British Empire towards a small unruly colony on the other side of the world’.²⁷² The perception of the autonomy afforded to the Sorbs was therefore of notable contrast, viewed as an accomplishment of an as-yet-unachieved aspiration held by many Welsh-speaking nationalists.

Considerable material is available on Huw T. Edwards’s impressions of the GDR and the personalities he encountered during the 1958 delegation. This is an indicator of his political and national prominence, which resulted in a published autobiography in 1963 and numerous articles in *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*. Although critical of several aspects of the GDR, Edwards also publicly cited many positive observations. In one newspaper article in particular, Edwards argued the case for recognition of the GDR as elegantly as the SED could ever have hoped seen presented in the Western media.²⁷³ Of all returning delegates, Huw T Edwards’s perceptions would have been the most influential and widely promulgated in Welsh society, both in Welsh-speaking circles and in the fora of the *Welsh Wales* identity type, as a result of his political affiliations. Jenkins declared that Edwards’ name was frequently on the front pages of the Welsh newspapers with every one of his comments analysed, applauded or judged.²⁷⁴ Observing whether his then-recent autobiographical statements mirror Haydn Thomas’s later recollections in 2013 is an informative exercise. That both men travelled on two separate delegations to the GDR too, enables a comparison to be made on the consistency of their experiences and impressions. Edwards offered a much broader perspective on life in the GDR, which was perhaps representative of his wider, non-Welsh-language specific political interests, particularly as a socialist. There was however a remarkable consistency between Huw T. Edwards and Haydn Thomas’ description of the status of the Sorbs.

The Sorbs were dispersed to the four winds by Hitlerism, the national home was destroyed, the language, the school, the books, the libraries. Then Communism came to recover the national home, to re-establish schools and libraries. Honour was bestowed on their language, books of every kind were published and they were given a Senedd [parliament] to discuss and debate the problems and infrastructure of this new home. Is it any wonder that they turned Communist?²⁷⁵

Again, core political messages (the oppression of the Sorbs, the acts of support and recovery through Communism) were made, with positive language used to reinforce this change in status, such as ‘recover’, ‘re-establish’, ‘they were given’, ‘honour’. The quotation below is of particular interest as it references one of the greatest pieces of Welsh literature in this period (1957), *Wythnos yng Nghymru*

²⁷² Jenkins, *Prif Weinidog*, p. 148.

²⁷³ ‘Argyfwng Berlin’, *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 24.08.1961, p. 8.

²⁷⁴ Jenkins, *Prif Weinidog*, p. 8.

²⁷⁵ Edwards, *Troi'r Drol*, p. 80. [My translation].

Fydd (A Week in Future Wales) by Islwyn Ffowc Elis, a novel describing an utopian, independent, self-ruling Wales, against which Edwards directly compared an experience in Bautzen.

All the residents came – both young and old – and the thrill and inspiration of the new life was visibly bubbling. I couldn't help but compare it to the 'Dresl Derw' – that blissful restaurant in 'Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd'. They were exactly the same – a world without back-handers. Not one man offered or took back-handers from the State. Just like in the ideal [version of] Wales.²⁷⁶

Although it is likely that the sentiments in the paragraph above were expressed genuinely, it is worth momentarily considering whether Edwards was making a political observation with his literary reference. *Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd* was a significant contribution to formal Welsh literature yet publicly recognised as a piece of nationalist propaganda. Was Edwards subtly illustrating the scene above as being in itself a display of GDR propaganda i.e. observing a vision which the SED wished to convey? In truth, Huw T. Edwards' recorded impressions of the Sorbs and the GDR are predominantly positive and perhaps merit the benefit of the doubt, especially considering Edwards' later (albeit temporary) defection from the Labour Party to the nationalist party of Plaid Cymru. Edwards also drew attention to the affinity experienced between representatives of the two minority cultures.

By now, I was starting to feel very much at home with the natives – from the President down. Was this perhaps due to the fact that we also live in a small country on the border of a larger country? However, the interaction was a happy one, and once we had spent some time seeing the new books in the national shop, we were taken to see the choir singing. After a short while, we had managed to persuade them to come to Llangollen and create a new relationship with the old country.²⁷⁷

As is the case in many eastern countries, the feast lasted for hours, with the food punctuated by singing and speeches, and everybody by now seeing there was a particular harmony between us.²⁷⁸

There were clear motivations on the part of the delegates to continue and prolong the relationship, evident in the invitation made to the Sorbian choir to sing at the International Eisteddfod in Llangollen. The references to choirs and singing are of course very representative and evocative of indigenous Welsh culture; the use of the word 'harmony' was perhaps intentionally used here. In referencing the harmonious nature of the relationship, Edwards attempted to draw attention to the commonality of their circumstances, both being small countries on the border of a larger entity. His definition of the 'small country' reflected his vision of Wales; specific to him as a Welsh-speaker and socialist, not as an integral part of Britain. Despite the noted affinity with the Sorbs and his recognition of the efforts made by the GDR authorities to support their development and protect their cultural status, Edwards was prepared in his autobiography to be publicly critical of some aspects of

²⁷⁶ Edwards, *Troi'r Drol*, p. 81. [My translation].

²⁷⁷ Edwards, *Troi'r Drol*, p. 81. [My translation].

²⁷⁸ Edwards, *Troi'r Drol*, p. 82. [My translation].

the GDR. ‘The following morning, visiting Parliament in Berlin and sitting through the procedures. Listening to a long speech and seeing each hand raised in one disturbing, unanimous action. A poor approach to nurture a living republic’.²⁷⁹ Yet although critical of the political reality of ‘actual existing socialism’ experienced in the GDR, Edwards returned convinced by its arguments that peaceful co-existence was possible, if all necessary parties engaged. ‘Flying back the following morning surprised at man’s ability to create tumult between peoples. Surely it should not be difficult to live alongside these people. Nor the Americans either. But look at us today, we are as far away from this as ever.’²⁸⁰ On the specific question of the division of Germany and in the aftermath of the construction of the Berlin Wall, Edwards declared his views in *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*.

Some time ago I was in Eastern Europe with my friends D.O., H.W., C.W. [and] M.J.J. Our interest was seeing how the Communists deal with the Sorbs, a small nation which was destroyed to the four winds by Hitler. Though there are some weaknesses, we were witnesses to the fact that they have a parliament, libraries and a language and that language is taught to every child within their territory and not secondary to German as Welsh is to English in Wales. But to return to the current problem. [...] Were there sensible politicians in the West, the first thing they should do is recognise that there is a government in East Germany. Once that would happen, it could be possible with goodwill from every direction, to come to a continuous agreement to remove this bone of contention which is going to be raised from one month to another, ending in destruction to the human race. The inflammatory speeches from both sides are sure to lead to that eventuality.²⁸¹

In this submission to *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, Edwards was publicly critical of US conduct in discussions relating to the fate of Germany and substantiated his declared view with his own actual real life experience. Again, the crucial role of the GDR in supporting the fate of the Sorbs was highlighted, serving as a prompt for any Welsh-speaking reader to question how such a state could be completely disregarded and ignored when it encouraged its minority in a way so wholly absent for the Welsh-speaking community. In this article, Edwards – perhaps viewing this scenario from a socialist, internationalist perspective - openly called for Western recognition of the GDR, seeing this as a necessary stepping stone to achieve peace’.

His colleagues, Moses Jones and B. Haydn Williams, were explicitly quoted in the 1960 SED material as being impressed by the noticeable development of the GDR compared to their previous visit to the country in 1958.

In our people, there existed a new self-confidence. Mr. Williams presented on 19.04.1960 a letter relating to an English TV preacher, known to him, who in a television programme had spoken about the unfortunate fate of East Germans saying that they live without joy, who are without decent clothes and who must hungrily battle in life. In this letter, he took a stance

²⁷⁹ Edwards, *Troi'r Drol*, p. 84. [My translation].

²⁸⁰ Edwards, *Troi'r Drol*, p. 85. [My translation].

²⁸¹ ‘Argyfwng Berlin’, *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 24.08.1961, p. 8. [My translation].

against these lies and defamations, and stressed that he had been convinced what a joyful, rich, and well-dressed population he had seen here with his own eyes.²⁸²

Regardless of the accuracy of this anecdote, such glowing commentary would have served to positively reinforce the notion promulgated by the SED that the GDR was developing rapidly. The effusive statement attributed to Williams above is indicative of the likely spin placed on the comments of the visiting delegates by the SED functionaries, a recognised SED method in the existing literature. Nevertheless, despite the positive impressions stated in the material, (appraised critically considering its intended audience), some critical viewpoints were also captured.

Critiques on the following points were made by our guest [Haydn Williams] with a challenging undertone [...] They considered our State an authoritarian State, which they placed as being completely opposite to the Western democracies such as Great Britain. They differentiated between 'democratic' states on the one hand and 'authoritarian states' on the other, in which they included communist and fascist states. When questioned about the criteria differentiating their categorisation, the following reasons were provided: that a 'free' economy was not permitted, the electoral system was not democratic, the one-party system was a sign of a totalitarian state, [as well as the lack of] ability to criticise the state and the government.²⁸³

This statement indicates how the visiting delegates from Flintshire were sufficiently at ease in the GDR to express challenging opinions to their hosts. Despite all encouraging comments made regarding state support for minority education and the positive aspects of socialism experienced, the political ideology underpinning the GDR was viewed as totalitarian. The report proceeded to confirm that the Flintshire delegates stated how they had seen much that they considered positive in the GDR, yet had not become Communists - a position which mirrored the typical views of returning Labour Party delegates. This suggests that despite their admiration for the efforts of the SED regarding the Sorbian situation, Welsh-speakers interacting with the GDR were not necessarily more susceptible to communist ideology than other Welsh identity types expressing an interest in the GDR. As farewells were made at the end of the 1958 delegation, an invitation was extended by B. Haydn Williams for any future visiting delegates to Wales to freely consider arranging communist meetings should they so wish, indicating a willingness to continue the relationship and providing an open invitation for the promulgation of SED views in a capitalist country.²⁸⁴

Conclusion

Whereas the creation of any relationship can be attributable to a particular set of circumstances or events, a test of its potency is its longevity and the efforts made to sustain it. When the strength of the relationship began to falter in 1960, clear attempts were made by SED representatives to revive it. Further invitations were extended for Welsh teachers to visit Lusatia at the SED's expense, making

²⁸² SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Auswertung des Aufenthaltes ...', Bl. 77. [My translation].

²⁸³ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Auswertung des Aufenthaltes ...', Bl. 78. [My translation].

²⁸⁴ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Auswertung des Aufenthaltes ...', Bl. 80.

reference to previous agreements for the proposed undertaking of future delegations.²⁸⁵ In addition to the delegations led in 1960 and 1961, a tentative proposal was also made by Williams in 1964 to ‘make acquaintance once again’.²⁸⁶ Later delegations did not include Huw T. Edwards and thus became increasingly similar in type to those from the teaching community, as identified in the existing literature, albeit with the key differentiating feature of promoting bilingualism. The SED functionaries clearly saw merit in maintaining the relationship and made efforts at its own considerable expense to prolong and preserve it. ‘Contacts with the Welsh are to be strengthened, with the objective of undertaking annual delegation exchanges’.²⁸⁷ This policy illustrates how key SED figures considered the relationship as yielding sufficient benefits to justify maintaining efforts and communications, such as enabling access to public figures in Wales. With limited (if any) financial means, the Flintshire delegates were dependent on the hospitality and the generosity of their GDR hosts. One document preserved in the Sorbian Institute demonstrates the expense incurred by hosting the 1960 delegation from Wales; the International Relations section of the Ministry for Education (MfV) allocated 4,000 DM towards costs.²⁸⁸ Absorbing such a financial commitment demonstrates the value attributed by the GDR authorities to the relationship.

Other than a few Sorbian choral tours to the Llangollen International Eisteddfod in the early 1960s and irregular correspondence, there was however a notable cessation of interaction by 1965. A waning of interest from the parties may not necessarily have been the primary cause for this. Several contributory factors are likely to have played a role in the disintegration of the relationship. The resignation of Huw T. Edwards as Chairman of the Council for Wales & Monmouthshire in 1958 (and his subsequent, if temporary, defection from the Labour Party to Plaid Cymru) may have played a role. The deaths of key individuals such as Wilhelm Koenen in 1963²⁸⁹ and B. Haydn Williams in 1965 made the deterioration of the relationship inevitable.²⁹⁰ Had such influential contributors been available to continue the interaction, there may have been greater scope for the relationship to have continued in some form. B. Haydn Williams was certainly held in high esteem by the Domowina. On hearing of Williams’ death, Kurt Krenz of the Domowina published an obituary in *Nowa Doba*, the Sorbian language newspaper, describing Williams as a ‘courageous and valiant fighter for the rights of the Welsh people and a true friend of the Sorbs [...] We the Sorbian people mourn our friend’. Gratitude was declared for the efforts made by Williams to enable the Sorbs to participate in the Eisteddfod in Llangollen, an opportunity which had ‘enabled the wider world to learn of the cultural

²⁸⁵ An example of this is contained in SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, [Letter] Kurt Krenz to B. Haydn Williams, 27.02.1960, Bl. 15.

²⁸⁶ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D 117 4, [Letter] B. Haydn Williams to Martin Kroschk, 13.10.1964, Bl. 23.

²⁸⁷ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, ‘Auswertung des Aufenthaltes ...’, 02.05.1960, Bl.81. [My translation].

²⁸⁸ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D 117 4, [Letter] M. Kroschk to Gen. Grossmann (MfV), Bl. 183.

²⁸⁹ Note: Wilhelm Koenen was a former wartime exile in Britain and participant in later delegations to Wales.

²⁹⁰ ‘Fervent Welshman and controversial Educationist’, *The Flintshire Chronicle*, 05.06.1965, p. 5.

heritage of the Sorbs in the GDR'. Through his promotion of the Sorbs and their culture in Wales, Williams had ensured that the 'truth about the GDR and its recognition by the world as the first peace-loving German state was disseminated' - language which was consistent with the usual GDR rhetoric.²⁹¹ Krenz also described Williams as an educationalist famed throughout England. This reference to England damningly demonstrates that despite the efforts made by the nationalist Welsh-speaking visitors in promoting their sense of nationhood, the Sorbs and the GDR authorities are likely to have considered Welsh speakers a cultural minority within England, rather than of their own nation; a perception plausibly influenced by the Sorbs' own political status.

It was the precarious status of bilingual secondary education in the late 1950s, which provided the impetus for Flintshire educationalists to engage with the Sorbs and the GDR. Yet after the first few tumultuous years of policy implementation, its future was much more secure by the early to mid-1960s. Welsh-medium secondary schools established in Flintshire were performing well, as exemplified by observations recorded in the minutes of Flintshire Education Committee's meetings: 'There was an equal average pass between English and Welsh and this in itself is a complete vindication of the Welsh policy for the Secondary Stage as propounded by the Director of Education and fully endorsed by the Education Committee five years ago'²⁹² and 'the Welsh Schools are holding their own satisfactorily'.²⁹³ The need to seek support and amass experiences from third parties diminished, the incentive to learn from the Sorbian situation was no longer as strong. The firm establishment of and growth in Welsh-medium education in many parts of Wales proved a considerable validation of the concept. There is limited information available to determine what, if any practical impact the experiences in the GDR may have had on Welsh-medium education and whether objectives relating to the sharing of practices and experiences were fully realised. Although commitments were made by the SED authorities to publish materials and resources in the Welsh language, there is no evidence that this offer ever came to fruition. Nevertheless, the exchanges would have undoubtedly reinforced the commitment of the visiting educationalists and Welsh-language campaigners, who were witnessing how such endeavours were achievable - at least in a socialist state. The GDR authorities, through the Sorbs, provided representatives of the *Fro Gymraeg* with an avenue of exploration and logistical support at a time when domestically, it was not forthcoming.

Prominent members of the Welsh-speaking community, with a publicly recognised cause, visited the GDR because they perceived it had something to offer. This is significant as the quintessential view in the field of British-GDR relations is that it was predominantly one-sided, with the SED mostly

²⁹¹ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D 117 4, [Obituary] 'Übersetzung aus der sorbischen Zeitung NOWA DOBA Bautzen', Undated (1965), Bl. 21. [My translation].

²⁹² Flintshire Record Office, FC/2/62, Minutes of the Flintshire County Council Education Committee, 1961, p. 403.

²⁹³ Flintshire Record Office, FC/2/63 Minutes of the Flintshire County Council Education Committee, 1962, p. 623

approaching British individuals to further its own messages and causes, be it to achieve sovereign recognition or to improve the image of the GDR internationally. Against a backdrop of growing Welsh nationalism and rising concern for the fate of the Welsh language, this case study demonstrates the magnitude of the challenges experienced by the pioneering educationalists from Flintshire during the late 1950s and how the fate of another minority behind the Iron Curtain offered an opportunity to learn and reinforce their political and educational pursuits. Throughout the Welsh language material, there is a sense of a shared comparable experience with the Sorbs, with multiple references to both being minority cultures existing under the shadows of larger entities. In the GDR, the Flintshire delegates encountered a constitutionally-protected belief that minority education should be made available to all, a notion promoted by their GDR hosts. There was no requirement (as in Flintshire and wider non Welsh-speaking Wales) to justify the provision of resource to secure bilingual secondary education. It is of no surprise that the Welsh-language press reported sympathetically on the reciprocal Sorbian delegations to Wales, as will be discussed in the next chapter, considering the support overwhelmingly offered by the *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* readership to the efforts of Williams, Jones & Edwards. It is unfortunate that limited information or material originating from Sorbs outside the leadership of the Domowina is available – indeed it is conspicuous by its glaring absence, but perhaps this should be considered indicative of the political influences governing the Sorbs at this time and the priorities of their leadership. The SED clearly welcomed the approach made by the Flintshire educationalists. The relationship was seen by key SED representatives as a further opportunity to engage with individuals of potential influence in Britain – all facilitated as a result of its Sorbian responsibilities. When the relationship started to falter through lack of interest, need or even desire by the Welsh educationalists who had initiated it, partially successful efforts were made by the SED to revive the relationship and continue. The invitation made by Edwards, Williams et al for the Sorbian choir to compete in Llangollen provided an opportunity for later multiple visits to Wales. Despite the eventual demise of the original relationship, its legacy was to provide another avenue for the SED to engage with alternative facets of Welsh cultural life. These subsequent interactions are evaluated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2 - FROM LAUSITZ TO LLANGOLLEN: THE SED AND THE DOMOWINA VISIT WALES

This chapter explores how the SED sought to exploit the relations established with the educationalists from Flintshire, to help fulfil its foreign policy objectives; using existing contacts to widen its network in Wales. Although this relationship had been initiated by individuals subscribing to the *Fro Gymraeg* identity type, the SED's universal approach of cultivating as many western contacts as possible meant that it mattered little which identity type it engaged with during delegations to Wales. The first delegation in 1959 started a sequence of visits from the Sorbs and members of the SED to Wales. These delegations were broadly defined as seeking to further co-operation and understanding of bilingual education and also to promote cultural exchanges, leading to numerous appearances by Sorbian representatives at the Llangollen International Eisteddfod.²⁹⁴ This chapter considers the impact and opportunities created by the delegations and whether they influenced the image of the GDR in Wales.

Securing a formal invitation to visit Wales in 1959 had been an achievement. The content of SED feedback reports relating to Flintshire delegations in the GDR often made reference to the permanently-held objective of acquiring a return invitation to Wales: 'it must be achieved that Sorbian teacher comrades are invited for a visit to Wales, in accordance with the instructions of the Secretariat of the Central Committee'.²⁹⁵ Declaring an official purpose of furthering mutual co-operation on bilingual education facilitated access to Britain, as Flintshire Council, through the direction of B. Haydn Williams, sponsored the visas required to secure passage. Delegations to Wales offered opportunities to promote key SED positions. Lead delegate Wilhelm Koenen, reflecting on his visit in 1959, stated that accepting the invitation from Flintshire gave the GDR an opportunity to enter one of the 'most important capitalist countries'.²⁹⁶ Deckers, another accompanying SED participant, described how the delegation had a purpose of 'furthering and intensifying the already existing contacts as well as establishing new ones to strengthen the popularity of the GDR in England (Wales)'. One of the delegation's tasks was to invite leading MPs of the Labour Party to the GDR, as well as influential members of the House of Lords.²⁹⁷ Although the stated, unambiguous purpose of

²⁹⁴ Llangollen International Eisteddfod is a major cultural event held annually in Llangollen, North Wales and was established in 1947. Numerous choral, instrumental and dance competitions are undertaken by representatives from all parts of the world. 'Each year around 4,000 performers converge on this beautiful small Welsh town and its International Pavilion; to sing and dance in a unique combination of competition, performance, and international peace and friendship'. Llangollen International Music Eisteddfod (2014) *About Us*. Available at: <http://www.international-eisteddfod.co.uk/about-us/> (Accessed: 24.06.2014).

²⁹⁵ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Vorlage zur Dienstbesprechung am 05.04.1960: Studienaufenthalt einer Delegation aus Wales/England', Bl. 23. [My translation].

²⁹⁶ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/199, 'Bericht der Delegation nach Wales und London vom 3. – 19.5.1959 von Wilhelm Koenen', Bl.3. [My translation].

²⁹⁷ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin/Sorbisches Kulturarchiv Bautzen, [henceforth: Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin] wobstatk/Bestand Domowina, D IV 1.1.7. 99, 'Protokoll-Bericht über die Reise der sorbischen Delegation nach England/Wales in der Zeit vom 2. bis 19. Mai 1959', Bl. 40.

the delegation was to develop mutual understanding of minority issues and bilingual education, it was evident that the current political issues of the GDR would also be discussed.²⁹⁸ Concurrent with any discussions on minority education practices, the primary objectives for delegation to Wales were to i) make as many new contacts as possible, ii) promote the fight against German militarism, iii) to argue for both recognition of the GDR and the execution of a peace agreement and iv) to recruit MPs for a forthcoming visit to the GDR.²⁹⁹

The Welshmen should recognise, that our GDR is the first peace state, which does not pursue a policy of aggression, built on the principles of peaceful co-existence with states of differing social structures. It is of great political importance that one demonstrates to these circles the dangerous developments in West Germany which leads to a direct threat to England through revised German militarism, when the people of England are not sufficiently vigilant.³⁰⁰

Notwithstanding the GDR's principles for the promotion of peace, delegates were also instructed to convince their newly-formed Welsh-speaking contacts of the benefits to minority culture which only socialism could provide.

[...] should clearly establish and demonstrate that the effective development of a national minority is only possible in a socialist state. The Welsh teachers should recognise that the socialist state undertakes all possible efforts, so that the spiritually cultured and poly-technically educated youth can develop independent of his social status [where] the previously suppressed Sorbian youth takes an equal place.³⁰¹

One briefing paper in particular provides an insight into the methods to be deployed in Wales. In order to achieve the set objectives for each visit, delegates were advised to seek opportunities to undertake evening debates and public lectures regarding the school system in the GDR as well as publishing articles in the Welsh media.³⁰² Existing, strong relationships were also to be exploited. Kurt Krenz (Chairman of the Domowina) was regarded as having established a very good relationship with Welsh individuals following earlier engagements. Considered 'very personable' by the Welsh, Krenz was therefore a natural choice to lead a later delegation in 1960 to achieve even greater access to personalities to increase the SED's list of parliamentary contacts.³⁰³ All delegates were subject to Central Committee review and approval, with only those considered 'technically and politically well qualified and who are committed to [the] State' permitted to participate.³⁰⁴

²⁹⁸ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/199, 'Bericht der Delegation nach Wales...', Bl. 3.

²⁹⁹ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/199, 'Bericht der Delegation nach Wales...', Bl. 3.

³⁰⁰ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Vorschlag zur Entsendung einer Delegation sorbischer Lehrer und Schulfunktionäre nach Wales', Bl. 168. [My translation].

³⁰¹ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Vorschlag zur Entsendung einer Delegation sorbischer Lehrer ...', Bl. 167. [My translation].

³⁰² SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Vorschlag zur Entsendung einer Delegation sorbischer Lehrer ...', Bl. 168.

³⁰³ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Vorschlag zur Entsendung einer Delegation sorbischer Lehrer ...', Bl. 169.

³⁰⁴ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Vorschlag zur Entsendung einer Delegation sorbischer Lehrer ...', Bl. 170. [My translation].

DELEGATION TYPE 1: Cooperating on Bilingual Education

The first delegation to Wales occurred between the 3rd and 19th of May, 1959 and was led by Wilhelm Koenen. A former exile to Britain, Koenen was a senior GDR politician - a member of the GDR's Central Committee and the then president of the GDR's Inter-Parliamentary Group.³⁰⁵ Koenen was accompanied by the Chairman of the Domowina, Kurt Krenz, his fellow delegate Comrade Noack and the head of the GDR's Society for Foreign Cultural Relations, Comrade Deckers.³⁰⁶ The itinerary of the 1959 delegation included many activities, all of which provided opportunities to engage with multiple facets of Welsh life and widen networks through the establishment of new contacts.³⁰⁷ It is unclear who constructed the itinerary, though as there are some references in later correspondence with B. Haydn Williams about arranging access to Welsh MPs and public representatives,³⁰⁸ the inclusion of a visit to the House of Commons to meet Welsh MPs (named as Jones, Williams, Hughes and White) and attending a county council reception in Cardiff, is likely to have followed such a request. At a stopover in London on the way to Wales, the delegation met the aforementioned Welsh MPs at Westminster, had tea and enjoyed 'inspiring' discussions relating to the 'solution for the Sorb problem', the reunification of Germany and the Berlin question. 'The MPs showed great interest in our perspective'.³⁰⁹ Following the stopover in London, the delegation visited the principal sights of Wales' capital city, Cardiff. It is plausible that visits to Welsh national institutions in the newly-declared Welsh capital, such as the National Museum and the National Theatre – as well as attending a dinner hosted by the Wales Tourist Board - may have been included in the itinerary by the Flintshire organisers to project a sense of Welsh nationhood to their foreign guests.³¹⁰ During the visit to Wales, multiple schools (such as Ysgol Glan Clwyd) and educational institutions (such as the College of Advanced Technology in Llandaff) were also included in the itinerary, in accordance with the official purpose of the delegation.

An interview between Wilhelm Koenen (on behalf of the wider delegation) and a *Neues Deutschland* correspondent was prepared for transmission on the BBC.³¹¹ Though it is unlikely to have been broadcast, it is illuminating material, as not only does it capture the messages which Koenen et al sought to have publicly promulgated in Wales, it also reveals a perception that the GDR had 'solved' the issue of its own cultural minority. The opening comments of the interview confirmed that the delegation had visited Wales at the invitation of 'Welsh national organisations' to study bilingual

³⁰⁵ Berger, S. & LaPorte, N. (2010) *Friendly Enemies: Britain and the GDR 1949-1990*, New York: Berghahn Books, p. 47.

³⁰⁶ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/199, 'Bericht der Delegation nach Wales...', Bl. 3.

³⁰⁷ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/199, 'Bericht der Delegation nach Wales ...', Bl. 4-5.

³⁰⁸ For an example of this, see: Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D117 4, [Letter] B. Haydn Williams to Kurt Krenz, 29.04.1960, Bl. 234.

³⁰⁹ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D IV 1.1.7. 99, 'Protokoll-Bericht über die Reise der sorbischen Delegation nach England/Wales in der Zeit vom 2. bis 19. Mai 1959', Bl. 41. [My translation].

³¹⁰ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D IV 1.1.7. 99, 'Protokoll-Bericht über die Reise der sorbischen Delegation nach England/Wales...', Bl. 43.

³¹¹ L. Elle (of the Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin), Private Archive, Untitled, Bl. 123 – 126.

education, following a visit to the GDR in 1958 to ‘examine how the problem of the Sorbe [*sic*] minority had been solved in the Socialist State of Germany’. Positive comments were made by Koenen about how the delegation had enjoyed a ‘cordial reception [...] throughout Wales’. No reference was made to any issues or criticisms experienced. Instead, Koenen focused on the warm welcome received and highlighted a statement from the address of William Llewellyn, the Glamorgan County Council Chairman, as a notable example: ‘This visit of our Sorbe friends has once more proved that the so-called iron curtain is only an imaginary one’. Despite the positive reception to their presence in Wales, Koenen bemoaned how little Welsh people knew of the GDR, describing how this vacuum had been used as an opportunity to inform the Welsh people of the GDR: ‘every time the Delegation gave the facts about life today in the GDR and the great strides forward achieved there under the new social order, there was very great interest’. A significant element of the prepared broadcast material concentrated on the fate of the Welsh people and the negligible support for their language.

This national problem does exist in Wales, The 3,000,000 Welsh people wish to retain alive both their national culture and their national traditions.

What made a deep impression on the Welsh people was the fact that the Government of the GDR promotes the Sorbe national minority. Let us take for instance, the question of education. All Sorbe educational books are published at the expense of the State and in great quantities and this is the reason why school text-books etc. stand at a very high level. In Wales, on the other hand, they have only just begun to produce books for Secondary and Higher Schools in the Welsh language. This however is financed by the teachers themselves or by private individuals. The result is therefore not very satisfactory. The printing is poor and the books are paper-backed. The Delegation, nevertheless, saw with its own eyes with what love and self-sacrifice the Welsh are devoted to their national language and culture.³¹²

These passages are very interesting as they make some very generalised statements regarding the unity of the Welsh people. The assumption that all 3 million Welsh people (the entire population of Wales) wanted to ‘retain alive their national culture’ was either ignorance or a misunderstanding of the plurality of identities in Wales, or alternatively, was a deliberate statement made for greater emphasis. The comment that the actions of the GDR in supporting the Sorbs had made a deep impression on ‘the Welsh people’ assumed the entire population, rather than the specific element of Welsh-speakers from Flintshire which had engaged with the Sorbs. Drawing attention to the limited resources available to Welsh-medium education, Koenen made an unfavourable comparison with the fate of the Sorbs. Strong, emotive words were used to describe the delegation’s perceptions of the Welsh people’s support for ‘their national language and culture’, such as ‘love’, ‘self-sacrifice’ and ‘devotion’, bearing little resemblance to the reality of the situation in Wales at this time, where a significant element of Welsh society was dismissive of the Welsh language and its indigenous culture.

³¹² L. Elle, Private Archive, Untitled, Bl. 123 - 124.

The Sorbe Delegation was saddened to see that despite the hard and tough fight of the people of Wales to retain their nationality, the Welsh national question cannot be solved in a capitalist society. Indeed, both in the official and informal talks which the Delegation had in Wales they found this very important difference in the treatment of national minorities in Great Britain and the GDR; the Welsh nation is just tolerated by the English State; the Sorbe national minority in the GDR is assisted to develop by the State itself. Hence, an expansion of the Sorbes and a decline of the Welsh.³¹³

This statement echoes to some extent the work of Mac Con Uladh, who determined how Northern Ireland had been used by the GDR as an overt demonstration of British colonialism,³¹⁴ a ‘stick with which British imperialism could be beaten.’³¹⁵ The passage demonstrates how the delegation sought to firmly attribute the difficulties experienced in Wales to capitalism, preventing its people from expressing their nationalism. Kurt Krenz was also quoted in the broadcast material, drawing attention to the resources provided by the GDR for the Sorbs and using it as a platform from which to judge the effects of capitalism on the fate of another minority. Highlighting the strengths which came from belonging to a socialist state, Krenz attributed the resilience of the Sorbs to the contributions of Marxist theory and the significant efforts made by the GDR state. Krenz noted the impact this information had on the Welsh people.

Our visit to Wales provided us Sorbes with a new living proof that the way which the GDR took in order to solve the national Sorbe question was the right one. It was right because it was thought out by Marxists. The assistance which the leader of our Delegation Volkskammer Deputy Koenen (SED) gave towards the solution of the Sorbe problem was seen by our Welsh hosts as a proof of the true brotherhood and collaboration among various nationalities living in a Socialist State. [...] The Delegates told me that the free national development of the Sorbs in the GDR made a profound impression upon the Welsh people with whom they came into contact. To many of them the Sorbe solution opened, it seemed, new prospect for the solution of their own national question. At the same time however the happy solution of the Sorbe question has increased the interest of the Welsh people in the Socialist regime of the GDR.³¹⁶

The Sorbs were therefore offered to the Welsh as an example worthy of imitation. As per the pre-delegation instructions, further key messages were also prepared for broadcast. Supplementary to the material highlighting how Welsh nationalism could only work in a socialist society, the core GDR foreign policy messages were also deployed, including the GDR’s commitment to peace, the importance afforded to the reduction of international tensions and the promotion of diplomacy through delegation.

³¹³ L. Elle, Private Archive, Untitled, Bl. 125.

³¹⁴ Mac Con Uladh (2005), ‘Relations between the Left in Northern Ireland and the GDR’, in Berger & LaPorte, *The Other Germany: Perceptions and Influences in British-East German Relations, 1945-1990*, p. 95.

³¹⁵ Berger & LaPorte, *The Other Germany*, p. 18.

³¹⁶ L. Elle, Private Archive, Untitled, Bl. 125.

Both to our Delegation and to our Welsh hosts it was clear that national activity for both Sorbes and Welsh can only flourish in a period of peace. The lessening of tension in the international situation and the securing of a peaceful solution of the German problem are of the greatest interest to the peace-loving forces of both countries. Peaceful co-operation between us can be promoted by the exchange of visits. This was underlined in a discussion we had in the House of Commons in which Labour MPs who had already visited the GDR participated. [...] I am convinced that our visit to Wales will create new bonds of friendship between the Welsh people and the Sorbes of the GDR.³¹⁷

An informative exercise is determining whether the delegation from the GDR in 1959 made any impact in Wales, or whether despite SED intentions to the contrary, the visit passed largely unnoticed by the wider Welsh public. Looking at different press sources gives an indication of how the interactions were perceived and expressed in the Welsh media. Press reports capture the 1959 delegation's presence in Wales, but there was a marked contrast in the tone of reporting, depending on whether the publication was in Welsh or English. This divergence suggests alternative ideological priorities, reflecting and/or influencing the views of their readerships.

Baner ac Amserau Cymru

Baner ac Amserau Cymru was a national, weekly Welsh-language newspaper, described as a liberal paper which became 'a powerful influence on Welsh life'.³¹⁸ Shortly before his visit to the GDR in 1958, Huw T. Edwards purchased the newspaper for the nominal sum of £1 as a trust representative.³¹⁹ Analysing its report on the delegation illustrates whether the SED's delegation objectives were successfully achieved and if some of the principal messages which the SED wished to see conveyed within a public arena, materialised. The article also provides an insight into the perceptions held by prominent Welsh-speakers of the GDR, as circulated to a wider audience.

A highly interesting delegation visited Wales last week. Five Sorbs, representing one of East Germany's minorities, formed the delegation and their main purpose was to gather information about our teaching methods in Wales, in particular, the way we approach the challenges created by bilingualism [...] it was obvious that their main interest was in the nationhood of the Welsh and the traditional language. It is thanks to the education officers of Flintshire that they have been invited to Wales. The leader of the delegation [...] saw a similarity between the problems of the language in Wales and the ones they faced in Germany. The Sorbian language is of an entirely different origin to German and it is difficult to teach the languages side-by-side when they are not from the same family of languages. The Sorbs had been under political oppression for centuries and Fascism nearly finished the task of entirely destroying the small nation.

Change came at the end of the war and the Sorbs were given the opportunity to strengthen and re-embrace their old traditions. Sorbians were given complete equality with the Germans [...] even by 1946 they were working away establishing various Sorbian schools and by the end of that year they had a Sorbian teacher training college. They were then not long in establishing

³¹⁷ L. Elle, Private Archive, Untitled, Bl. 126.

³¹⁸ National Library of Wales [henceforth: NLW] (2013) Early Weeklies. Available at: <http://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=525> (Accessed: 17.07.2013).

³¹⁹ Jenkins, G. (2007) *Prif Wenidog Answyddogol Cymru*, Ceredigion: Y Lolfa, p. 160.

a Sorbian Department of the Public Education Ministry. That Department then in its turn, established a Research Institute for history and folk culture, a Science Academy, a Terminology Committee and a Literary Society [...] for the first time ever, this minority was given the right to put East German 'Sorb' on their travel permit. Behind this rapid development of course there has been the financial resources provided by the state. There is no lack of or any concern regarding finance for the developments. Somewhere here there is a valuable lesson for anyone who wants to notice it. If this minority was just in another part of the world it would probably be different - it would be highlighted as an example of the fair play which is a particular feature of the free countries. It is often said that Wales is a small nation, and but a third of its inhabitants speak its native language. Yet there are only 150,000 who are fluent in the Sorbian language, but it managed to increase rapidly during the last fifteen years, despite the anguish following the war on the European continent.³²⁰

This very detailed article conveyed a considerable knowledge of the Sorbian situation, possibly the result of Huw T. Edwards' involvement in the paper and perhaps supplemented by a genuine interest on the part of its anonymous author in the fate of the Sorbs. By stating that the visitors' interest was in Welsh nationhood and language, it demonstrated that the delegation publicly and formally conveyed its primary purpose as furthering the understanding of bilingual education. The presence of the visitors from the GDR was firmly attributed to Flintshire's Educationalists, B. Haydn Williams and Moses Jones - well-known and widely-admired individuals to the readership of this paper at the time, owing to their frequently reported and celebrated endeavours to promote Welsh-language education. Drawing attention to such an association would have implied constructive co-operation between Sorbs and Welsh-speakers. In comparing similarities between the language problems faced in Wales and in the Sorbian area of the GDR, an acknowledgement of a mutual experience was encouraged, essentially a declaration that both peoples were in the same situation.

By making an explicit comparison of the situation of the Sorbs with the current GDR government relative to their experiences under National Socialism, the GDR's anti-fascist position was overtly demonstrated. Statements in the piece above visibly illustrated how the lives of the Sorbs had materially improved under socialism; enjoying legally-protected rights and new institutions, which were conspicuously absent in Welsh society by comparison. Reference was made to the financial resources provided by the GDR state, again drawing an obvious contrast with the lack of state support provided for the Welsh language. The author of this piece argued how the treatment of the Sorbs would likely be more publicly celebrated and acknowledged were they not located in the Eastern Bloc. Parallels were explicitly drawn with the situation in Wales – despite having more native Welsh-speakers than the 150,000 individuals who spoke Sorbian, the implied conclusion was that the situation and fate of the Sorbs was considerably more advanced.

A further input from a *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* columnist was included within the same issue. Although unconfirmed, there is reason to believe, based on the content of other columns under this

³²⁰ 'Y Sorbiaid yng Nghaerdydd', *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 21.05.1959, p. 1. [My translation].

pseudonym, that it may have been written by novelist Dyddgu Owen, who as mentioned previously, visited the GDR as a delegate in 1958.

The Sorbs, a Slavic minority from Lausitz, have only positive things to say about the way they have been treated by the Communist Government of East Germany. I had the opportunity to question a group of Sorbs who recently came to Wales, about the way they are treated by that government and they said that their linguistic and minority rights are given every fairness by the central government in Berlin. They came to Wales as guests of Flintshire's educationalists and they learnt much about the state of Wales under London's government. Alderman Huw T. Edwards who was chairing the meeting, commented how propaganda skewed the truth regarding the relations of nations with each other. 'We were forced to swallow some strange things about the people who live the other side of the iron curtain and we find out that they have the same desires as us. All the nations of the world must come together or we are all doomed' said Dr. Edwards. Herr Kurt Krenz, chairperson of the federal board of the Domowina, said that they felt at home in Wales, but when Londoners heard that they were from East Germany, they turned their noses, he said. There is no lack of employment in East Germany, in truth there is a need for more miners, said Kurt Krenz. There was a true friendship between the government of East Germany and the Sorbs. Similar was the testimony of Herr Wilhelm Koenen, M.P. The Sorbs were oppressed for a thousand years, said Herr Koenen, but they now have their own government, thanks to Russia. The agricultural state of the country had improved and the price of electricity had decreased. 'We can grow without the help of the capitalists', he said.³²¹

This column reinforced the view of a constructive attitude towards the Sorbian minority by the GDR government, with emphasis on how Sorbian linguistic and minority rights were given all fairness. As discussed below, the GDR's domestic policies (particularly relating to the economy) were not always constructive in terms of safeguarding Sorbian culture. Yet, whilst in Wales, positive feedback was provided by the Sorbian delegates in terms of the support received from the GDR authorities, also sharing their own observations on the position of a Welsh minority under a London government. Huw T. Edwards was prominently quoted in the column, asking for increased mutual understanding of both peoples. Notwithstanding his association with the newspaper, the inclusion of such statements was typical, with his influential opinions and activities given frequent prominence in the Welsh media. When Kurt Krenz compared the welcome received in Wales with that experienced in London, he expressed a distinct disparity between one type of people (considered welcoming, in a comparable minority situation with his own) and another (arrogant, non-welcoming). In conformance with one of the delegation's original objectives, clear propaganda messages were provided to the columnist regarding the realities and benefits of the GDR's 'actual existing socialism', such as the employment situation and the decreasing cost of living in the GDR.

Western Mail

A report of the 1959 delegation also appeared in the *Western Mail* – a national English-language daily newspaper in Wales, which has historically been of a conservative nature. Although the official

³²¹ 'Y Sorbiaid yng Nghaerdydd' (2/2), *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 21.05.1959, p. 5. [My translation].

purpose of the delegation was captured and quotations from the visitors included, the nature and style of this report differed significantly from what was published in *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*.

Five East Germans are staying in Cardiff until tomorrow, paying a return visit to Wales after the tour of East Germany last year by members of the Flintshire Education Committee. This was headed by Dr. Haydn Williams, the Director of Education for Flintshire and a keen exponent of the teaching of Welsh in Welsh Schools. Leading the East German delegation was Herr Wilhelm Koenen, a member of the East German People's Commune [*sic*]. He is a bald man with a sharp grey beard, and is travelling with his wife, a serious woman who listens hard and takes copious notes wherever she goes. It is perhaps no co-incidence that the other three visitors – Herr Kurt Krenz, Herr Bernard Noack and Herr Werner Deckers – are each members of the 'Sorbian Parliament', supposed to represent the tiny Sorbian minority in East Germany, which has an obscure language of its own. Six years ago the East Germany Communist Government made strenuous efforts to revive this tongue – now almost extinct – by enforcing its teaching in all schools within the Sorbish area.

I talked to the five Germans yesterday as they were being shown around the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff, earnestly examining butterfly specimens and relief maps. They are very courteous and serious-minded and all of them – fear not! – are 'right-minded' members of the (Communist) German Unity Party. 'We each have the anti-Fascist outlook', Herr Deckers told me, as we walked through the stately halls of the museum. 'People in Wales are anti-Fascist too', I pointed out. 'That is very healthy', he said. East Germany was politely referred to as the 'German Democratic Republic'.

What do they think of Wales? They admit that it is a highly developed country, but what particularly absorbs them is what they call 'the language problem'. This they regard as a 'very serious matter.' Today the party is visiting Treforest Trading Estate, the open air school at Rhiwbina and Llandaff Technical College. Then this evening they go to the New Theatre, Cardiff, to see the Welsh National Opera Company perform 'Rigoletto'. But I suspect that the five visitors will be interested far more in what they have clearly come to regard as organised oppression of the Welsh-speaking minority by Whitehall. Dr. Haydn Williams has certainly chosen with huge skill his bed-fellows for the Welsh language campaign.³²²

This article could justifiably be perceived as being rather mean-spirited. The description of the delegates in the first paragraph is almost a caricature. Referring to Sorbian as an 'obscure' (rather than minority) language is derogatory and leads the reader to draw parallels with the status of the Welsh language ('they too'). The provocative use of a strong verb such as 'enforce' to describe the implementation of the bilingual education system in Lausitz served to dilute the potency of the anti-fascist claims made by the visiting delegates. The author of this article (the anonymous Crwydryn) clearly perceived the efforts to establish Welsh-medium education negatively, betraying tensions between Welsh-speakers and non-Welsh speakers regarding the importance of the Welsh language. The words used to describe B. Haydn Williams's efforts against 'organised oppression' and the implication of a conspiracy ('bedfellows') against Whitehall with the visitors from the GDR, leaves

³²² 'They have their own tongue too', *Western Mail*, 08.05.1959, p. 4. Note: the reference to 'People's Commune' in this article is an error. The correct translation of *Volkskammer* is 'People's Chamber'.

the reader in no doubt of Crwydryn's critical attitude. Koenen however sought to describe in his feedback report how this column was a clear indication of the public interest generated by the delegation.

The reactionary reporter Crwydryn, who purported to have been arrested in the GDR, reported on the formation of our delegation and our interest in bilingual education. With the usual misrepresentations of the western press, he tried to dismiss our behaviours as communist, though he had to describe us as courteous people who were sincerely against fascism. Our Welsh friends mentioned that one could not expect much else from such a reactionary newspaper. It was however notable that they had so extensively taken notice of our visit.³²³

Significantly, greater concern was shown by Koenen on the possible misinterpretation of the GDR rather than (even questioning) the overt cynicism of the Welsh press against the Welsh language. This is arguably indicative of the bias in the SED's priorities, despite the officially-declared importance afforded by the delegation to the preservation of minority cultures. In spite of the negative portrayal in the *Western Mail*, there was nonetheless a sense of achievement evident in Koenen's report that the delegation had merited consideration in a national newspaper.

Neues Deutschland

A valuable comparison is considering how the same delegation was portrayed domestically in the GDR. An article describing the visit was published in *Neues Deutschland*, a SED funded daily newspaper which functioned as the formal method of communication for SED policy and propaganda in the GDR.³²⁴

A Sorbian delegation under the leadership of Wilhelm Koenen, (member of the People's Chamber) has just completed a two-week visit to Wales and London. The delegation was invited by the Council for Wales, and comprised the Chairman and the Secretary of the Federal Board of Domowina, Krenz and Noack, as well as a representative of the Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, Werner Deckers. In an interview with the London correspondent of ADN, Wilhelm Koenen highlighted the many conversations undertaken by delegation which had helped generate great interest in the GDR. Many misconceptions, which are still present in the minds of the people, were shattered. Often they expressed how laughable it was that the British government continues to refuse to recognise the German worker and peasant state. Many valuable contacts were made during the visit. A Sorbian ensemble will participate in the Welsh 'Folk Art' Festival this summer. The Sorbian guests, who experience all possible support in the GDR, were particularly surprised by the treatment of the Welsh minority, who are merely tolerated in the UK. In the conversations held, it was often seen that a commonality of views exists on the vital struggle for peace, against the nuclear armament of West Germany and for the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany³²⁵ which requires the masses of Britain and the GDR acting and standing together'.³²⁶

³²³ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/199, 'Bericht der Delegation nach Wales ...', Bl. 5. [My translation].

³²⁴ Staatsbibliothek Berlin (2013), *Informationen zum 'Neues Deutschland'*. Available at: <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/neues-deutschland/> (Accessed 02.08.2013).

³²⁵ This is a reference to a contemporary issue pursued by Moscow, the conclusion of which would have led to international de facto recognition of the GDR.

³²⁶ 'Sorben besuchten Wales und London', *Neues Deutschland*, 16.05.1959, S. 5. [My translation].

As expected considering the propagandistic nature of the newspaper, this article served to ridicule UK foreign policy and its non-recognition of the GDR, stating how the UK government's own citizens were in disagreement and subverting the government's authority, by 'laughing' at its actions. Overt reference was made to state provision for the Sorbian minority, making a direct comparison with the inferior support provided to a comparable minority by a capitalist state. By publicly stating to the readership that GDR sentiments and policies were shared by the people of Britain, the political course taken by the SED was validated.

Koenen's feedback report in 1959 summarised the delegates' impressions of the state of bilingual education in Wales and the general understanding of the Welsh public of the GDR. The delegates' visit to Ysgol Glan Clwyd (Glan Clwyd Comprehensive School) brought Koenen to the conclusion that the GDR was further developed than Wales in its provision of resources and support. Koenen acknowledged however that there were certain aspects in Flintshire, primarily relating to learning materials and teaching methods, which could be studied by GDR teachers and educators.³²⁷ This conclusion is an unusual feature when considering the assumption widespread in the existing literature that the GDR authorities sought to repel two-way influences to the GDR, suggesting that Sorbian provision was not wholly without its challenges. In his report, Koenen also evaluated the depth of understanding and awareness of the GDR in Wales. The description of a reception hosted by Glamorgan County Council for the delegation implied that its councillors were unaware of the origin of their German visitors.

We realised how little such Labour People knew about the GDR. One could say, nothing! In my response, I firstly had to explain the difference between East and West Germany. All these leading people and the councillors were very surprised to have East Germans in front of them but were from then on in very interested in asking questions [...] it became apparent [during the reception] that they would gladly receive an invitation to visit us.³²⁸

No corresponding evidence has been uncovered to confirm that reception attendees agreed with this conclusion, with no indication that any such invitation was issued or indeed accepted. It is prudent to suppose that Koenen may have sought to overtly demonstrate compliance with the objectives of the delegation, however (in)accurate. When considering the impact made by the delegation in Wales, Koenen highlighted the following statement by Huw T. Edwards:

Whatever the political effect of the visits of the GDR and the exchange of delegations, a sentence which we heard in the address of one of the leaders of the Welsh minority movement was particularly enlightening. The 67 year old [...] previously a miner, who visited the GDR and Bautzen in 1958, said in his welcome speech in a reception in Wales on 7th May 1959: 'we visited (at our request) a worker's family in Berlin. We were astonished that the worker owned his own library and had read all the books. When conversing with him, we became sure that this was a worker who knew who he was, why he was and what he was. They are building something quite new, something which until now we have always been a bit afraid of. But something new is starting over there, something from which we could eventually learn

³²⁷SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/199, 'Bericht der Delegation nach Wales ...', Bl. 6.

³²⁸SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/199, 'Bericht der Delegation nach Wales ...', Bl. 4. [My translation].

from. In Cardiff for example, they knew nothing of the GDR! We must become much closer to one another in order for us to better understand each other. The simple people [*das einfache Volk*] will always understand itself'.³²⁹

Further to his visit to the GDR in 1958, Huw T. Edwards remained a prominent member of Welsh public life despite his subsequent protest resignation as Chairperson for the Council for Wales and Monmouthshire and his defection from the Labour Party to Plaid Cymru. Such a publicly declared view of the GDR would therefore have undoubtedly been considered beneficial by delegation members. Although no reference was made (in this excerpt) to the similarities between the Welsh and Sorbian minorities, with Edwards focusing instead on the achievements of socialism, in a later speech in 1960 he highlighted the GDR's national policy for the Sorbs as an example for capitalist countries to follow. Edwards declared how he was sure that all Welsh friends who knew the GDR on the basis of its treatment of the Sorbs believed that the GDR had a right of recognition from Britain.³³⁰ He was quoted as having been convinced of a socialist reconstruction in the GDR and a genuine desire for both peace and recognition of their existence. The associated delegation feedback report to the SED described Edwards as one of the most popular personalities of the Welsh nationalist movement, meaning that he would have been considered a valuable asset for further access opportunities by the visiting delegates.³³¹

Further prospects existed for visiting delegates to demonstrate the superior support provided by a socialist country to its cultural life, in contrast to what the British state offered its Welsh citizens. Reflecting on a performance of *Rigoletto* by the Welsh National Theatre, SED delegate Deckers described this as a special event for those who were concerned with the independent development of Welsh culture, not only in the field of language. This observation does suggest at least a subtle understanding of the identity of those with whom they engaged, recognising an enthusiasm for the promotion of a distinct Welsh culture in an environment of otherwise dominant British- or Englishness. Deckers remarked how the amateur performers demonstrated a high level of artistic training, which was of particular surprise considering the lack of official and financial support received. It was a revelation when conversations revealed that no-one knew anything of theatre in the GDR and were 'very surprised' when they heard of the extent of state support for it. This lack of knowledge of such specific facets of GDR society should not have been so surprising; the existing literature demonstrates widespread ignorance in Britain of aspects of GDR society, other than the (mostly) negative perceptions presented by the British media. For Deckers, this knowledge vacuum

³²⁹ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/199, 'Bericht der Delegation nach Wales ...', Bl. 7. [My translation].

³³⁰ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Bericht über die Teilnahme des sorbischen Kammerchors Bautzen am 'International Musical Eisteddfod' in Llangollen und seines Aufenthalt in England in der Zeit vom 29.6. bis 13.7.1960'[sic], 16.07.1960, Bl. 151.

³³¹ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Bericht über die Teilnahme des sorbischen Kammerchors Bautzen ...', Bl. 150.

presented an opportunity to raise awareness of the GDR's activities in the Welsh artistic community.³³² Another prospect was thus identified for further possible exploitation.

The feedback report authored by Koenen in 1959 included suggestions for evolving the relationships created with existing and newly-formed Welsh contacts. Ideas for several possibilities clearly arose as a result of interactions undertaken during the delegation. The wide variety of contacts reflected the different types of Welsh identity encountered whilst in Wales. Despite the official hosts having been of the *Fro Gymraeg* identity type, the networks cultivated included non Welsh-speakers. The Welsh MPs visited in London – presumably through Huw T. Edwards' connections - were likely to have been Labour MPs and thus overwhelmingly of the *Welsh Wales* identity type. Some of the suggestions from the initial 1959 delegation included:

- Inviting another group of teachers from Wales to travel to the GDR and arranging further reciprocal teacher delegations to Wales for an exchange of Sorbian/Welsh experiences.
- Arranging a children's exchange (circa 50-70 in number) between the GDR and Wales.
- Creating links with the Welsh Tourist and Holiday Board via the (East) German Travel Bureau.
- Providing material for children and youth in Rhyl / Wales as well as films and items of folk art for education. Also exhibitions for the school classes (about the Sorbs, art reproductions of GDR galleries), especially for the school of Haydn Thomas in Rhyl.
- Arranging a delegation exchange between the College of Advance Technology in Llandaf and the Technical University of Dresden (via the State Secretary for University and School Systems). Similarly to the description of the Cardiff Council meeting, Koenen stated how the directors of the College of Advance Technology in Llandaf had also expressed their interest in visiting the GDR and 'awaited an invitation with great attention', yet no further evidence is available to indicate any progress.³³³

Koenen's observations of the 'great quantity' of coal works in South Wales and the 'increasing numbers of unemployed miners' led to a suggestion in the feedback report of inviting a delegation of unemployed miners to the Zwickauer-Olsnitzer coal mining district in the GDR – an idea discussed with Comrade Painter [*sic*].³³⁴ This was a reference to Will Paynter, President of the South Wales Miners' Federation in 1959 and who became General Secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers in the same year. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, relations already existed between the South Wales Miners and their counterpart union in the GDR. This later recommendation however demonstrates the GDR's consistency of approach in identifying targets and also illustrates

³³² Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D IV 1.1.7 99, 'Protokoll-Bericht über die Reise der sorbischen Delegation nach England/Wales in der Zeit vom 2. bis 19. Mai 1959', Bl. 49.

³³³ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/199, 'Bericht der Delegation nach Wales ...', Bl. 19. [My translation].

³³⁴ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/199, 'Bericht der Delegation nach Wales ...', Bl. 5.

the receptiveness of Welsh miners to contact with GDR agents. Koenen also stipulated clearly in his feedback report that the already established *modus operandi* and stated objectives should continue to apply to future delegations to Wales.

With regard to the political leadership accompanying the ensemble, this must be swiftly decided by the Central Department for Sorbian issues (Ministry of the Interior) in conjunction with the Domowina. It must be made clear to the leadership that they are required [...] to represent the GDR and all her accomplishments.³³⁵

DELEGATION TYPE 2: Cultural Experiences at Llangollen

As well as extending an invitation to study bilingual education in Wales, B. Haydn Williams and Huw T. Edwards also arranged for delegations of Sorbs and GDR representatives to compete in the Llangollen International Eisteddfod. Participating in the International Eisteddfod offered the GDR a further, legitimate opportunity to visit Wales, via pre-arranged visa sponsorship. The ethos of the Eisteddfod would have appealed to the GDR authorities. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, multiple cultural delegations came from Lausitz to Llangollen, made possible by the Eisteddfod's policy of welcoming visitors from around the world. A renowned event of significant magnitude, Kurt Krenz recorded how the International Eisteddfod hosted 1,500 foreign guests from circa 30 countries in 1959, with 45,000 visitors attending.³³⁶ Llangollen's welcome and international outlook was explicitly promulgated in its literature, including principles which indicated its likely recurring appeal to the Sorbs and the GDR authorities:

A very warm invitation is extended to all peace-loving peoples who find joy in music and dance.³³⁷

Llangollen is now proud to be known throughout the world as the birthplace in Wales of a great experiment in establishing international peace and goodwill. [...] Every year we open wide our doors to all those who come to take part in our Eisteddfod and race, colour, language or creed make not the slightest difference to the warmth of their reception.

The ancient civilisation of Wales has provided in this international event one of its most traditional and characteristic forms of cultural expression. The institution of the International Eisteddfod [...] has placed the great celebrations of Welsh traditions on the international level. [quoting Dr Luther Evans, Director General of U.N.E.S.C.O.]³³⁸

Wright described the International Eisteddfod as 'of the people, by the people and for the people of many lands'³³⁹ and an opportunity for the 'mixing of nationals with nationals on a footing free of

³³⁵ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/199, 'Bericht der Delegation nach Wales ...', Bl. 7. [My translation].

³³⁶ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D IV 1.1.7. 99, 'Bericht der Delegation nach Wales und London vom 06. – 15.07.1959, von Kurt Krenz', Bl. 12.

³³⁷ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D 117 4, Foreword to the 1965 festival syllabus, Bl. 25b.

³³⁸ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D 117 4, 'Llangollen International Music Eisteddfod Programme, 1961', Bl. 131.

³³⁹ Wright, K.A. (1973) *Gentle are its songs*, Birmingham: Sir Gerald Nabarro (Publications) Ltd., p. 14.

politics or inhibitions of any kind'.³⁴⁰ The organisers of the International Eisteddfod sought to further friendship amongst peoples and engaged in activities to promote this approach. One such example was the Chairman of the Eisteddfod committee attending a meeting in the early 1960s to discuss the formation of a Welsh branch of the Great Britain – U.S.S.R Association. The International Eisteddfod later affiliated itself with the branch, demonstrating how its organisers welcomed such opportunities for furthering friendship.³⁴¹ The GDR described how Welsh patriots had brought the Eisteddfod 'to life' in 1947³⁴² and how it functioned as a 'remedy for international friendship'.³⁴³ The Eisteddfod's uniquely cultural purpose and the readily-available folk culture of the Sorbs meant that participating in the Eisteddfod not only provided a further avenue for engagement and access to Britain, but also enabled interaction with a range of representatives from Western nations. In 1959 for example, the Sorbian choir competed in a choral category which included representatives from Algeria, Austria, Belgium, England, Finland, France, the FRG, the Netherlands, Israel, Italy, Norway, Scotland, Sicily, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Ukraine and the USA.³⁴⁴ Despite recognising the cultural purpose of participating in the International Eisteddfod, the SED authorities had accepted the invitation from Williams et al on the basis that it offered further opportunities.

The aim of the tour was primarily to acquaint the English [*sic*] population with the development and policy of our Republic, to raise the prestige of the first German workers and peasants' state, to penetrate the so-called 'iron curtain', raise awareness of the GDR's nationality policy relating to the Sorbs [...] and to document the all-round development of folk culture in socialism.³⁴⁵

Notwithstanding the typical mistake made by GDR agents of referring to an English rather than a Welsh population - demonstrating once again that the national identity of the Welsh was not usually recognised as anything greater than cultural - this particular objective was remarkably consistent with the usual SED-determined aims for delegations to the West, albeit with a supplementary feature of promoting the GDR's efforts towards the Sorbs and the subsequent development of folk culture in the GDR. Similarly to the situation in Wales, choral singing was and remains a key facet of Sorbian cultural tradition. Stone described the Sorbian choral movement between 1845 (the date of the first Sorbian choral festival) and 'well into the twentieth century' as a period of 'enthusiasm and activity' with choral societies playing 'an important part in Sorbian cultural life'.³⁴⁶ Sorbian entries in the

³⁴⁰ Wright, *Gentle are its songs*, p. 36.

³⁴¹ Denbighshire Archives [henceforth: DRO], DD/LE/1/2/3/14, Minutebook of Executive Committee Minutes, Unpaginated.

³⁴² SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Bericht über die Teilnahme des sorbischen Kammerchors Bautzen ...', 16.7.1960, Bl. 148.

³⁴³ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D IV 1.1.7. 99, 'Bericht der Delegation nach Wales ... von Kurt Krenz', Bl. 11, ('Lösung der Völkerfreundschaft').

³⁴⁴ DRO, DD/LE/4/4/1/1, Lists of choral, dance and instrumental parties 1950-1959, p. 15.

³⁴⁵ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV2/13/386, 'Bericht über die Teilnahme sorbischer Volkskunstgruppen am International Musical Eisteddfod in Llangollen', 28.07.1961, Bl. 223. [My translation].

³⁴⁶ Stone, G. (1972) *The smallest Slavonic Nation: the Sorbs of Lusatia*, London: Athlone Press, p. 157.

International Eisteddfod were led by Jurij Winar,³⁴⁷ who had dominated the Sorbian musical scene after the Second World War, was appointed director of the State Ensemble for Sorbian Popular Culture in 1951 and became Director of Bautzen Music School from 1961 onwards.³⁴⁸ Winar's repeated participation implies that his conduct conformed to SED guidelines relating to those who were permitted to participate in the International Eisteddfod: 'in our opinion it is imperative that comrades attending this tour have the necessary political skills and are familiar with the circumstances of the competition, as this will certainly have a positive impact on the entire tour'.³⁴⁹

<u>Year</u>	<u>Entry</u>
1959: 7 – 12 July	Sorbischer Kammerchor ³⁵⁰ (Folk Song category) <i>Result: 6th from 21 entries.</i> ³⁵¹
1960: 5 – 10 July	Sorbischer Kammerchor ³⁵² (Folk Song category) <i>Result: 5th from 20 entries.</i> ³⁵³
1961: 11 – 16 July	Sorbischer Volkschor Sorbische Volkstanzgruppe Sorbische Dudelsackgruppe ³⁵⁴
1964: 7 – 12 July ³⁵⁵	Sorbischer Volkschor ³⁵⁶
1965: 6 – 11 July	Sorbischer Volkschor der Domowina Sorbische Volkstanzgruppe Sorbische Volksmusikgruppe ³⁵⁷
1972	Sorbischer Volkschor ³⁵⁸

Table 3: Sorbian participation at the Llangollen International Eisteddfod

³⁴⁷ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D IV 1.1.7. 99, 'Bericht der Delegation nach Wales . von Kurt Krenz', Bl. 6.

³⁴⁸ Stone, *Smallest Slavonic Nation*, p. 158.

³⁴⁹ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D117 4, [Letter] from J. Handrick (Sekretär der GO der SED) and G. Gross (Sekretär des Bundesvorstandes der Domowina) to Zentralkomitee der SED, Abteilung Staats- und Rechtsfragen, 20.03.1961, Bl. 143. [My translation].

³⁵⁰ DRO, DD/LE/4/4/1/1, Lists of choral, dance and instrumental parties 1950-1959, p. 15.

³⁵¹ DRO, DD/LE/4/4/2, Musical and Staging Records – List of Competitors, p. 23.

³⁵² DRO, DD/LE/4/4/1/3, Lists of choral, dance and instrumental parties 1960-1969, p. 16.

³⁵³ DRO, DD/LE/4/4/2, Musical and Staging Records – List of Competitors, p. 25.

³⁵⁴ DRO, DD/LE/4/4/1/3, Lists of choral, dance and instrumental parties 1960-1969, Unpaginated. Note: The Dudelsack is a traditional Sorbian instrument, similar to bagpipes and made from goatskin. See: Stone, *Smallest Slavonic Nation*, p. 146.

³⁵⁵ Entry proposed for this year, but prior to travel, the competitors were denied entry visas by the Allied Travel Office in Berlin. See: Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D117 25, [Statement] 'Sorbischem Chor Einreise verweigert', 07.07.1964, Bl. 4.

³⁵⁶ DRO, DD/LE/4/4/1/3, Lists of choral, dance and instrumental parties 1960-1969, Unpaginated.

³⁵⁷ DRO, DD/LE/4/4/1/3, Lists of choral, dance and instrumental parties 1960-1969, Unpaginated.

³⁵⁸ Wright, *Gentle are its Songs*, p. 35.

Participating in the International Eisteddfod offered the SED further opportunities to seek additional contacts in the West. The delegation travelling to Wales to compete at Llangollen in July 1959 also held a specific objective of securing a future local politician delegation from Wales to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the GDR in Dresden.³⁵⁹ This targeted demographic was the type usually sought by the authorities to visit the GDR and is therefore consistent with examples raised in the existing literature. The visiting delegation raised the proposal with Huw T. Edwards and B. Haydn Williams. Willing to help, Edwards pointedly recommended that the invitation be jointly presented with the Domowina rather than independently by the hosts, the District Council of Dresden. When asked why the Domowina should be connected with the invitation, Edwards did not give a direct response, mentioning only that it would 'be wise'.³⁶⁰ The feedback material provides no further detail, but it is reasonable to infer from this that Edwards understood that the chances of the invitation being accepted would be higher if some connection could be made with a situation in Wales - with its minority - rather than overtly from the GDR authorities, particularly during a period of non-recognition. The use of Williams and Edwards to progress this objective demonstrates a clear reliance on contacts cultivated in Flintshire to facilitate further Welsh interactions and introductions. Additionally, these individuals proved useful for defending the GDR's activities in Wales. One reference in the feedback material recounted an episode where Williams rebuffed the attacks of 'reactionary Welsh circles' printed in the Welsh press who claimed that left-oriented Welsh politicians were exploiting and using Sorbian folk groups competing in Llangollen for their own political purposes.³⁶¹ A passage in the *Western Mail* did suggest that the Sorbs had links to the 'Welsh National Party',³⁶² which was rejected two days later by B. Haydn Williams:

Dr. Haydn Williams, Director of Education for Flintshire, tells me that this is not so. The Sorbs, he says, have no association with any political parties in this country [...] Dr. Williams says that this exchange of cultural information has no political significance of any character [...].³⁶³

Although no official connection existed between the Sorbs and Plaid Cymru, such strong rejections of links to the Welsh National Party are somewhat debased considering that the relationship was initiated by those who were members of Plaid Cymru. What is of further irony is the fact that strong political links did influence and permeate the Sorbian delegation, not only in terms of the SED membership of the Domowina leadership, but also through the ministerial delegates accompanying the choral competitors to Wales.

³⁵⁹ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D IV 1.1.7. 99, 'Bericht der Delegation nach Wales ... von Kurt Krenz', Bl. 6.

³⁶⁰ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D IV 1.1.7. 99, 'Bericht der Delegation nach Wales ... von Kurt Krenz', Bl. 21. [My translation].

³⁶¹ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV2/13/386, 'Bericht über die Teilnahme sorbischer Volkskunstgruppen ...', 28.07.1961, Bl. 225.

³⁶² 'Wales and the World', *Western Mail*, 11.07.1961, p. 4.

³⁶³ 'Wales and the World', *Western Mail*, 13.07.1961, p. 6.

Significant attention was paid by the SED delegates to the presence of British press representatives at the Eisteddfod. ‘The public interest in the Eisteddfod was confirmed by the presence of the central English [*sic*] press [...] Amongst others, the following media entities were present: the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express*, *News Chronicle*, *Daily Mirror* and the BBC.’³⁶⁴ It was quickly established by the visitors that it was possible to make political capital out of issues which arose as a result of logistical challenges experienced. During the first visit to Llangollen in 1959, the choir’s national costumes were held up at customs and were then lost by British Rail. After ‘VIP intervention’ and ‘a dozen phonecalls’ from the Eisteddfod, a police van rushed the costumes to Llangollen. This incident led to the Sorbian choir achieving some significant prominence in their first Eisteddfod, with the story highlighted on the front page of the *Wrexham Leader*,³⁶⁵ in the *News Chronicle and Daily Dispatch*,³⁶⁶ the *Daily Mail*³⁶⁷ and also in the *Daily Express*.³⁶⁸ One article entitled ‘Customs Ban cost us prize says Choir’³⁶⁹ provides an illuminating insight into the political capital generated by the affair.

[This] meant that the choir was one of the most popular groups in the Eisteddfod. [We] could complain against London bureaucracy. The English press got their sensation - the missing costumes rather than the content of the programme. But articles particularly in the *Daily Mail* and in the *News Chronicle* were positive for us. Naturally, our choir was the centre of attention [...] the costumes turned up with a police escort. Photos taken by the press after the evening performance included being arm-in-arm with the police inspector and his ‘bobbies’.³⁷⁰

In some respects and despite the inconvenience caused to the Sorbian competitors, the incident was useful in supporting the delegation’s aims of highlighting the unfair British treatment of the GDR, being symptomatic of the wider issues created by non-recognition. The approach of achieving as much media coverage as possible seems to have been consistently applied in later delegations to the Eisteddfod too. Numerous photos of the Sorbian competitors were published in the press including articles such as ‘Inge Posselt of East Germany poses in her national costume’,³⁷¹ ‘Encounter with a Dudelsack at Llangollen’³⁷² and ‘Karl Fillich plays a goat-skin pipe from East Germany’.³⁷³ The returning delegates reported experiencing ‘great interest’ by the media, in contrast to that afforded to the representation from the FRG. ‘Daily, there appeared picture reports of us in the biggest British newspapers, where our GDR origins were particularly emphasised. No notice was taken of the

³⁶⁴ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D IV 1.1.7. 99, ‘Bericht der Delegation nach Wales ... von Kurt Krenz’, Bl. 12. [My translation].

³⁶⁵ *Wrexham Leader*, 10.07.1959, p. 1

³⁶⁶ *New Chronicle and Daily Dispatch*, 09.07.1959, p. 6

³⁶⁷ ‘Trouble with Customs hit the Eisteddfod’, *Daily Mail*, 09.07.1959, p. 3

³⁶⁸ *Daily Express*, 10.07.1959, p. 3

³⁶⁹ ‘Customs Ban cost us prize says Choir’, *Daily Express*, 09.07.1959, p. 5

³⁷⁰ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D IV 1.1.7. 99, ‘Bericht der Delegation nach Wales ... von Kurt Krenz’, Bl. 15. [My translation].

³⁷¹ ‘Inge Posselt of East Germany poses in her national costume’, *Liverpool Echo*, 09.07.1960, p. 9

³⁷² ‘Encounter with a Dudelsack at Llangollen’, *Liverpool Daily Post*, 14.07.1961, p. 3

³⁷³ ‘Karl Fillich plays a goat-skin pipe from East Germany’, *Daily Mail*, 14.07.1961, p. 6

presence of West German groups'.³⁷⁴ Monitoring the status of the FRG in the competition and taking advantage of all opportunities to denounce the FRG was a regular activity. Although the GDR had also sought to arrange for the Sorbs to compete in 1964 (and despite significant efforts on the part of the Festival Director in support of the GDR's application), the Allied Travel Office in Berlin did not grant the required visas to the competitors, due to its policy of not issuing such documentation to GDR citizens in protest against the building of the Berlin Wall. In a statement to the Eisteddfod, the incident was used to support the GDR's typical criticism of the FRG, claiming that the visa refusal was due to pressure exerted by the FRG government in Bonn against the entry of GDR citizens to Britain. 'The peaceful, cultural exchange between representatives of the first German peace state and West European countries is prevented', underlining the 'urgent need' to stop such discriminating NATO practices against the GDR.³⁷⁵

Existing contacts also created additional opportunities for exposure. In 1961, B. Haydn Williams made arrangements for the Sorbian competitors to record a programme at the T.W.W. studios for transmission to Wales and the West broadcasting area, even including an appearance fee.³⁷⁶ Although a 15 minute programme on Sorbian '*Volkskultur*' was planned,³⁷⁷ it was cancelled at the last minute due to revised programme scheduling.³⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the returning 1961 delegation reported achieving multiple media appearances and references during their visit, including four appearances on 'English' [*sic*] television, two radio broadcasts and numerous examples of photo reports and commentary in the press.³⁷⁹ Through its colourfully-dressed and melodic Sorbian minority, competing at the Eisteddfod provided the GDR authorities with one of its few opportunities to promote a cultural identity in the Western press, a marked contrast with the usual depiction of the GDR in the British media.

The multiple competition entries made over a period of several years demonstrate the value ascribed to the International Eisteddfod by the SED authorities. Although there was a clear dependency on the Domowina's existing Flintshire contacts during the earlier years, (B Haydn Williams for example, continued supporting administrative queries relating to Llangollen as late as 1962),³⁸⁰ later archival

³⁷⁴ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Bericht über die Teilnahme des sorbischen Kammerchors Bautzen ...', Bl. 150. [My translation].

³⁷⁵ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D117 25, [Statement] 'Sorbischem Chor Einreise verweigert', 07.07.1964, Bl. 4. [My translation].

³⁷⁶ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D117 4, [Letter] from B. Haydn Williams to Martin Kroschk of the Domowina, 19.06.1961, Bl. 115.

³⁷⁷ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/386, 'Bericht über die Teilnahme sorbischer Volkskunstgruppen', 28.07.1961, Bl. 224.

³⁷⁸ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Bericht über die Teilnahme des sorbischen Kammerchors Bautzen ...', Bl. 150.

³⁷⁹ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/386, 'Bericht über die Teilnahme sorbischer Volkskunstgruppen ...', 28.07.1961, Bl. 223.

³⁸⁰ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D 117 4, [Letter] B. Haydn Williams to Martin Kroschk of Domowina, 20.08.1962, Bl. 29.

correspondence between the International Eisteddfod office and the GDR authorities indicate an eventual degree of independence. Although the construction of the Berlin Wall had led to greater diplomatic difficulties for the GDR to engage with Western contacts, the International Eisteddfod remained welcoming. A key concern documented in the SED material was whether the International Eisteddfod would permit an entry from the GDR following the building of the ‘protective wall’. When this enquiry was made to the Eisteddfod, the response given was that nothing had changed in Llangollen – ‘the same hospitality and the same courtesy that has been shown to over fifty nations over many decades will of course still be shown’.³⁸¹ Despite the difficulties posed by non-issuing of visas (both for entry to Britain and the restrictions caused by the GDR’s own policy on freedom of movement), there remained a clear appetite to participate in the International Eisteddfod, even after the demise of the original relationship with the Flintshire educationalists. Kurt Krenz wrote to the International Eisteddfod in 1970 stating how unfortunate it had been that the Sorbs had not been able to compete during the last few years, but that he saw better prospects in the future. ‘Unfortunately, this year it isn’t possible to send a cultural ensemble, but can we send a delegation of three? They would discuss with you the participation of a Sorbian cultural ensemble for next year and prepare for participation’.³⁸² By 1972, a further Sorbian cultural delegation participated in the Eisteddfod.³⁸³ Each delegation to Llangollen was a significant financial undertaking. Costs incurred in competing in the International Eisteddfod from 28.06 - 13.07.1960 for example, totalled 31,182.08 DM.³⁸⁴ Clearly, the opportunities for cultivating wider networks, participating on a cultural world stage and promoting the image of the GDR in the West justified such expenditure, as demonstrated by the repeated participation and continued interest.

The Llangollen International Eisteddfod remains an event which gives all participating representatives equal competitor status, regardless of origin or political affiliation. In a period of non-recognition, it allowed the GDR to enjoy a sense of equality with representatives of other states. Considerable emphasis was given in *Neues Deutschland* (and thus to a national readership) of the fame and the international appeal of the competition. One article drew attention to the Sorbian choir competing on behalf of the GDR against representatives from 30 other countries, with the GDR flag raised and flown in Wales.³⁸⁵ This was the GDR on the world stage – the plurality of participants in the Eisteddfod saw the GDR described as an independent entity amongst many nations from across the world. The feedback reports suggest that the perceived status of the GDR in Llangollen was subject to continuous observation by delegation members. ‘On the flag of the GDR in Llangollen, [it was]

³⁸¹ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D117 25, [Letter] from Günter Wichmann to Köhler, 22.06.1964, Bl. 11. [My translation].

³⁸² Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D 117 4, [Letter] from Kurt Krenz to W. S. Gwynn Williams (Musical Director of Llangollen International Eisteddfod), 20.05.1970, Bl. 9.

³⁸³ Wright, *Gentle are its Songs*, p. 35.

³⁸⁴ Serbski kulturny archiv Budyšin, D 117 4, ‘Vorläufiger Finanzierungsplan zur Teilnahme am ‘International Musical Eisteddfod’ vom 28. Juni – 13. Juli 1960’, Bl. 222.

³⁸⁵ ‘DDR-Flagge weht in Wales (Llangollen)’, *Neues Deutschland*, 9.07.1960, S 5.

interesting that it flew between the flags of the USA and West Germany'.³⁸⁶ As late as 1980, a prominent representative of the GDR's *Liga für Völkerfreundschaft* (Dietmar Hahn) recollected how due to the International Eisteddfod, the first nation to fly the GDR's flag outside the socialist countries of the Warsaw Pact had been Wales.³⁸⁷

Conclusion

Throughout the period of engagement with Flintshire educationalists and the multiple Sorbian appearances in the Llangollen International Eisteddfod, the SED's core objective was to exploit all opportunities to widen networks and to seek access to individuals of influence. 'Through the School functionaries, it is to be achieved that we make contact with representatives of parliament, business and culture, with the goal of achieving an official and mutual relationship'.³⁸⁸ Receiving an official invitation to Wales enabled such endeavours, with access to prominent Welsh personalities such as Huw T. Edwards generating new opportunities. But what of the Sorbian people? In the Welsh press, particular attention was given to comments by Sorbian delegates (Krenz *et al*) describing the freedoms and rights afforded to the Sorbs by the Communist state. Public declarations of an affinity were made with concerns raised over the Welsh minority being merely tolerated by the political authorities, rather than receiving practical and political support. There was a clear correlation between the perceptions of the GDR promulgated by Domowina representatives in Wales and the delegation objectives outlined in SED briefing papers. The simplest explanation for this of course is that the claims made by the SED delegates regarding the GDR's support for the Sorbs were perfectly valid and were thus acknowledged by the Sorbs. The Sorbian people however were being represented in Wales by leading members of the Domowina. Lindeth and Soldan previously raised concerns about the legitimacy of the Domowina's leadership during this period, as having not necessarily been aligned with the needs of the Sorbian people. Suggesting that the Domowina leadership instead conformed to the requirements of the SED, Lindeth and Soldan also identified Kurt Krenz as a key SED functionary.

From the very beginning, the Domowina faced political pressure to promote the monopoly of power of the communist party among the Sorbs [...] SED cadres also held most other positions of leadership within the organisation. The official alliance of the Domowina with the SED led to an atmosphere of distrust and discontent among the members of the Domowina towards their leadership. Between 1947 and 1951 alone, membership in the Domowina dropped by 50%; the downward trend continued into the late 1960s.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁶ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/386, 'Bericht über die Teilnahme sorbischer Volkskunstgruppen ...', 28.07.1961, Bl. 225. [My translation].

³⁸⁷ Interview with Brynach Parri, 28.09.2013.

³⁸⁸ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/13/385, 'Vorschlag zur Entsendung einer Delegation sorbischer Lehrer ...', Bl. 168. [My translation].

³⁸⁹ Lindeth, M. & Soldan, A. (2000) 'The Sorbian population before and after German reunification', *Debatte: Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, 8(2), p. 153.

This raises the concern that of the available material highlighting the activities and representations of the Sorbs in Wales, what evidence exists merely serves as a pseudo extension of SED views rather than representing the experiences and perceptions of the general Sorbian population. It is indisputable that the SED government provided support and resources to the Sorbian people; a significant contrast with the erstwhile treatment of the Sorbs under previous regimes. Yet despite all the positive statements and representations made to the Flintshire educationalists (in particular) during this period, certain policies were being introduced by the authorities, which negatively impacted the position of the Sorbs. A key policy change in the late 1950s was a shift from a 'bilingual Lusatia' to a new primary objective of achieving the 'highest form of national equality for Sorbs – namely, socialist equality', with the preservation of the Sorbian language playing a secondary role.³⁹⁰ This had a significant impact on the state of Sorbian education. Whilst on the one hand, the SED representatives and the Domowina leadership were demonstrating to Flintshire delegates how full Sorbian education provision had been achieved (and were overtly expressing such achievements during delegations to Wales), the authorities were simultaneously amending the language policy relating to the teaching of sciences, permitting the teaching of these subjects through the medium of German in the A-Schools.

The directive from the *Minister für Volksbildung* of the GDR of 2nd October 1962, prescribed the use of the German language in the case of chemistry, mathematics, physics and citizenship education. Because of this, Sorbian obtained an inferior position in education. The following directive of 30th of April 1964 made this position even worse. From then on Sorbian education became dependent on the decision of the parents, that is to say, it became voluntary. A substantial decline in numbers of pupils was the result. In 1963 11,600 pupils took part in Sorbian education, a year later only 3,300 pupils received Sorbian education.³⁹¹

A direct consequence of this of course, was a reduction in the quantity and competency levels of schoolchildren using the Sorbian language. This, coupled with a decline in the prestige of Sorbian as a 'living language', lowered 'the communicative potential of the Sorbian language in the community'. The dilution of the Sorbian education policy prompted a decline of almost 75% in the number of students who studied Sorbian (from 12,800 in 1962 to 3,200 in 1964).³⁹² Barker also questioned the validity of GDR support for the Sorbs relative to its economic priorities:

While official policy proclaimed that it was promoting the development of the Sorbian language and culture, it was at the same time undermining them through its economic policies, at the centre of which were industrialisation and open-cast mining.³⁹³

It is therefore questionable whether the support provided by the SED to facilitate the Welsh-Sorbian relationship was necessarily aligned with Sorbian objectives and was instead pursued to serve a higher SED purpose. In view of the considerable political and financial investment employed, the SED (via the Domowina leadership) evidently perceived a value in continuing to engage with Flintshire

³⁹⁰ Lindseth & Soldan, 'The Sorbian population', p. 154.

³⁹¹ Hemminga, *The Sorbian language*, p. 9.

³⁹² Lindseth & Soldan, 'The Sorbian population', p. 154.

³⁹³ Barker, 'From Wendish-Speaking Germans', p. 49.

contacts and participating in the International Eisteddfod. A report from the 1961 delegation stated how 'interest for the Republic has risen through the Sorbian folk culture in England and especially in Wales'.³⁹⁴ Although the objective of engaging with Welsh contacts was publicly-stated as being for the promotion of Sorbian culture, the material suggests that any benefit achieved through the activities undertaken in Wales was incidental. It is evident that the main incentive for engagement was to support the GDR's foreign policy aims: pursuing recognition of the GDR, contrasting its anti-fascist nature with that of the FRG and promoting the GDR as the true German peace state.

Despite the multitude of contacts encountered in Wales by the numerous delegations, it is very evident that it was the Welsh-speaking associates of Flintshire who proved to be the 'true friends' of the GDR in Wales during this period, influenced by their perceptions of the GDR's treatment of its minority - a significant propaganda coup for the GDR. B. Haydn Williams, Huw T. Edwards *et al* facilitated opportunities for the SED and the Domowina to establish greater networks, particularly with political figures such as MPs and local politicians. The Flintshire hosts not only enabled access to wider Welsh cultural circles such as the International Eisteddfod in Llangollen, but also arranged for greater media exposure via press and television than would otherwise have been achieved and in which medium they were also prepared to publicly defend the GDR. The evidence demonstrates that contacts traditionally belonging to the *Welsh Wales* identity type, such as Labour MPs and local politicians were regularly receptive to interactions with the delegates, in all likelihood due to a mixture of curiosity and courtesy. Often, such contacts willingly met the delegations and even discussed possible future visits, but no evidence has been unearthed of definitive follow-on activity or later interactions. No material whatsoever has been found of engagement with contacts conforming to the *British Wales* identity type and although this may have been influenced by the networks of their original Flintshire contacts, it is consistent with the identity types interacting with the GDR as illustrated in the existing British-GDR scholarship. Although the greater engagement of Welsh-speakers was of course influenced by the existing relationship established in 1958, the magnitude and depth of support seems to have been due to the respect held for the GDR's treatment of its minority, as was also demonstrated by the stark differences in the media reporting. This sentiment was undoubtedly further enhanced by a perceived affinity with the Sorbian people - a consideration which would not likely have applied to the *Welsh Wales* and the *British Wales* identity types. The GDR's treatment of the Sorbs became a recurring theme in attracting the engagement of Welsh-speakers and was used again by the GDR authorities in the 1980s. The impact and effectiveness of this approach twenty years after the GDR's interactions with the Flintshire educationalists is evaluated in the fourth chapter.

³⁹⁴ SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV2/13/386, 'Bericht über die Teilnahme sorbischer Volkskunstgruppen ...', Bl. 233. [My translation].

CHAPTER 3 - TRADE UNION RELATIONS BETWEEN THE FDGB AND THE NUM (SOUTH WALES AREA)

This chapter evaluates interactions between the GDR's *Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (FDGB)³⁹⁵ and the most prominent trade union in Wales during the Cold War period, the South Wales Area of the National Union of Mineworkers [henceforth: the Union]. Berger & LaPorte determined how 'proletarian internationalism' played an influential role in directing the GDR's foreign policy, describing how the state sought an alliance 'with all progressive forces in Western capitalist states whilst denouncing the capitalist regimes and the alleged misery they brought for the working classes.'³⁹⁶ South Wales was an area dominated by heavy industry, above all mining, with numerous immigrants contributing to its global export of coal.³⁹⁷ Its workers were represented by a strong and dominant trade union which advocated an internationalist perspective. In his work on the contribution of Welsh miners in the international brigades of the Spanish Civil War, Hywel Francis considered the political ideology of the South Wales coalfield and the part played by trade unionism in its development.

It is difficult to assess how universally accepted the ideology of 'proletarian internationalism' was among the working men and women of the coalfield. What is clear is that it had, at times, a dominant, even hegemonic presence within the [South Wales Miners' Federation] and was seen by very many miners as their only salvation: to the outside world, a strangely *Biblical* aspiration!³⁹⁸

The Union's predecessor, the South Wales Miners' Federation (SWMF), was not only prominent in the mining community it represented, it also had considerable impact within the wider Welsh labour movement.³⁹⁹ Promoting itself as an 'international and internationalist organisation', the Federation was by the 1930s 'the most powerful single political forum in South Wales', representing 135,000 miners and sponsoring thirteen Members of Parliament.⁴⁰⁰ This was the ideological basis the Union inherited when it was established in 1945.⁴⁰¹ It continued and developed the vigorous socio-political role of its predecessor of which internationalism was such an integral part. 'The conception of [the Union's] role in British society and in a world context was more that of a dynamic political party than an orthodox trade union'.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁵ The GDR's Trade Union Organisation, a TUC equivalent. A state-run organisation, the individual unions of the FDGB represented almost a hundred per cent of the GDR's adult population. This was in contrast with the member unions of the TUC and the 'capitalist democracies', which were instead operating as organisations 'representative of freely associating workers'. Fulbrook, M. (2005) *The People's State – East German Society from Hitler to Honecker*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 224

³⁹⁶ Berger, S. & LaPorte, N. (2010) *Friendly Enemies: Britain and the GDR 1949-1990*, New York: Berghahn Books, p. 4.

³⁹⁷ Francis, H. (1984) *Miners Against Fascism: Wales and the Spanish Civil War*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, p. 34.

³⁹⁸ Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, p. 39.

³⁹⁹ Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, p. 99.

⁴⁰⁰ Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, p. 139.

⁴⁰¹ Francis, H. & Smith, D. (1998) *The Fed: A History of South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century*, 2 edn., Cardiff: University of Wales Press, p. 426.

⁴⁰² Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, p. 263.

Historically, the political identity of the South Wales coalfield has conformed to Balsom's *Welsh Wales* identity type, displaying loyalties to socialist and communist platforms. In 2001, Thomas described its political heritage:

[...] the political culture of the south Wales valleys area has been monolithically Labour for decades, with an earlier more heroic substratum of Communist and trade union activism and miners' strikes, a rhetoric of internationalism, hostility to nationalism (and often to the Welsh language) and suspicion of devolution as a sop to nationalism. This culture identified itself as Welsh, or perhaps south-Walian, within a British working-class and a British political order.⁴⁰³

With reference to this political and internationalist background, this chapter considers whether key GDR policies such as its opposition to fascism, a resistance to the rearmament of the FRG and its desire for 'peaceful co-existence' resonated with Welsh miners and questions whether this was influenced by their political identity. Bauerkämper previously identified British trade unionists as key targets for the GDR and the receptiveness of Welsh miners to the concept of 'diplomacy through delegation' has already been acknowledged within the existing literature.⁴⁰⁴ Consideration is therefore given to the effectiveness of the GDR's methods for engagement and whether independent actions conducted by the Union during this period (such as its activities in opposition to FRG rearmament), were influenced by its interactions with the GDR. Though the miners of South Wales identified themselves as Welsh, this chapter demonstrates that relations with the GDR arose as a result of the coalfield's internationalist attitude, rather than any specific influence or feature relating to Welsh identity.

Pre-recognition, the British government's refusal to acknowledge the GDR's existence was mirrored by the TUC's attitude, firmly rejecting any interaction with the FDGB and declining to recognise the organisation as the 'legitimate representative' of workers in the GDR.⁴⁰⁵ The FDGB was therefore forced to pursue relations with any sympathetic individual trade union 'where a strong Communist presence ensured a far more favourable reception of overtures of East German trade unionists'.⁴⁰⁶ From the late 1940s onwards, the TUC instructed all of its members 'either to leave communications from the FDGB unanswered or to forward them to the Executive Committees of their respective associations'.⁴⁰⁷ Furthermore, the British Foreign Office officially requested that participants in non-governmental organisations, such as trade unions, did nothing to support any approach by the GDR to form diplomatic relations. Archival evidence demonstrates that the Union did not adhere to any such requirement but instead, actively responded to and engaged with the FDGB (and its mining union, the *Industriegewerkschaft Bergbau und Energie*) as well as the various supporters of the GDR who

⁴⁰³ Thomas, N. (2001) 'New Wales? New Culture?', *Institute for British-Irish Studies: IBIS Working Paper no. 6*, p. 5.

⁴⁰⁴ Bauerkämper, A. (2002) *Britain and the GDR: Relations and Perceptions in a Divided World*, Berlin: Philo, p. 19.

⁴⁰⁵ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, pp. 42 – 44.

⁴⁰⁶ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 21.

⁴⁰⁷ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 44.

communicated through speculative letters and via existing British-GDR friendship networks. Berger and LaPorte highlighted how the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) furnished the FDGB with lists of names and addresses of individuals who were either communist union officials or persons considered likely to be sympathetic towards building up fraternal links.⁴⁰⁸ A document in the SAPMO archive provides a specific Welsh example of this method, illustrated by a letter to the Union from the GDR, sent via the CPGB.⁴⁰⁹

Strategy papers in the SAPMO⁴¹⁰ section of the German federal archives provide an insight into the aims and objectives of the FDGB. Mandated by SED Central Committee policy, the FDGB defined a strategy for developing British trade union relations, principally to further the cause for recognition of the GDR. Numerous reports by its executive board informed the SED Central Committee of progress made. The content of all reviewed strategy papers unambiguously illustrates how the FDGB did not work independently but rather as an organ of the state, directed by central policy. Each paper regularly identified themes with which to engage trade unions. Most were consistent with those identified in the literature review, including achieving British recognition of the GDR, promoting a resistance to fascism, pursuing world peace, highlighting the perils of FRG imperialism and the GDR's opposition to FRG rearmament.⁴¹¹ Of greatest appeal to miners in Wales was the GDR's position on fascism. Welsh miners had already acted in direct opposition to fascist ideology even before the formation of the GDR. Prior to the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, the SWMF 'consistently passed resolutions against the imprisonment of Socialists and Communists in fascist and neo-fascist countries'⁴¹² and was 'always vigilant to the growth of fascism in Europe whether it was in Germany, Austria, Spain or within its own mining communities [...]' Its Executive Council needed little prompting from lodges and would often take initiatives itself.⁴¹³ Influenced by the South Wales District of the CPGB and with the SWMF 'rooted in proletarian internationalism',⁴¹⁴ 118 of the 174 Welshmen who volunteered for the International Brigades in Spain for example, came from the mining valleys of South Wales,⁴¹⁵ with 33 volunteers losing their lives.⁴¹⁶ Although Stradling's study concluded that Welsh interest in

⁴⁰⁸ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 45. For further context, see also: Berger, S. & LaPorte, N. (2005) 'Official Anti-Communism and What Lay Beneath: The British Trade Unions and the 'Other' Germany, 1949-1989' in Berger, S. & LaPorte, N. (eds.) *The Other Germany: Perceptions and Influences in British-East German Relations, 1945-1990*, Augsburg: Wissner-Verlag, pp. 141-158.

⁴⁰⁹ Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (Berlin) [henceforth: SAPMO-BArch], DY30/IV2/20/237, [Letter] Abteilung Aussenpolitik und Internationale Verbindungen des ZKs der SED to Executiv-Komitee der Kommunistischen Partei Britanniens, 30.08.1954, Bl. 1.

⁴¹⁰ Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR.

⁴¹¹ SAPMO-BArch, DY34/24615, 'Zusammenarbeit der Gewerkschaften Grossbritanniens und der DDR', 20.08.1963, Bl. 1.

⁴¹² Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, p. 140.

⁴¹³ Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, p. 141.

⁴¹⁴ Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, p. 98.

⁴¹⁵ Coalfield Web Materials (2002) *International Unity*. Available at:

http://www.agor.org.uk/cwm/themes/love%20and%20hate/international_unity.asp, (Accessed: 14.05.2014).

⁴¹⁶ Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, p. 251.

the ‘plight of the Spanish republic [...] was ‘superficial and transient [...] even in the southern coalfield, its effect was far from [being a] whirlwind populist action’,⁴¹⁷ Francis believed that the involvement of Welsh miners in the International Brigades in Spain had a significant long-term effect.

The SWMF’s commitment to the Spanish cause had a profound and lasting impact on its subsequent internationalist perspectives. Its consistent, anti-fascist and internationalist policy from the late 1930s, can be traced directly to the period of the Spanish Civil War.⁴¹⁸

Will Paynter was President of the Union from 1951 to 1959 (and of the central NUM from 1959 to 1968) and was described in *The Times* as one of the leading British Communists of his generation.⁴¹⁹ He had himself fought alongside international comrades in Spain. A former full-time activist in the Communist Party, Paynter had attended the Lenin School in Russia and had assisted the underground movement in Nazi Germany.⁴²⁰ Writing in 1983, Paynter reflected on the historical internationalist attitudes of Welsh miners and how this culture had influenced their actions and causes.

The Welsh miners have a proud history of internationalism, especially in the fight against fascism and tyranny at home and abroad. They have constantly championed the cause of the downtrodden.⁴²¹

In May 1954, Paynter elected in his presidential address to cite excerpts from a recent German Democratic report on the resurgence of Nazi elements in the FRG and the threat posed by FRG rearmament. ‘German rearmament is intended not only as a spearhead of war against Soviet Russia and the Eastern Democracies, but also to strengthen reactionary forces and prevent the unity of the country on a progressive basis’. He claimed that re-arming a divided Germany was a ‘sinister development in the American war plans’.⁴²² During his leadership, the Union was regarded as one of the most communist-influenced industrial trade unions. ‘There is no future for us under Capitalism. We must be the architects of our own future if we want peace, security and Socialism’.⁴²³ This statement strongly suggests that the Union would not have repelled attempts at forging links with the trade unions of socialist countries, especially as there was a precedent for such activity. Relations with the trade unions of the Soviet Union had been strong in the 1920s.⁴²⁴ As exemplified by the content of Paynter’s address, the Union was using material generated by the GDR by at least 1954, making statements which were in harmony with views the SED wished to see transmitted in the West. The use of this material in 1954 suggests that interactions were occurring prior to 1955, the year in which Hoff

⁴¹⁷ Stradling, R. (2004) *Wales and the Spanish Civil War: The Dragon’s Dearest Cause?*, Cardiff: UWP, p. 171

⁴¹⁸ Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, p.153.

⁴¹⁹ ‘Obituary: Mr. William Paynter – Former general secretary of the NUM’, *The Times*, 13.12.1984, p. 16

⁴²⁰ Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, p. 80.

⁴²¹ Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, [Will Paynter’s foreword, May Day, 1983], p. 20.

⁴²² South Wales Miners Library [henceforth: SWML], ‘NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes: May, 1954 – President’s address, p. 4.

⁴²³ SWML, ‘President’s address’, p. 16.

⁴²⁴ See for example, the minutes of the SWMF in the South Wales Miners Library.

stated that the GDR's 'British campaign' commenced.⁴²⁵ Paynter also expressed a desire for peace and clearly outlined the Union's opposition to the rearmament of the FRG: 'peace by negotiation [...] no revival of German militarism'.⁴²⁶ This position complemented what Berger & LaPorte described as the GDR's policy in reinforcing the notion of a fascist, militant FRG: 'whenever neo-Nazism raised its head in the FRG it was portrayed as confirming the danger emanating from an unreconstructed West Germany. The GDR successfully played on British fears about West German rearmament [...]'.⁴²⁷ Hoff also described how the GDR (with Labour MP delegations) sought to project an impression that it had stamped out militarism and fascism in the GDR and how it used its energies for the preservation of freedom and the fight against fascist and military forces in the FRG.⁴²⁸ Whereas the FRG was beyond reform and accommodating 'sabre-rattling Nazis', the GDR promoted itself as the 'other', 'new' Germany.⁴²⁹

Opposition to FRG rearmament was not a position held exclusively by the Union leadership. There are numerous examples of individual mining lodges within the jurisdiction of the Union expressing concern at the prospect of FRG rearmament. Though there is no evidence to suggest that any individual lodge protest followed specific guidance or a particular prompt from any GDR agency, these actions nevertheless indicate a deeply-held concern by Union members, one which complemented a strongly-promulgated SED/FDGB message.

The political actions of the Union throughout the mid-1950s corresponded harmoniously with the SED and the FDGB's own objectives. The resistance of the Welsh miners to German rearmament, their proactive support of anti-fascist measures and a dynamic interest in pursuing elements of socialism brought the efforts of the Union in close alignment with the pursuits of the SED in what seemed to be common ground. Petitioning MPs against German rearmament was one such example. One incident which further exemplifies this alignment was correspondence from the Brynteg lodge in 1954 demanding that the Union took a position of opposing German rearmament. 'The German government and its military caste had been responsible for the last two world wars [...Brynteg] felt that it was an exceedingly dangerous policy once again to re-arm this nation'.⁴³⁰ In this particular case, the Union's Executive Council resolved to lobby the Miners' Members of Parliament to protest against German rearmament.⁴³¹ A number of mining lodges also urged the Executive Council to call a Special Area

⁴²⁵ Hoff, H. (2002) 'Die Politik der DDR gegenüber Grossbritannien 1949-1973' in Bauerkämper, *Britain and the GDR*, Bl. 268, For further examples of interactions prior to 1955, see also: Berger & LaPorte, 'Official Anti-Communism and What Lay Beneath', pp. 141-158.

⁴²⁶ SWML, 'President's address', p. 5.

⁴²⁷ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 316.

⁴²⁸ Hoff, H. (2003) *Großbritannien und die DDR 1955-1973: Diplomatie auf Umwegen*, München: Oldenburg Verlag, S. 147.

⁴²⁹ Hoff, *Großbritannien und die DDR 1955-1973*, S. 313

⁴³⁰ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Item 99: Brynteg Lodge – German Rearmament', 23.02.1954, p. 180.

⁴³¹ SWML, 'Item 99', 23.02.1954, p. 180.

Conference to discuss the subject of German rearmament and to again mandate the Miners' Members of Parliament to lobby other Welsh Members of Parliament too.⁴³² Notably, one of the Union Executive Council members tasked to fulfil this action was Jack Jones, who had recently returned from a visit to the GDR. Jones' delegation report documented the 'ardent desire of the German people for peace' and a clear opposition to the re-armament of the FRG.⁴³³ It is logical to assume that his prior experience as a delegate to the GDR may have strongly influenced his opinions and perspectives on the issue.

Correspondence was received directly from the GDR's Miners' Union, in which it stated its position in respect of the rearmament of FRG forces, inviting the Union to send delegates to a conference in Berlin.⁴³⁴ Though the Executive Council 'regretfully declined' this particular invitation, a message of goodwill was sent to the conference as its aims 'coincide with the policy decisions of this Union on this question'.⁴³⁵ This wording explicitly demonstrates recognition by the Welsh miners of mutual agreement with one of the GDR's policies. GDR-specific arguments were quoted by several lodges to justify raising protests. In one example dating from 1960, one of the lodges, when discussing the 'German problem', cited examples of the SED's policies and declarations: 'the East German Government has already agreed on three plans for the solution of the German problem and has submitted them to West Germany; these plans, as a whole or in part, would have the effect of making Germany, for the first time in modern history, a centre-point for peace rather than for war'.⁴³⁶ Numerous attestations within the Union archive illustrate how such statements led to demands for the Executive Council to lobby not only MPs on the subject, but also the National Executive Committee of the National Union of Mineworkers and the TUC.⁴³⁷

Opposition to FRG rearmament was an issue actively pursued by the Union from the 1950s onwards, having greater resonance in the early 1960s as a result of the Ministry of Defence's decision to allow FRG Panzer troops to train on Welsh soil in fulfilment of Britain's NATO membership obligations. This act allowed the ongoing debate on FRG militarism to develop a uniquely Welsh facet (both geographically and politically). It is apparent from the minutes of the Executive Council that the Union was strongly opposed to such a venture, demonstrating a comprehensive awareness of wider pan-German politics. In March 1960 for example, a protest originating from the Abercraf lodge was presented to the Executive Council, urging it to act against the prospect of training German troops on Welsh soil. The message of protest was supplemented with material describing how the Chancellor of

⁴³² SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Item 585: Nine Power Pact – German Rearmament – Abercraf and Onllwyn Lodge', 15.11.1954, p. 995.

⁴³³ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Item 570: Visit to East Germany', 02.11.1954, p. 897

⁴³⁴ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Item 273: East German Miners', 13.05.1958, p. 446.

⁴³⁵ SWML, 'Item 273', 13.05.1958, p. 446.

⁴³⁶ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council, 'Minutes of Annual Youth Conference', 29.09.1961, p. 822.

⁴³⁷ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Item 40: Resurgence of Nazism in Germany and other parts of the world', 12.01.1960, p. 19.

the FRG had recently ignored a proposal from the GDR to agree to the ending of the 'cold war', renounce nuclear arms in both German states, effect an arms 'stop', renounce rocket bases on German territory and execute a non-aggression pact between the two German States. In this, one of several similar pleas to the Executive Council, Union members called for the following measures:

- To call upon the National Union⁴³⁸ to inform the Government, the TUC and the Labour Party that we will not silently allow the betrayal of those who died to defeat German Nazism, by training West German troops for nuclear warfare on British soil, [and]
- If this protest goes unheeded, to demand a special congress of the TUC to organise and plan trade union resistance to this madness, [and]
- Call upon the rank-and-file of the Labour Movement to organise mass rallies and meetings to register their protest [and]
- Call upon the Mining Members of Parliament to demand the release of information in respect of secret negotiations that have taken place between Britain and the West German Defence Minister.⁴³⁹

According to the Executive Council minutes, this approach and policy was endorsed and pursued. If successful, such action would have served GDR interests as well as those of the Union. The SED authorities observed these concerns, reporting in 1962 how 'in the last few months, the German and West Berlin problem and the role of the GDR in the quest for peace have been more heavily discussed in the English [*sic*] trade unions'.⁴⁴⁰ This extract also demonstrates the Union's natural escalation route of its sponsored MPs and the TUC, thus illustrating its appeal to the FDGB as a potentially influential ally.

Much of the material from the Union's Executive Council sessions in 1960, 1961 and 1962 document an extensive amount of protest activity against the British government's decision to allow FRG Panzers to train at a military base in Castlemartin, Pembrokeshire.⁴⁴¹ The issue occupied a great deal of Union resource and attention with significant effort invested in protesting against the proposal. Special interest groups were mobilised, prominent individuals and governmental organisations were lobbied, rallies were organised, conferences were held and publicity was sought. The prominence of the Union and its protests was sufficient to achieve a degree of coverage in the British and Welsh press. One such example was an article in *The Times*, explicitly illustrating the role played by the Union.

A mass demonstration and protest march against more German Panzer troops being sent to Wales for training are to be staged [...] 200 delegates representing an estimated 400,000 trade union and Labour Party organisations, local authorities and other bodies from all over South Wales [have] passed a resolution demanding cancellation of the plan to bring more than 2000

⁴³⁸ The central NUM organisation.

⁴³⁹ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Item 185: Abercrave Lodge – Training of West German Troops on British soil', 08.03.1960, p. 183.

⁴⁴⁰ SAPMO-BArch, DY34/8086, 'Grossbritannien', Bl. 2. [My translation].

⁴⁴¹ For further context on this episode, see: Berger, S. & LaPorte, N. (2011) 'Welsh Labour and the Cold War', *Llafur*, 10 (4), pp. 58-76.

Panzer troops to Castlemartin. Mr. Will Whitehead, president of the South Wales area of the National Union of Mineworkers, described the plan for sending Panzer troops as ‘the greatest insult that could be thrown in our faces.’⁴⁴²

Two years later at the 1963 annual conference, the training of FRG troops in Wales remained a prominent topic, becoming the subject of an Emergency Resolution.

Conference expresses its anger and alarm at the admission of further members of German Armed Forces in increased numbers to train in Wales, despite the overwhelming opposition of the Welsh and National Labour Parties, the Trades Unions Congress and the NUM. This can only increase the danger of German militarism already seeking nuclear weapons. [...] The land of our fathers will yet again be contaminated by the presence of German troops at Castlemartin, although the people of Pembrokeshire have buried the illusion propagated by their Labour M.P. Desmond Donnelly.⁴⁴³

This was a reference to the fact that Desmond Donnelly, the Labour MP for Pembrokeshire, believed that the FRG needed to develop a degree of military capability to counter any threat from the Soviet Union. The Dictionary of Welsh Biography described Donnelly as an individual whose opposition to communism had strengthened following travels to Eastern Europe and China; visits which preceded his publication of anti-communist works such as *The March Wind: Explorations behind the Iron Curtain* (1959) and a *Struggle for the World: the Cold War from its Origins in 1917* (1965).⁴⁴⁴

Donnelly was openly supportive of FRG troops training at Castlemartin and *The Times* quoted his position as expressed during a parliamentary debate on the subject:

Mr. Donnelly (Pembroke, Lab.) said that the people in the Pembroke area had no hostility to this proposal. There was a genuine feeling in the district of ‘letting bygones be bygones’. The people he represented had no hymn of hate in their hearts. It should not be forgotten that German rearmament began on the eastern side of the border, not the western. Having agreed to the principle of West German rearmament, the issue was whether they wished to see the German army outside the western alliance, ostracised and isolated, or integrated and part of the fabric of the west.⁴⁴⁵

The Spectator quoted another of Donnelly’s statements to parliament, where he declared that in Pembrokeshire, ‘as far as [he] could find there was no local feeling against the arrangement’.⁴⁴⁶

Donnelly was also accused during a parliamentary debate of suggesting that protesters demonstrating ‘against the Panzers coming to Wales were Communists and that they were being paid for by Communists’.⁴⁴⁷ Although his opinions were influenced by what he had observed during his

⁴⁴² ‘Welsh Protest on Panzers Planned’, *The Times*, 16.04.1962, p. 19.

⁴⁴³ SWML, ‘NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes: NUM (South Wales) Area Annual Conference held at Porthcawl, 13-17th May, 1963’, Unpaginated.

⁴⁴⁴ Y Bywgraffiadur Ar-lein (2009) *Donnelly, Desmond Louis (1920-1974)*, Available at: <http://yba.llgc.org.uk/cy/c6-DONN-LOU-1920.html>, (Accessed: 22.07.2014).

⁴⁴⁵ ‘German Troops in Britain’, *The Times*, 20.07.1961, p. 6.

⁴⁴⁶ ‘Panzers in Pembrokeshire’, *The Spectator*, 03.08.1961, p. 12.

⁴⁴⁷ HC Deb 15 March 1962 vol. 655, col. 1627, Available at: http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1962/mar/15/vote-9-miscellaneous-effective-services#column_1627 (Accessed: 04.04.2015).

participation in an earlier delegation to the GDR, they may also have been demonstrative of wider public opinion in Pembrokeshire, an area outside the coalfield and therefore one reputed to present a different political identity. Balsom for example, identified Pembrokeshire as mostly displaying *British Welsh* identity features. Despite its representation by a Labour MP, Donnelly did not share the same background as the Labour MPs of the coalfield. An Englishman of Irish extraction, Donnelly eventually drifted to the right of the political spectrum and later became a member of the Conservative Party.⁴⁴⁸ In contrast, S.O. Davies, a fellow Labour Party MP, actively opposed the presence of the FRG troops in Wales. Born and bred in the South Wales coalfield, Davies was one of the Union-sponsored 'Miners' MPs' subject to Union lobbying activities and whom had previously sought to defend the GDR in Parliament.⁴⁴⁹ Having visited Russia in 1922, which 'furnished him with a lifelong but often uncritical admiration for the Soviet system',⁴⁵⁰ Davies remained a committed supporter of socialism and strongly opposed the rearmament of the FRG.⁴⁵¹ Later in 1966, he was quoted in *Neues Deutschland* as declaring that the GDR deserved gratitude for its constructive suggestions for European security and world peace.⁴⁵² Davies was thus receptive to Union lobbying on the issue of training FRG troops in Wales. *The Times* reported Davies leading an eight man delegation to present a protest at the Ministry of Defence in London, quoting Davies as follows: 'we made it perfectly clear [...] the trades councils in Pembrokeshire are categorically opposed to any idea that any Germans in uniform should go into their country', presenting a resolution passed by the joint conference of the National Union of Mineworkers (South Wales area) and the Glamorgan Federation of Trades Councils demanding that the government abolish the idea.⁴⁵³ *Neues Deutschland* described how five Welsh Labour MPs had also raised concerns in Parliament, condemning the plans to allow the training of FRG troops at Castlemartin:

In consideration of mankind's suffering and misery due to the two world wars caused by German militarism and the aggressive plans of the West German government regarding Polish territories, this house condemns all plans to deploy German armed forces in the UK, particularly in view of the terrible suffering caused by German militarism to Welsh soldiers and civilians. This house expressly opposes the training of German troops in the principality of Wales and asks her Majesty's government to take all necessary steps to prevent the desecration of the memory of all who gave their lives to achieve a demilitarised Germany.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁴⁸ Y Bywgraffiadur Ar-lein (2009) *Donnelly, Desmond Louis (1920-1974)*, Available at: <http://yba.llgc.org.uk/cy/c6-DONN-LOU-1920.html>, (Accessed: 22.07.2014).

⁴⁴⁹ Griffiths, R. (1983) *S.O. Davies - A Socialist Faith*, Llandysul: Gomer, p. 226.

⁴⁵⁰ Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (2014) *Davies, Stephen Owen (1886 – 1972)*, Available at: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/47339>, (Accessed: 22.07.2014).

⁴⁵¹ Y Bywgraffiadur Ar-lein, (2009) *Davies, Stephen Owen (1886? – 1972)*, Available at: <http://yba.llgc.org.uk/cy/c6-DAVI-OWE-1886.html> (Accessed: 22.07.2014).

⁴⁵² 'Davies: Der DDR gebührt Dank', *Neues Deutschland*, 01.02.1966, S. 1.

⁴⁵³ 'Welsh Protest on German Troops', *The Times*, 25.05.1961, p. 5.

⁴⁵⁴ 'Bonner Panzer – nicht bei uns!', *Neues Deutschland*, 27.01.1961, S. 7. [My translation]. Although no corresponding Hansard record was found for the date of this report, a similar example is available, recording Welsh MPs (not all Union-sponsored) protesting against German Panzer activity in Castlemartin during parliamentary debates (more specifically,

This example saw Welsh Labour MPs making a specific reference to Wales and the ‘desecration of the memory’ of Welsh soldiers, suggesting a more domestic outlook in contrast to the earlier Union passage quoted above, which referenced warfare on ‘British’ soil. Such a shift in perspective was likely due to a lack of interest from elsewhere in Britain over an incident which was occurring on the furthest western shores of Wales. A few months later, *Neues Deutschland* identified S.O. Davies as a guest-speaker at a conference attended by representatives of 500,000 Welsh workers in Porthcawl, protesting against the stationing of FRG troops in Wales.⁴⁵⁵ Although the delegates present may have technically represented half a million Welsh workers on paper, such headline figures in *Neues Deutschland* would have arguably created a false impression of the strength of support. Following the conference, Davies demanded of the Prime Minister in parliament that he consider the Union’s conference resolution ‘protesting against the proposal to establish German troops in Wales’. Upon receiving an ‘unsatisfactory’ reply, Davies ‘beg[ged] to give notice [that he would seek] to raise this matter again’.⁴⁵⁶

Yet despite the large amount of resource and effort afforded to the campaign by the Union and several Welsh MPs, its impact and success was limited. In July 1961, *The Times* described:

[how] more than 2000 of those expected to take part in a mass rally and march protesting against German panzers being allowed to train at Castlemartin, Pembrokeshire, in Swansea, yesterday failed to attend. Only about 400 participated. Organised by a campaign committee consisting of trade unionists and particularly miners, the protest followed the announcement that about 600 Germans will arrive at Castlemartin in September.⁴⁵⁷

The Spectator also reported a later demonstration organised by the Union and detailed the number of protesters present. Rather provocative in tone, the first sentence of the article was ‘It’s a terrible job to assess the size of a crowd’, proceeding to compare the forecasted ‘scores of thousands’ expected to attend, against a count by one of the organisers of ‘about 2000 out’ with a later organiser declaring ‘1,400’, and finally a Swansea news agency man counting 275 present.⁴⁵⁸ This article suggested that protesting against FRG troops in Wales was a niche endeavour, which not only failed to create parliamentary momentum but also had a limited impact beyond the Welsh workers’ movement. Nevertheless, *Neues Deutschland* reported a further protest march a month later, indicating that an ‘impressive demonstration train’ of ‘several thousand’ Welsh people had protested against FRG troops

against the actions of the Army’s ‘publicity services’ in response to earlier protesting activity). See: HC Deb 15 March 1962 vol. 655, cc. 1615-41, Available at: http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1962/mar/15/vote-9-miscellaneous-effective-services#column_1615 (Accessed: 04.04.2015)

⁴⁵⁵ ‘500,000 Waliser Arbeiter anworten’, *Neues Deutschland*, 15.05.1961, S. 2

⁴⁵⁶ HC Deb 30 May 1961 vol. 641, col. 28, Available at: http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1961/may/30/german-troops-wales#S5CV0641PO_19610530_HOC_158 (Accessed: 04.04.2015)

⁴⁵⁷ ‘400 protest over German Panzers’, *The Times*, 17.07.1961, p. 6.

⁴⁵⁸ ‘Panzer in Pembrokeshire’, *The Spectator*, 03.08.1961, p. 12.

in Wales.⁴⁵⁹ These figures were conservative compared to *Neues Deutschland*'s later claim in June 1962 that 40,000 Welsh workers and their families had attended a recent protest march.⁴⁶⁰ Despite the discrepancy in reporting between the Western press and *Neues Deutschland*, the GDR's daily paper continued to publish numerous articles detailing the Castlemartin affair during this period, all highlighting the protest of Welsh workers and the support of Welsh Labour MPs in rejecting FRG militarism.

Efforts made by the Union and its sponsored MPs opposing FRG military training in Wales did not go unnoticed by interested parties in the GDR. Correspondence was received from GDR miners, supporting the actions undertaken by the Union.

We Miners of the G.D.R have seen and heard on our TV with interest and great satisfaction your passionate protest against the stationing of West German Panzer troops in your homeland of South Wales. [...] It is becoming increasingly evident that the ordinary folk of Great Britain and other N.A.T.O lands have absolutely no desire to be drawn into an atomic war for the aggressive policies and revanchist dreams of the West German militarists.⁴⁶¹

In 1961, the Union was invited by the General Secretary of the World Federation of Trade Unions to send delegates as observers at a conference in Berlin held to discuss 'the German Problem'. 'The Officials were of the view that we should be represented at this conference as we had participated so actively in opposing German rearmament and the training of German troops in Britain'. A Miners' Agent and one Executive Council member were sent to represent the Union.⁴⁶² In 1963, the following assessment was made in a briefing document summarising the state of relations between the FDGB and British trade unions:

[...] the NATO policies of the British government and the Labour Party are the centre point of political conflict in Britain [...] the increase in the quantity of atomic powers who rule over nuclear weapons, the foreign military bases⁴⁶³ [...] the movement to prevent Bonn becoming a nuclear weapons power is supported by a steadily increasing number of British Trade Unions.⁴⁶⁴

Aims for 1963 included making contact with trade union leaders to promote policies such as banning atomic weapons for both German states and the withdrawal of FRG troops from Britain. The Union was to be specifically targeted - the documentation contained a specific reference of '*westdt. Stützpunkte*' (West German bases) against this strategy, with an exclamation mark indicating its

⁴⁵⁹ 'Tausende Waliser demonstrieren gegen westdeutsche Truppen', *Neues Deutschland*, 10.09.1961, S. 7.

⁴⁶⁰ '40,000 Waliser demonstrieren gegen Bonner Truppen', *Neues Deutschland*, 24.06.1962, S. 7.

⁴⁶¹ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Item 585: German Democratic Republic – Training of German troops in Wales', 25.09.1961, p. 789.

⁴⁶² SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Item 551: Berlin Situation', 19.09.61, p. 760.

⁴⁶³ It is assumed that this refers to Castlemartin.

⁴⁶⁴ SAPMO-BArch DY34/24615, 'Information über die Lage in Grossbritannien und die Politik der britischen Gewerkschaften, 26.7.1963, Bl 9. [My translation].

importance. Arthur Horner, a Welshman, a Communist⁴⁶⁵ and former General Secretary of the NUM, was also specifically identified as one of four individuals mooted as a potential ally in the creation of broader-based GDR friendship groups.⁴⁶⁶ Horner recognised the GDR's efforts to eliminate Nazism from its territory and his co-operation and receptiveness to the GDR's positions would have been likely considering his long-held position against fascism.⁴⁶⁷ At an anti-fascist rally in Tonypandy in May 1946, for example, he expressed the following view:

The message of Fascism we know. Their destruction of democracy, imprisonment, murder, the enslavement of the working class. The end Fascism aims at is to compel the working class to work under worse conditions and for lower wages, so that capitalism may eke out its criminal existence for a little longer. Fascism can kill and enslave those who fought to preserve and improve the working class conditions.⁴⁶⁸

References in the existing literature have also illustrated a consciousness in the GDR of the Union's efforts against FRG troops in Wales. When responding to a letter opposing the construction of the Berlin Wall from the Union's General Secretary, Dai Francis⁴⁶⁹ in 1963, reference was made to the Union's protests, rallies and demonstrations against the FRG Panzers, including a further invitation for Welsh miners to form a delegation to the GDR.⁴⁷⁰ Though efforts continued to be made by the Union and its members in later years, (in 1967 for example, concern was expressed at its Annual Conference on the resurgence of Nazism in the FRG), attention was diverted to more contemporary political causes.⁴⁷¹ The protest against the presence of FRG troops in Wales was eventually superseded in prominence by newer campaigns such as one opposing the war in Vietnam. The Union's earlier efforts had demonstrated that the industrial coalfield of South Wales displayed strong anti-fascist sentiments and principles when opposing a FRG military base in Wales. Pembrokeshire's priorities however, led to it subscribing to the stronger anti-Soviet position promoted by Donnelly, which was of greater concern than any issue relating to FRG militarism.

A further GDR engagement strategy was achieving 'diplomacy through delegation', a concept actively pursued by the FDGB and which was willingly undertaken by the Union. In reality, such an approach was an extension of existing traditions for the Union which had frequently despatched delegations to the Soviet Union in the 1920s.⁴⁷² The minutes of the Union's Executive Council contain multiple examples of correspondence received from the FDGB's unions, in particular from its counterpart mining union, the *IG Bergbau*, inviting miners from South Wales to the GDR as participants of study

⁴⁶⁵ Horner, A. (1960) *Incorrigible Rebel*, London: MacGibbon & Kee, p. 21.

⁴⁶⁶ SAPMO-BArch DY34/8086, 'Grossbritannien', Bl. 5 and SAPMO-BArch, DY34/IVA2/20/481, [Untitled document], Bl. 112.

⁴⁶⁷ Horner, *Incorrigible Rebel*, p. 210.

⁴⁶⁸ Extract from an article published in the *Daily Worker*, 25.05.1960, reprinted in Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, p. 80

⁴⁶⁹ A recognised Communist, see Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 139.

⁴⁷⁰ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 100.

⁴⁷¹ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council: Minutes of Area Annual Conference', 05.05.1967, p. 311.

⁴⁷² See for example, the minutes of the SWMF in the South Wales Miners Library.

delegations and holidays. This type of communication was not only received from the GDR; the content of the minutes are notable for the diverse assortment of delegation opportunities offered, ranging from the Soviet Union to Bulgaria to Hungary to other Western capitalist countries, all demonstrative of the Union's subscription to an internationalist, trade union-led fraternity. The highest concentration of examples however, (particularly in the 1950s and 1960s) came from the GDR. Not all invitations were accepted but the vast majority were responded to affirmatively with a varying range of delegates (usually from a rota) frequently selected by Union leadership to participate. Many of the itineraries available in the archival material conform to Berger & LaPorte's description of a typical trade union delegation to the GDR:

[...] a set-piece programme of events [that] included an official welcome reception, which was addressed by state and union officials, followed by a tour of the country, which emphasised the GDR's progressive social, cultural and political credentials and the unions' wider role in East German society [...] the visits served to emphasise the GDR's 'anti-fascist and anti-militarist' credentials [... the] presentation of social provision often emphasised access to recreational facilities in the factories and FDGB holiday homes, as well as comprehensive health care. A central theme was how East Germany was constructing socialism against the odds after sweeping away the ruins left by war. [...] The visits served to emphasise the GDR's 'antifascist and anti-militarist' credentials, with exhibitions aiming to impart the impression that the perpetrators of these war crimes could be found in the offices of state in Bonn. [...] The overall objective was to impart to the delegates the belief that the GDR was a workers' state in which capitalism had been replaced by social solidarity, political equality and proletarian fraternity. And hopefully, the delegates, would, on their return, report about their positive experiences in the GDR in the trade union press.⁴⁷³

Many returning Welsh delegates presented reports to the Union on what had been experienced and learnt whilst in the GDR. One returning delegate noted how 'such visits are essential to promote and further the cause for world peace'.⁴⁷⁴ Delegation reports and accompanying comments in the Union Executive Council minutes are remarkable for their overwhelmingly positive assessments of the GDR, containing very minor criticisms. There were frequent praises for the achievements of socialism despite the difficult circumstances experienced by the GDR, suggesting that delegations were one of the GDR's most successful methods of transmitting and championing its core messages. In his study of Labour MP delegations to the GDR, Hoff evaluated the GDR's standard approach – the more normal the GDR was shown to be to the visiting delegates, the more absurd the British non-recognition policy appeared.⁴⁷⁵

The majority of the Union's delegation reports date from the period between 1954 and 1963 and include common themes and narratives. Frequent references were made to the GDR's isolated geo-

⁴⁷³ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 141.

⁴⁷⁴ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Delegation Report: German Democratic Republic: 25th April – 6th May, 1970', 26.01.1971, p. 48.

⁴⁷⁵ Hoff, *Großbritannien und die DDR 1955-1973*, S. 135.

political situation and its unfavourable position as an unrecognised state. The itineraries set were broadly similar to those described for MP delegations in the existing literature, though with a greater emphasis on the life of an ordinary socialist worker in the GDR. Further similarities in the reports included the GDR's promotion of anti-fascist messages and impressions of the GDR insecurities against its stronger capitalist neighbour. Prevalent themes in all delegations included the division of Germany (despite all proactive political efforts by the GDR to foster relations), pressures on Welsh miners to assist with the cause for recognition and invariably, the GDR's desire for peaceful co-existence. Typical messages which the FDGB asked returning delegates to contain in their reports included:

[...] we hand out the hand of friendship to all nations [...] we are for peace ...and we plead that our government be recognised by all nations so that there are no barriers between us.⁴⁷⁶

[The] impression which seemed to be prevalent [was] that the capitalist countries and the western countries were preparing for war and could go to war against the East sometime [...] there was one thing clear – there is a longing for peace and friendship expressed everywhere. At the social functions the toast was raised time and time again for 'peace and friendship'.⁴⁷⁷

Unquestionably, there is a sincere plea for peace. They are desperately anxious to avoid war.⁴⁷⁸

The content of the reports are also notable for the extensive quantity of statistics and factual information presented about 'actual existing socialism' in the GDR such as production arrangements, medical aid, safety & health and education features, which were often made in comparison to circumstances in Britain.⁴⁷⁹ Notably, such positions often became visible in later Union material on related subjects, frequently used as statistical and anecdotal data. A foreword to one of the published delegation reports by the then General Secretary of the Union, D. D. Evans, expressed his belief in the success of 'actual existing socialism', comparing the anti-fascist nature of the GDR with that of the FRG:

[...] the resurgence of Nazi elements in Western Germany [...] is positive proof that the Nazi creed and philosophy has not been eliminated in Western Germany particularly, as anti-Semitism displayed by the Western Germans is a clear indication that the movement is growing in strength [...] therefore a report of ordinary Welsh people on their visit to Eastern Germany gives a picture that is somewhat heartening [...] the] resurgence in that part of Germany is not as virulent as it is in the Western part [...] we hope that this pamphlet will be

⁴⁷⁶ SWML, HD8039.M61.G3, 'NUM (South Wales Area) Delegation Report: Report by the delegation of South Wales Miners to the GDR, 1963', p. 4.

⁴⁷⁷ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Delegation Report: Conditions in East Germany, 29.8.1956, p. 701.

⁴⁷⁸ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Delegation Report: Visit of South Wales Miners' Delegation to the German Democratic Republic', 01.04.1965, p. 262.

⁴⁷⁹ SWML, 'Conditions in East Germany', pp. 696 – 700.

widely read by our members in order that they may have an appraisal of conditions where the workers have been control of their country and means of livelihood'.⁴⁸⁰

The content of these delegation reports were not confined to a limited audience. There are several attestations of reports being mass-copied and distributed to lodges across the South Wales coalfield to achieve greater exposure. One example was deemed important enough to merit a 5000+ copy distribution.⁴⁸¹ These reports were generated in order to be read by as many people as possible with the FDGB encouraging a broad circulation of the returning delegates' views of the GDR. A strategy report created by the FDGB in the mid-1960s instructed delegation organisers to persuade delegates to publish the results and findings of their visit upon their return, to improve union co-operation with the FDGB.⁴⁸² Such encouragement is likely to have been influential not only for promoting a wide distribution of GDR-friendly positions, but also for expressing pro-GDR sentiments, as illustrated by the following example:

It is our earnest desire that every miner who reads our report shall gain some knowledge of how socialism is applied in the GDR and that individually and collectively we assert our influence to make our government to recognise the GDR and that when we invite a delegation from the GDR to South Wales they will be free to come.⁴⁸³

Invitations for GDR delegations to South Wales were also made by the Union, though at a much lower frequency than the number received from the FDGB. Pressure seems to have been exerted by the FDGB on visiting Welsh miners to encourage reciprocal invitations, a request which was echoed frequently by returning delegates in their reports.

They [the FDGB] would most certainly welcome an invitation from South Wales for a delegation to visit us and see our pits, to learn and see for themselves our way of life. They were very deeply moved when they learnt of the efforts of the South Wales miners to prevent the entry of West German troops into Wales [...]⁴⁸⁴

One GDR delegation visited South Wales in June 1960 to study the conditions of Welsh labour, the achievements of the Union, its structure and also the way of life of the Welsh people.⁴⁸⁵ Following an extensive itinerary, (which included a visit to the Welsh School of Medicine to learn about treatment of pneumoconiosis), the principal GDR delegate was invited to address the Executive Council of the Union. According to the meeting minutes, the GDR delegate complimented the Welsh miners on their efforts in promoting peace, asserting that they were in the vanguard of the struggle for peace in the

⁴⁸⁰ SWML, 'NUM (South Wales Area) Delegation Report: Impressions of a visit to Eastern Germany, January 1960', p. 2.

⁴⁸¹ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Item 853: Report of a Visit to East Germany', 22.12.1959, p. 1248.

⁴⁸² SAPMO-BArch, DY34/24615, 'Zusammenarbeit der Gewerkschaften Grossbritanniens und der DDR', 18.03.1966, Bl. 5.

⁴⁸³ SWML, 'Report by the delegation of South Wales Miners... 1963', p. 2.

⁴⁸⁴ SWML, 'Report by the delegation of South Wales Miners... 1963', p. 18.

⁴⁸⁵ SWML, 'NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes: Delegation from East Germany at the Council', 28.06.1960, p. 604.

world, stating that the German workers would also do everything in their power to preserve peace and that he was certain that the Welsh miners would continue do the same.⁴⁸⁶

The propaganda benefits generated by trade union delegations to the GDR were clearly valued by the SED. Notwithstanding the political coup of British citizens voluntarily visiting a state not recognised by their own government, further opportunities were also identified for exploitation. Domestically, material could be generated by the SED to display to its own citizens how the workers of capitalist countries were visiting the GDR to see for themselves the benefits of ‘actual existing socialism’, often strengthened by selected comments or quotations from delegates. A strategic recommendation was made to the FDGB Executive Council in 1966 to encourage British delegates to participate in television and radio interviews.⁴⁸⁷ A specific Welsh example of this practice pre-dated this instruction. A Union report described the following incident during a 1963 delegation to the GDR: ‘they questioned us on the British miners’ attitude towards the Berlin problem and the rearming of West Germany. Indeed, they arranged for a member of our delegation, Mr. Emlyn Williams, to give a television broadcast from the Brandenburg Gate’.⁴⁸⁸ This anecdotal reference to the views of ‘British’ miners suggests that the primary identity expressed by the visiting miners was as British workers rather than Welshmen. This plausibly led to the FDGB and the SED failing to recognise a distinct Welsh identity in their interactions with Union representatives.

Engagement between the Union and agents of the GDR was not limited to delegations. Further strategies were also executed. There are numerous examples of correspondence from individuals and organisations supportive of the GDR in the Union’s archival material including frequent references to the strengths of ‘actual existing socialism’ and the right of the GDR to peaceful co-existence and world peace, often drawing attention to its opposition to nuclear conflict. The Union’s Executive Council was often called to recognise Nazi-influenced misdemeanours conducted in the FRG, as exemplified by communication received from the ‘German Anti-Fascist Committee’ in 1959. This organisation not only highlighted the anti-fascist endeavours of the GDR (as demonstrated by its construction of national memorials on the sites of former fascist concentration camps situated in the GDR) but also described the GDR-led investigations on the fate of citizens murdered in concentration camps.⁴⁸⁹ Summarising the fascist nature of prominent FRG individuals, the ‘Anti-Fascist Committee’ proceeded to list and identify perpetrators now living in the FRG and called for legal proceedings. In this particular case, the desired result and reaction was achieved. The Executive Council’s resolution was to note the information contained in the correspondence and urge that these criminals be brought to justice. Further anti-fascist correspondence came from the Committee of Anti-Fascist Fighters

⁴⁸⁶ SWML, ‘Delegation from East Germany at the Council’, p. 604.

⁴⁸⁷ SAPMO-BArch, DY34/24615, ‘Zusammenarbeit der Gewerkschaften’, Bl. 5.

⁴⁸⁸ SWML, ‘Report by the delegation of South Wales Miners’, p. 14.

⁴⁸⁹ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, ‘Item 787: Anti-Fascist Resistance Fighters - Germany’, 24.11.1959, p. 1146.

(GDR) in 1961 (it is unclear whether this is the same organisation as that referenced above), leading to an Union resolution to protest against the FRG government, encouraging not only the NUM National Executive Committee, but also the Mining Members of Parliament to do the same.⁴⁹⁰

The early to mid-1960s also saw the Union receiving correspondence from Gordon Schaffer, Harry Francis and Hilda S. Forman,⁴⁹¹ in which the Union was requested to associate itself with greetings sent to the GDR.⁴⁹² These individuals (and there are several examples of such correspondence) were heavily involved in GDR friendship group activity and frequently requested that the Union associate itself with specific greetings or messages sent to the GDR.⁴⁹³ Schaffer and Forman were the first Chairman and Secretary of BRIDGE (Britain Democratic Germany Information Exchange), when it was founded in 1965.⁴⁹⁴ BRIDGE's objective was to 'assist the campaign for diplomatic recognition of the GDR as a sovereign state and to promote knowledge about the GDR'.⁴⁹⁵ The following message exemplifies the type of sentiment to which the Union typically lent its name in support.

On the occasion of May Day, the international festival of organised workers, we send greetings to the trade unionists of the GDR. It is our fervent hope that in the coming year we shall be able to improve relations between our two countries. We are convinced that recognition of both German Republics and the establishment of friendly relations with both would be in the interests of the German and the British people and of world peace. As trade unionists, we are deeply concerned at the mounting threat of unemployment. We believe that improvement of trade between our countries and the removal of all barriers and embargoes to free exchanges would be of immense value. We deplore the visa restrictions which, in the past months, have prevented your trade unionists, cultural workers, sportsmen and civic dignitaries from visiting our country. Above all, we are alarmed at the threat to peace resulting from the divisions of the world into military alliances and the increasing tempo of the nuclear arms race. We are completely opposed to any policies which would place nuclear weapons in the hands of either German Republic. We support the policy of disengagement and nuclear-free zones in both German republics, and indeed in wider areas in Europe as well. We know the elements which supported Nazi aggression are still with us and still powerful. The most effective weapon against them is friendship between the people and in particular between the trade unionists of all countries.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁰ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Item 461: Committee of Anti-Fascist Fighters – German Democratic Republic', 25.07.1961, p. 615.

⁴⁹¹ Hoff also identified Hilda Forman as having played a role in the GDR's friendship activities, tasked with making contact with organisations and institutions such as the British peace movement, city councils, trade unions and youth organisations to build the GDR's friendship network. See: Hoff, *Großbritannien und die DDR 1955-1973*, S. 319.

⁴⁹² SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Item 67: German Democratic Republic: New Year Greetings', 12.02.1963, p. 51.

⁴⁹³ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 290.

⁴⁹⁴ Bell, M.S. (1977) *Britain and East Germany: the politics of non-recognition*, Unpublished M.Phil. thesis, University of Nottingham, p. 190.

⁴⁹⁵ Bell, *Britain and East Germany...*, p. 191.

⁴⁹⁶ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Item 159: German Democratic Republic – May Day Message', 26.03.1963, p. 167.

Such messages would again have proven to be a valuable input to SED propaganda material. By subscribing to these greetings, the Union was affiliating itself with positions such as the GDR's right to recognition and the removal of both trade and visa restrictions on the GDR – all of which were in direct opposition to the British government's policies. Additionally, it included the mining 'trade unionists' of South Wales in its pledge of international friendship. A felicitous corresponding comment was made in a contemporaneous FDGB report summarising the state of relations between British trade unions and the GDR.

On the occasion of 1. May 1963 [corresponding with the date of the greetings referenced above], greetings were received from around 250 trade union organisations representing 550,000 members by the FDGB, which is proof that the policies of the FDGB find recognition in many British trade unions. Therewith is an expression of readiness to fight together for trade union demands, which strike a chord and serve the interests of workers in both countries.⁴⁹⁷

Notwithstanding the encouragement of external parties, there is also evidence of proactive approaches by the Union in conveying fraternal goodwill and international solidarity to the GDR where appropriate. In 1960 for example, following the Karl Marx Mine disaster in the GDR, a telegram was sent to the mining union concerned, expressing sympathy and the hope that the men entombed would be brought safely to the surface of the mine.⁴⁹⁸ A further example included greetings sent by the Union in 1964 to the GDR celebrating the 15th anniversary of the establishment of the republic.⁴⁹⁹ This was an overtly symbolic gesture, considering the British government and the TUC's formal policy of non-recognition of the GDR during this period.

Articles illustrating the difficult conditions experienced by Welsh miners were published in *Neues Deutschland* from the mid-1950s onwards. References were often made to their protest against the presence of FRG troops in Wales or describing the inferior position of Welsh workers working under a capitalist system. One such example, an article entitled '*Filthy from head to toe*', described how mine owners had forbidden Welsh miners from using bathing and washing facilities.⁵⁰⁰ Another article described how a proportion of the coal mined by Welsh miners was awarded to former mine owners as compensation for the nationalisation of the mines in 1947, with 'no-one under any illusion as to the injustice of this'. Welsh miners were the 'last on the social scale' with low standards of living and atrocious pensions, a description which contributed to legitimising the GDR's propaganda that workers in the capitalist West were severely exploited. The article concluded that despite the battle against social class considerations, the Welsh miners had managed to develop a class consciousness and a steadfast solidarity, which meant that they were at the very forefront, leading the British

⁴⁹⁷ SAPMO-BArch DY34-24615, 'Information über die Lage...', Bl. 8. [My translation].

⁴⁹⁸ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Item 167: Karl Marx Mine Disaster (East Germany)', 23.02.1960, p. 159.

⁴⁹⁹ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Item 393: G.D.R.', 11.08.1964, p. 484.

⁵⁰⁰ 'Von Kopf bis Fuss beschmutzt', *Neues Deutschland*, 07.12.1955, S. 5.

Workers' movement.⁵⁰¹ This recognition in *Neues Deutschland* demonstrated the prominence of the Union and its activities to interested GDR parties, though notably being viewed as an element of the British, rather than the Welsh labour movement.

The evidence unearthed so far has overwhelmingly demonstrated a cordial relationship between the South Wales NUM and the FDGB, with frequent examples of mutually-held political positions and common causes, strengthened by a bond of international fraternity and an early Cold War perception of the GDR as being truly socialist. The relationship which developed through numerous delegations and correspondence however was not so robust as to withstand occasional criticisms by Welsh miners of specific actions by the GDR authorities. There are (limited) examples of events where the Union was sufficiently perturbed by activities in the GDR to raise protest or register disagreement with SED positions. The construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 caused particular contention, reflecting the wider British reaction to its existence.⁵⁰² Dai Francis' protest letter on behalf of the Union has already been well documented and its drafting is likely to have followed calls from individual lodges demanding the Executive Council take action.⁵⁰³ St. John's Lodge for example, requested that a protest be sent to the GDR government 'over the unnecessary shootings and killings at the Berlin Wall'.⁵⁰⁴ During a later delegation to the GDR and as a possible response to this protest, several Welsh miners were taken to observe the wall and were invited to provide their Union with a detailed report on its necessity, learning how:

[...] the American army in particular was carrying out espionage and by extensive propaganda were enticing technicians, medical people, professors [...] from East Germany by false promises of better wages and security. They were responsible for many shooting incidents at the Brandenburg Gate and two young German soldiers had been shot to death. Since the building of the wall there have been very few incidents and the GDR have been able to control entry and departure into and out of the socialist republic.⁵⁰⁵

Although this particular report was limited in its critical assessment of the wall, its inclusion in the delegation itinerary and report indicates a perceived need for its justification following the concerns raised by the Union. A later delegation was also shown 'photographs of the results of acts of violence, sabotage and arson, committed by persons and army personnel of West Germany against the people of East Germany'.⁵⁰⁶ The Union's response to the construction of the Berlin Wall was not its only protest against the GDR. The invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 generated such strong condemnation within the Union that the then Secretary, Dai Francis, reported how he had informed the GDR's

⁵⁰¹ 'Die Bergarbeiter von Südwales, *Neues Deutschland*, 19.07.1960, S. 5.

⁵⁰² Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 97.

⁵⁰³ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 100.

⁵⁰⁴ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Item 213: St. John's Lodge – Berlin Wall', 14.04.1964, p. 225.

⁵⁰⁵ SWML, 'Report by the Delegation of South Wales Miners', p. 17.

⁵⁰⁶ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area), Executive Council Minutes, 'Delegation Report: Visit of South Wales Miners' Delegation to the German Democratic Republic', 01.04.1965, p. 259.

Mineworkers' trade union that the Union would abandon its plans for a forthcoming visit to the GDR, withdrawing its earlier acceptance of the invitation. This was done as a 'gesture of protest against the combined military forces being used against Czechoslovakia in which the East German Government was participating'.⁵⁰⁷ Unanimous protests were also made to the GDR on several political issues, such as the sentence imposed on Horst Bonnet⁵⁰⁸ and his wife who had publicly protested against the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia.⁵⁰⁹ Nevertheless, these issues were evidently insufficient to irretrievably damage the relationship, as exemplified by the decision to accept an invitation to send a delegation to the GDR the following year, in 1969.⁵¹⁰ The impression created when evaluating the material is that condemnations of this type were not made as a result of any influence from the British government or even wider public perceptions of the GDR, but were due to the Union and its members perceiving such behaviours as contrary to the anti-fascist principles it expected a socialist state such as the GDR to execute.

In 1960, the FDGB evaluated its success in transmitting information on the GDR to British trade unions and had according to its analysis, achieved mixed results. Efforts had helped raise awareness of the existence of two German states with differing social orders and the dangers posed by FRG militarism had also been highlighted. The purpose and role of trade unions in the GDR had also been promoted to many British trade unionists.⁵¹¹ As relations developed, the understanding of 'the German question' had undoubtedly improved, and 'fundamental questions' regarding the politics of GDR society had been clarified.⁵¹² Such progress was evident by reports of the questions raised by British trade unionists in annual TUC conferences. Areas of improvement were identified and one such example was a pressing need to improve contacts with the lower level leaderships of trade unions.⁵¹³ This recommendation however was redundant for the FDGB's relations with the various British mining unions - they were identified as one of the principal areas in which the FDGB had experienced its greatest success. The British mining unions were recognised as organisations which were prepared to work with the FDGB and who embraced core GDR values, identifying the Welsh and Scottish miners' unions in particular as organisations which had publicly demanded full recognition of the GDR.⁵¹⁴ According to an assessment completed in 1963, several trade unions with which the FDGB had cultivated relations were very aware of the core issues of interest to the GDR, often holding

⁵⁰⁷ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Report of National Executive Committee – East German Mineworkers' Union', 08.10.1968, p. 654

⁵⁰⁸ Horst Bonnet, producer at the East Berlin Komische Oper, was sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison for his protest against the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. Source: (2010) 1968 in Europe, Available at: <http://www.1968ineurope.com/index.php/chronologies/index/31> (Accessed: 25.11.2010).

⁵⁰⁹ SWML, 'East German Mineworkers' Union', p. 662.

⁵¹⁰ SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Item 56: Visit to the GDR', 04.02.1969, p. 44.

⁵¹¹ SAPMO-BArch, DY34/24615, 'Sekretariatssvorlage: Einschätzung der Arbeit des FDGB nach Grossbritannien, 31.10.1960, Bl. 7.

⁵¹² SAPMO-BArch, DY34/24615, 'Sekretariatssvorlage: Einschätzung der Arbeit...', Bl. 2.

⁵¹³ SAPMO-BArch, DY34/24615, 'Sekretariatssvorlage: Einschätzung der Arbeit...', Bl. 2.

⁵¹⁴ SAPMO-BArch DY34/24615, 'Information über die Lage...', Bl. 6.

positions and opinions which were the same or broadly similar to those held by the FDGB.⁵¹⁵ Though successes in forming such positive relations with individual unions were celebrated, a sombre and frequent comment in the FDGB's analyses was the failure (despite the strenuous efforts made) to establish official relations with the TUC, which remained opposed to fostering relations with the FDGB.⁵¹⁶ This was a position which would not change until the establishment of diplomatic relations between Britain and the GDR in 1973.⁵¹⁷

Howarth (writing under her former name of Bell) considered it unlikely that the efforts of groups such as BRIDGE in the campaign for recognition were able to reach an 'audience that was not already sympathetic, either to the general ideological line represented, or specifically to the question of recognition' – an assumption equally valid when considering the Union's responsiveness to engaging with agents or supporters of the GDR.⁵¹⁸ Ultimately, exerting influence through contacts had been one of the SED's principal aims for the FDGB's relations with British trade unions - at the core of its strategy. The failure to achieve its required objective of cultivating broader and prominent contacts and securing recognition demonstrates that this strategy was yet another facet of GDR relations which bore little fruit, despite the strenuous efforts made by the FDGB to nurture and cultivate relations with individual unions.

Conclusion

Although it targeted friendly decentralised trade unions to achieve 'deeper integration and relations with their central organisations' (such as the NUM in London for example, in the case of the Union), the FDGB made no specific national or regional distinction in its British trade union strategy.⁵¹⁹

Circumstances particular to the South Wales coalfield during this period however created a certain receptiveness to the principles promulgated by the GDR. It is unsurprising that the South Wales NUM - Wales' most prominent and populous trade union - was identified by the Communist Party of Great Britain as a union suitable for the GDR to approach. Coupled with an existing tradition of supporting proletarian internationalism and fraternal solidarity, the Union's long-held opposition to fascism saw it receptive to engaging with the GDR. The relationship between the FDGB and the Union was influenced by specific Welsh events, such as the stationing of FRG troops in Wales, which resulted in greater resonance and credence given to GDR arguments than may have been the case with other British trade unions engaging contemporaneously with the FGDB. The Union had a close relationship with several of its sponsored MPs (overwhelmingly committed socialists themselves), some of whom

⁵¹⁵ SAPMO-BArch, DY34/24615, 'Information über die Lage...', Bl. 5.

⁵¹⁶ See for example: SAPMO-BArch, DY34/24615, 'Sekretariatssvorlage: Einschätzung der Arbeit...', Bl. 4.

⁵¹⁷ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, pp. 42 – 44.

⁵¹⁸ Bell, 'Britain and East Germany...', p. 279

⁵¹⁹ SAPMO-BArch, DY34/24615, 'Vorlage an das Sekretariat des Bundesvorstandes des FDGB', 22.10.1963, Bl. 2.

such as S. O. Davies could often be influenced and lobbied to speak on causes which harmoniously complemented the priorities of the GDR. The Union effectively and autonomously mobilised itself as a local protest movement against FRG rearmament. To the GDR, strong Union opposition to FRG military presence in Castlemartin could prove deeply damaging to the image of the FRG which corresponded with its own strategy. The prominence given to the efforts of the Welsh miners in the GDR national press indicates the political capital which the GDR sought to exploit from the situation.

For the SED, relations with the Union backed the GDR's claim of legitimacy. Support sought (and frequently received from the Union) provided symbolic weight to its calls for recognition. Following the establishment of diplomatic relations between Britain and the GDR in 1973 however, there is limited evidence of a similar concentration of activity between the Union and the FDGB. The promotion of anti-fascist principles, international solidarity and socialist ideals were clearly sufficient to attract and retain the interest of Welsh miners in the 1950s and 1960s, striking a chord with an earlier generation of Union members who had experienced global conflict and had already witnessed a struggle against fascism. Despite the perceived success and triumphs of delegations (not only by the FDGB but also by the Union), such pursuits lost momentum and significance post diplomatic recognition of the GDR, despite the enormous effort and resource previously applied (particularly by the FDGB). Though relations between the mining unions remained cordial throughout the Cold War period, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed greater domestic issues demanding the attention of Union officials, with the actions and policies of both the GDR and the FRG assuming less significance. Reduced engagement between the FDGB and the Union post-1973 mirrored a contemporary decrease of activity in wider British-GDR relations. In the immediate period following recognition of the GDR by Britain, the number of MP delegations and friendship society activities reduced in volume, prior to a stage of increased interaction during the 'second Cold War' phase of the 1980s.⁵²⁰

The sharp decrease in correspondence and delegation invitations received from the GDR post-1973 is however notable as it supports the assumption that the FDGB's principal motivation for engagement was in support of the SED's policy of recognition. It is however significant that the Union itself made little proactive effort to sustain a similar depth of relationship in the 1970s and 1980s. By this stage, the mining industry in Wales had severely declined in strength and numbers. By the 1970s for example, it was a quarter of the size it had been in 1939 and had also lost all its sponsored Labour MPs.⁵²¹ Arguably, this decade witnessed a greater level of engagement with the FRG mining union than at any other time in the post-war period, again suggestive of a newer generation which was unconvinced or unconcerned with any criticism of the FRG by the GDR. It is possible to confidently conclude that the FDGB had undertaken the principal burden of sustaining the relationship throughout the earlier pre-recognition period. Some evidence exists of activity which could be considered a facet

⁵²⁰ See chapters 4 and 5 for further context.

⁵²¹ Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, p. 263.

of the GDR's *Imagepflege* (image cultivation) following recognition, such as an invitation for ageing miners to convalesce in GDR recovery centres in the 1970s,⁵²² but generally, the frequency of delegations and correspondence reduced significantly after the particularly active period of the 1950s and 1960s. Although Berger & LaPorte identified the FDGB as having provided 'moral support [...], hard currency payments and the supply of clothing and food' to the NUM during the miners' strike of 1984/5, no specific examples of interaction between the GDR and the Union during this period were unearthed in any of the archival material referenced. This suggests that in its interactions with the overarching NUM organisation during the strike of 1984/5, no specific distinction was made by the FDGB in respect of the NUM in Wales.

If using relations with British trade unions to influence the achievement of diplomatic recognition had been the SED/FDGB strategy, then the outcome fell markedly short of expectations. 'The GDR effort [...] was devoted to subverting the non-recognition policy and to attempt to secure recognition by the back door' and though the Union was explicitly referenced by the GDR authorities as having publicly called for diplomatic recognition, in reality it had a limited influence which would have only ever made a moderate impact at best.⁵²³ This assessment echoes the conclusions reached by existing scholars that 1973 was the year in which the GDR's international relations truly developed, despite the non-diplomatic networks and contacts it had sought to cultivate. This case study exemplifies how GDR relations with British trade unionists proved a frustrating endeavour, leaving the SED to witness limited advancement.

What this chapter has demonstrated is that Welsh identity had a negligible influence on relations between the South Wales area of the National Union of Mineworkers and the FDGB and that the engagement of the Welsh labour movement with the GDR differed little from the overall British experience. In the Union's archival material, there are few references to the Welsh language and what exists is due to it being the language of communication in some areas of the coalfield, rather than a particular concern for its fate or as an integral element of the miners' identity. There is evidence of some support for Welsh culture in the coalfield (such as the Miners' Eisteddfod), but none evident in the Union's dealings with any GDR representatives.⁵²⁴ This chapter has starkly illustrated a limitation of Balsom's model. The area of the South Wales coalfield was strongly identified by Balsom as demonstrating *Welsh Wales* features (consciously Welsh but not Welsh-speaking). When considering this identity type's relations with entities outside Wales however, no evidence was found in the archival material to suggest that any features relating to Welsh identity were projected to the GDR representatives with whom the Union engaged.

⁵²² SWML, NUM (South Wales Area) Executive Council Minutes, 'Item 484: Convalescence in East Germany', 13.09.1977, p. 375.

⁵²³ Howarth, M. (2000) 'The Business of Politics, The Politics of Business. The GDR in Britain before and after Diplomatic recognition', in Hall, C. and Rock, D. (eds.) *German Studies Towards the Millennium*, Berne. p. 12.

⁵²⁴ Francis & Smith, *The Fed*, p. 427.

Although engagement between the Welsh and GDR mining unions occurred contemporaneously with interactions between Welsh-speaking educationalists and the Sorbs, there is no indication of an awareness in the GDR trade union movement of any cultural distinctions for consideration in relations with Welsh miners. This was an example of one facet of the GDR operating in isolation from another. No efforts were made by the FDGB to adapt its strategy and approach to accommodate a specific Welsh identity. Instead, the FDGB tailored its delegations to promote the working man's conditions in the socialist GDR. The GDR was reaching out to the international proletariat, not the Welshman. Such an approach would have found a receptive audience. Outside Wales, Welsh miners subscribed to an internationalist outlook as members of a trade union fraternity. During the Spanish Civil War for example, Welsh miner volunteers 'were not affected or motivated in any way by a national or nationalist consciousness: not one of the volunteers was, or ever became, a member of the Welsh Nationalist Party. They did not form a separate ethnic company but served alongside English, Scots, Cypriots and a few Irish, inside the British Battalion [...]'.⁵²⁵ In conclusion, relations between the Welsh miners and the FDGB reflected little variance from those of a British-GDR context. Any success enjoyed by the FDGB in its relations with the miners of South Wales was not due to any expression or perception of Welsh identity. The GDR's positions resonated because of the internationalism of the Welsh miners - its political ideology appealed to the class-conscious proletariat.

⁵²⁵ Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, p. 228.

CHAPTER 4 - CULTURAL RELATIONS IN THE 1980s: ASSESSING THE IDENTITY OF THE BRITAIN-GDR SOCIETY'S WELSH BRANCH

This chapter considers cultural relations between Wales and the GDR by evaluating the role and activities of the Britain-GDR Society's sole Welsh branch, located in the county of Gwent. The function and purpose of the Gwent branch as part of the wider friendship movement is considered, particularly its co-ordination of cultural and youth delegations between Wales and the GDR towards the end of the Cold War period. Three Welsh delegations from the 1980s are presented in this chapter, all of which were to one extent or another arranged or influenced by the Gwent branch.⁵²⁶ Exploring the delegations' objectives and participant types illustrate the (d)evolving Welsh identity of the branch during this decade, where it can be demonstrated that its identity was influenced and shaped by how others perceived it. This chapter also evaluates the impact and influence of the GDR's *Liga für Völkerfreundschaft* (the League of International Friendship, [LfV]) and the *Nationale Freundschaftsgesellschaft DDR-Großbritannien* (a GDR counterpart to the Britain-GDR Society) on Welsh-GDR interactions and considers which type of delegation in the 1980s was most indicative of cultural relations between the two nations. The methods used by the LfV to foster engagement are considered, demonstrating the GDR's willingness to, once again, use its Sorbian minority and presenting (sometimes incorrectly) a facet of GDR society which it considered appealing to Welsh people. As ever, it is important to reiterate at the beginning of the chapter that these activities remained small scale and were not representative of a widespread Welsh awareness of the Gwent branch's activities. Existing literature on cultural interactions has already illustrated the GDR's dependency on friendship societies to disseminate information on the GDR to the British public, including arranging and co-ordinating activities, exhibitions and events to raise awareness. As Wallace cautioned, the wave of new branches formed in the early 1980s (which would have included the Gwent branch) remained 'relatively modest in scope and can hardly be taken to mean that wide sections of the British public had suddenly become aware of the GDR and begun to see it in a positive light'.⁵²⁷

At its Annual General Meeting in 1982, members of the Britain-GDR Society endorsed its purpose of 'promoting mutual understanding between the people of Great Britain and the people of the GDR, to strengthen peace and friendship; to make available factual information and to develop friendly association between people and organisations of both countries'.⁵²⁸ This was a time of decentralisation for the Society, away from a London-centric base towards establishing a greater presence in other

⁵²⁶ Those related to town twinning activities are evaluated in the next chapter.

⁵²⁷ Wallace, I. (2000) 'The GDR's Cultural Activities in Britain', *German Life and Letters*, 53(3), p. 405.

⁵²⁸ Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (Berlin) [henceforth: SAPMO-BArch], DY13/3123, 'The Britain – GDR Society General meeting: Agenda', Bl. 2.

areas of Britain, such as Scotland and the industrial heartlands of England.⁵²⁹ Although several branches already existed in England and Scotland, new groups were only established in Ireland and Wales from 1980 onwards. According to Sheila Taylor (erstwhile Secretary of the Society), these branches were usually established by left-wingers, normally Communists or Labour Party supporters, who ‘suddenly discovered the GDR’ and thus saw an interesting comparable example of a smaller nation ‘living alongside’ a larger entity.⁵³⁰ Howarth evaluated that by the early 1980s, a total of twenty-six branches had been founded in Britain, including six in Scotland and just one in Wales.⁵³¹ In 1983, *Neues Deutschland* published an article on the Britain-GDR Society, describing how it had become one of the fastest-growing GDR friendship societies abroad and thus reflected a growing interest for the life, work, politics, history and culture of the first German worker and peasant state. According to the article, more than a thousand new members had registered in the preceding 18 months with branches established in most major British cities.⁵³² Despite this increase, LfV objections to the development of Eurocommunist views in the branch leadership in London grew and it determined that it would pursue a formal policy of decentralising GDR friendship activity in Britain. Sheila Taylor, when interviewed, confirmed this new approach by the LfV authorities and described how its leadership started organising local branch delegations as a political alternative to central co-ordination.⁵³³

According to a pre-departure briefing document for a delegation to Britain between May and June 1980, Dietmar Hahn and Gerhard Linder, who were leading figures in the GDR friendship movement,⁵³⁴ held an objective of raising the profile of the GDR and its friendship movement in Britain by disseminating information, strengthening existing contacts and opening up new avenues for exploration.⁵³⁵ Their visit was referenced in the Secretary’s report for the Britain-GDR Society General Meeting of 1980:

Tomorrow Dietmar goes to Manchester and later Glasgow and Wales. In these four [*sic*] places there have been new efforts made over the last few months to build up local committees which will be able to organise more regular events. This is an extremely welcome development. In each of these areas the initiative has come from trade union activists who are

⁵²⁹ Berger, S. and LaPorte, N. (2010) *Friendly Enemies: Britain and the GDR 1949-1990*. New York: Berghahn Books, p. 244.

⁵³⁰ Telephone interview with Sheila Taylor, 24.04.2014.

⁵³¹ Howarth, M. (2004) ‘Projecting the Self – Reflecting the Other: Scotland, Wales and the GDR’, in Fischer, J., O’Dochartaigh, P.O. and Kelly-Holmes, H. (eds.), *Irish-German Studies, Yearbook of the Centre for Irish-German Studies 2001/2002*, Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, p. 88.

⁵³² ‘Zuwachs für die DDR-Freunde in Großbritannien: Gruppen bestehen in allen Großstädten des Landes’, *Neues Deutschland*, 04.11.1983, S. 6. Note: By 1989, 30 local branches existed with an official membership of 3000. See: Berger, & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 246.

⁵³³ Telephone Interview with Sheila Taylor, 24.04.2014.

⁵³⁴ President of DEBRIG and member of the People’s Chamber (Volkskammer). Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 244.

⁵³⁵ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3124, ‘Direktive für den Aufenthalt einer Delegation des Präsidiums der Freundschaftsgesellschaft DDR-Grossbritannien in Grossbritannien, 12.2.1980, B1.1.

members of the Society, who have got other people in the labour movement interested and involved in sponsoring the work.⁵³⁶

This description provides an initial indication of the type of interested parties in Wales, sufficiently incentivised to become involved in the establishment of a branch. On Dietmar Hahn's itinerary, two Welsh individuals were named as contacts to visit, Brynach Parri (a Welsh-speaker, who had an existing acquaintance with Hahn) and Dai Francis, also a Welsh-speaker, who had previously been critical of the GDR following the building of the Berlin Wall⁵³⁷ though whom Sheila Taylor described as representative of how the Society had lots of good contacts on the Left 'who could be relied upon to help'.⁵³⁸ Reference was also made in the Secretary's Report of Hahn's visit to (anonymous) 'members of the proposed GDR group in Wales'.⁵³⁹ Howarth previously described the standard approach for establishing a new branch of the Society:

[...] a typical pattern [for branch establishment] was for an individual returning from a study trip to the GDR to take an initiative to establish a local branch, where like-minded people could meet to discuss matters of interest relating to the GDR, or which could provide an audience for visiting GDR speakers.⁵⁴⁰

Following this visit, both Lindner and Hahn reported that the formation of a Welsh section of the national friendship group was not without its problems,' (unfortunately, they did not elaborate on what these problems may have been).⁵⁴¹ A year later however, the Britain/GDR Society Members' Bulletin reported how a branch of the Society had been founded in Gwent on June 14th, 1981:

[Following] a successful meeting in Cwmbran which was attended by about 20 people. Our Chairman John Kotz addressed the meeting and spoke about his experiences in the GDR as well as the Society's work. There was a discussion and literature was handed out. The event was organised by Councillor Ray Hill, who was elected as secretary of the new committee and we wish them well for the future. The local press gave useful coverage to the launch in Gwent, thanks to Ray's preparatory efforts, and two local papers reported on the event.⁵⁴²

This first Welsh branch was based in the industrial town of Cwmbran in the South Wales valleys and not in a major urban or strongly populated area. This was indicative of the extent and depth of interest towards the GDR in Welsh society during this period. Its establishment and continued existence throughout the 1980s clearly demonstrated sufficient local support, centred within the left-wing political area of Cwmbran and the wider Gwent community. The absence of another branch elsewhere in Wales however, such as in the main cities of Cardiff or Swansea, support an assumption of apathy and ignorance in Wales for the GDR and its policies. The Gwent branch's mission conformed to the

⁵³⁶ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3124, 'The Britain-GDR Society: General Meeting 1980 – Secretary's Report', Bl. 7.

⁵³⁷ See chapter 3 for further information.

⁵³⁸ Telephone interview with Sheila Taylor, 24.04.2014.

⁵³⁹ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3124, 'The Britain-GDR Society: General Meeting 1980 ...', Bl. 7.

⁵⁴⁰ Howarth, 'Projecting the Self', p. 92.

⁵⁴¹ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3120, 'Bericht zum Aufenthalt der Delegation der Liga für Völkerfreundschaft im Mai/Juni 1980 in Grossbritannien', 28.7.1980, Bl. 6.

⁵⁴² SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3130, 'The Britain-GDR Society – Members' Bulletin: June 1981', Bl. 2.

typical friendship group objectives encouraged by the LfV. Writing to Dietmar Hahn in 1986, the branch Secretary, Ray Hill, declared: 'My Society members are dedicated to working towards not only peaceful co-existence but also strengthening the bonds of friendship between our peoples'.⁵⁴³ Sheila Taylor remembered Ray Hill as '[a] really nice, normal, decent man [...] I wouldn't have known if he was Labour or Communist, he didn't come across as particularly 'Welsh'.⁵⁴⁴

Following its establishment, the Gwent branch immediately became an active and engaged member of the wider Britain-GDR Society and the GDR friendship movement. This enthusiasm was demonstrated by the arrangements made for the visit of the GDR's 'Peace Bus' to Gwent in 1982. The purpose of the Peace Bus delegation from the GDR (led by Gerhard Lindner as President of DEBRIG) was to undertake numerous meetings with representatives of public life in Britain and make appearances on forums and cultural events.⁵⁴⁵ Touring Britain to 'spread the good news about the GDR', the delegation included representatives from 'local government, industry, the official trade unions and women's organisations, educationalists, [as well as an] athlete and an artist'.⁵⁴⁶ During the visit, messages of peace and a desire for friendly co-existence were strongly prevalent, echoing the statements made in existing scholarship about the promotion of peace and anti-nuclear messages by the GDR authorities during this period. A 'festival of peace' concert was held at Cwmbran Stadium, where two accompanying GDR folk singers, Peter & Paul performed,⁵⁴⁷ singing in English, German & Welsh.⁵⁴⁸ During the concert interval, peace gifts were exchanged between the GDR visitors, the local authorities, CND and other anti-nuclear groups. Although fewer than three hundred people attended, the presence of local authority representatives at the peace concert (and the hosting of a formal reception for the visitors at County Hall) illustrates the influence of the Gwent branch with Gwent Council leadership, even at this early stage of its existence.⁵⁴⁹ Whilst in Wales, the Peace Bus delegation met with youth, religious organisations, county councillors, artists, Trade Union officials and women's' organisations.⁵⁵⁰ A letter between the Britain-GDR Society and Dietmar Hahn illustrated the efforts undertaken by the Gwent branch to expose the visitors to as wide a range of Welsh contacts as possible:

In Wales, the delegation will be received by [the] Mayor and Council for lunch. In the afternoon there will be various meetings with the delegation i.e. leading Trade Union leaders, health workers, sport & youth [representatives]. Peace festival in Sports Stadium - incl. Welsh choirs, youth bands and Peter & Paul. The following day [...] visits to famous places in Wales, lunch and tour of a famous comprehensive school which is near an old Roman Site, later visits to a Steel Works. [An] early evening discussion with the Cwmbran Development

⁵⁴³ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3118, [Letter] Ray Hill to Dietmar Hahn, 25.10.1986, Bl. 1.

⁵⁴⁴ Telephone Interview with Sheila Taylor, 24.04.2014.

⁵⁴⁵ 'Freundschaftsgesellschaft besucht Grossbritannien', *Neues Deutschland*, 5.10.1982, S. 2.

⁵⁴⁶ Berger, & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 248.

⁵⁴⁷ 'East German 'peace bus' arrives, *South Wales Argus*, 5.10.1982, p. 7.

⁵⁴⁸ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3130, 'The Britain-GDR Society Newsletter: October 1982', Bl. 1.

⁵⁴⁹ 'East German 'peace bus' arrives, *South Wales Argus*, 5.10.1982, p. 7.

⁵⁵⁰ SAPMO-BArch DY13/3130, [Letter] Jack Berlin to Dietmar Hahn, 05.08.2012, Bl. 1.

Corp, about aspects of town planning etc. [...] In the evening a big Welsh concert of Drink and Song.⁵⁵¹

The visit drew the attention of the *South Wales Argus* which published an article ('*East German 'peace bus' arrives*') highlighting the visit as part of a campaign 'against nuclear weapons on both sides of the Iron Curtain', stressing that this was the only Welsh stop in a nationwide tour.⁵⁵²

According to the Britain/GDR Society Newsletter of October 1982, the delegation enjoyed Welsh television coverage⁵⁵³ with Radio Wales also invited.⁵⁵⁴ The overall success of the Peace Bus tour was highlighted in the GDR press with meetings with local politicians in Cwmbran and representatives of the peace movement described as having been cordial.⁵⁵⁵ Gerhard Lindner disclosed to the *South Wales Argus* that the 'welcome in Gwent had been very warm'.⁵⁵⁶ Yet again however, the absence of other engagements in Wales during the Peace Bus Tour reflected a lack of interest in the GDR outside the Gwent branch's sphere of influence and the reliance on key activists to promote and co-ordinate such events locally.

Notwithstanding the hosting of such delegations from the GDR, there are numerous citations of exhibitions and displays in Cwmbran and the wider Gwent area, including those presented to Gwent Council members. Councillor John Pembridge referenced one such example in correspondence to the LfV, describing an exhibition of life in the GDR organised by Ray Hill. 'I think this really gave our members an insight into your lifestyle and I believe many of them were surprised by it'.⁵⁵⁷ Further references, such as an exhibition on the GDR at Cwmbran town centre library,⁵⁵⁸ showing films from the GDR within the Council⁵⁵⁹ and a display of the Architecture of East German Cities at Gwent County Hall from 17th - 30th March, 1988,⁵⁶⁰ exemplify the range and effort behind activities undertaken by the Gwent branch. Ray Hill, as Secretary, promoted the work of the Gwent branch to the friendship organisations. With specific regard to a photographic exhibition organised by the branch members, Hill declared: 'I am sure that such an exhibition is very valuable in bringing the social and industrial life of the GDR to the notice of the people of Gwent. We hope to start a newsletter in the near future which will add another dimension to our work in Gwent'.⁵⁶¹ Perhaps as a result of its numerous activities, the LfV appraised the effectiveness of the Gwent branch (along with the Coventry, Bradford and Manchester branches) as enjoying a high profile with local town councils,

⁵⁵¹ SAPMO-BArch DY13/3130, [Letter] Jack Berlin to Dietmar Hahn, 05.08.1982, Bl. 1.

⁵⁵² 'East German 'peace bus' arrives, *South Wales Argus*, 05.10.1982, p. 7.

⁵⁵³ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3130; 'Britain-GDR Society Newsletter, October 1982', Bl. 1.

⁵⁵⁴ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3130, [Letter] Jack Berlin to Dietmar Hahn, 05.08.1982, Bl. 1.

⁵⁵⁵ 'DDR-Delegation zu Gast im walisischen Cwmbran', *Neues Deutschland*, 11.10.1982, S. 2.

⁵⁵⁶ 'East German 'peace bus' arrives, *South Wales Argus*, 05.10.1982, p. 7.

⁵⁵⁷ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter] John Pembridge to Inge Schönherr (LfV), 11.12.1985, Bl. 212.

⁵⁵⁸ 'East German 'peace bus' arrives, *South Wales Argus*, 05.10.1982, p. 7.

⁵⁵⁹ Gwent Archives, G-10-M-5, 'Twinning Sub-Committee minutes', 11.09.1985, D.6.

⁵⁶⁰ Gwent Archives, G-10-M-6, 'Twinning Sub-Committee', 08.06.1988, D.22.

⁵⁶¹ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3118, [Letter] Ray Hill to Dietmar Hahn, 06.01.1986, Bl. 2.

Trade Unions, Church leaders and Universities and receiving political, material and financial support from these.⁵⁶² Significantly, as all of these groups were typical GDR targets for engagement – such an appraisal would have fostered an appreciation in the GDR of the value of the Gwent branch's activities.

Golz described how GDR friendship groups in Britain played a significant role in co-ordinating delegations to and from the GDR. This responsibility included not only the practical organisation of arranging and receiving delegations, but also seeking suitable contacts and extracting words of praise about the GDR from returning delegates for wider promulgation.⁵⁶³ As well as planning activities and events to promote the GDR in Wales, this responsibility was also undertaken by the Gwent branch. After all, such methods were an important 'propaganda instrument'⁵⁶⁴ for the GDR, 'carefully targeting individuals and organisations in a position to influence attitudes [...] and inviting them to undertake a study-visit at the GDR's not inconsiderable expense'.⁵⁶⁵ As well as the delegations involving local politicians (reviewed in the next chapter), the Gwent branch organised multiple youth delegations between Gwent and Bautzen. The choice of Bautzen was presumably made as a result of the successful contacts made there by the 1981 delegation (discussed below) and likely recommended by the LfV and DEBRIG on the basis of such previous interactions. Youth delegations occurred frequently and were well-arranged, with visitors often interacting with Gwent civic life.⁵⁶⁶ A letter to Dietmar Hahn from the central Britain-GDR Society in July 1984 described the first youth tour to Wales as a '200% success'.⁵⁶⁷ Supplementary to the youth activities, the Gwent branch was also instrumental in co-ordinating strategic delegations to the GDR as per LfV and DEBRIG recommendations. Three delegations identified within the archival material are considered in this chapter, supplemented by press reports, secondary literature and oral interviews. Determining the purpose of these delegations and evaluating whether they had a specifically 'Welsh' dimension illuminates the motivations behind the Gwent branch's activities, policies and identity during this period.

⁵⁶² SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3123, 'Anlage: Zur Tätigkeit und Entwicklung der NFG 1985/86', Bl. 1

⁵⁶³ Golz, H-G. (2004) *Verordnete Völkerfreundschaft: Das Wirken der Freundschaftsgesellschaft DDR-Grossbritannien und der Britain-GDR Society, Möglichkeiten und Grenzen*, Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, S. 39.

⁵⁶⁴ Golz, *Verordnete Völkerfreundschaft*, S. 31.

⁵⁶⁵ Wallace, 'Cultural Relations', p. 400.

⁵⁶⁶ See for example the photo on the front page of *The News & Weekly Argus* (Cwmbran edition) where GDR students and members of the Gwent branch were pictured with the Mayor of Torfaen, 09.10.1986, p. 1.

⁵⁶⁷ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3129, [Letter] Jack Berlin to Dietmar Hahn, 12.07.1984, Bl. 1.

DELEGATION 1: Welsh-speakers visit Bautzen, September 1981

A delegation of Welsh-speakers travelled to Bautzen in September 1981, with a specific objective of gaining an overview of the Sorbian situation in the GDR.⁵⁶⁸ Although officially co-ordinated by the ‘Welsh branch’ of the Britain-GDR Friendship Society, the impetus behind the delegation was the result of earlier discussions between Brynach Parri and Dietmar Hahn, both having previously corresponded following an attempt by Parri (a German-speaking interpreter) to visit the GDR. Whilst Dietmar Hahn was in Wales meeting potential members of the new Gwent branch in 1980, discussions were held with Parri about bringing a delegation from Wales to look at the position of the Sorbs.⁵⁶⁹ The wholly Welsh-speaking delegation comprised the following participants: Brynach Parri, Ned Thomas (Founder-Editor of *Planet* journal, literary critic, author of *The Welsh Extremist* and recognised Welsh language campaigner), Robat Powell (the first Welsh learner to be awarded the Eisteddfod Chair in 1985; he established *Wilia*, the Welsh-language area newspaper in Swansea and was also a German-speaker) and Dewi Morris-Jones, then a senior editorial representative of the Welsh Book Council (*Cyngor Llyfrau Cymru*). Both Thomas and Morris-Jones were strongly interested in minority languages. Morris-Jones (a fluent Breton-speaker) had spent time in Brittany as a *Lector*⁵⁷⁰ and was interested in minority language publishing - specifically how the Sorbs cooperated with other nationalities such as the Czechs who produced excellent children’s books, which the GDR would buy and then replace with Sorbian or German text.⁵⁷¹ One of the primary and recurring themes for Thomas’ *Planet* journal was European minority languages. Thomas stressed that his participation on the delegation was not as a political ‘fellow-traveller’ (being no ‘anti-Soviet’ either), having already seen the strengths and weaknesses of Communism through earlier experiences. This instead was an opportunity to visit the Sorbs, ‘whom few people seemed to have heard of’.⁵⁷² The other delegates held similar motivations. Parri recollected how the fact that he understood and spoke German meant that he could visit and see both systems (the GDR and the FRG) side-by-side, ‘which was like a window into another world’.⁵⁷³ Powell was also a fluent German-speaker, making it possible for him to ‘hear what was being said beyond earshot’.⁵⁷⁴ The delegation which arrived in Berlin was fewer in number than originally anticipated. Three other anticipated delegates who initially

⁵⁶⁸ Morris-Jones, D. (1981) ‘Taro Cis ar y Sorbiaid’, *Llais Llyfrau*, (Gaeaf), p. 14.

⁵⁶⁹ Interview with Brynach Parri, 28.09.2013.

⁵⁷⁰ Interview with Ned Thomas, 07.04.2013.

⁵⁷¹ Interview with Brynach Parri, 28.09.2013.

⁵⁷² Ned Thomas learnt Russian to interpreter level in the Army during national service and later taught at Moscow State University under the Anglo-Soviet Cultural Agreement.

Interview with Ned Thomas, 07.04.2013. [My translation].

⁵⁷³ Interview with Brynach Parri, 28.09.2013. [My translation].

⁵⁷⁴ Interview with Robat Powell, 16.03.2014. [My translation]. Such a high concentration of German-speakers in several of the interactions identified in this thesis suggest that the GDR was a natural match for those with pro-Soviet sympathies or interests, who spoke German and who wanted to witness ‘actual existing socialism’. The 1980s was also a period of growing interest in the GDR, as exemplified by the interactions identified in the existing literature, including educational, scientific and cultural exchanges. The signing of a cultural agreement between Britain and the GDR in 1978 was also influential. See: Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 202.

confirmed their participation but had to cancel at the very last minute were key representatives from *Plaid Cymru* (the Welsh Nationalist Party), namely Dafydd Wigley and Dafydd Elis-Thomas, as well as a Professor of German, Len Jones, from Aberystwyth University. The two *Plaid Cymru* MPs were reported as having been very interested in the Sorbian situation and also incentivised by the wider learning opportunities afforded by visiting the GDR. Their last-minute cancellation was due to exceptional circumstances, with an urgent debate in parliament preventing their attendance. Additionally, as the German department of Aberystwyth University was newly under threat, Len Jones was also prevented from travelling in order for him to stay to defend his department from closure.⁵⁷⁵ According to Parri, Dietmar Hahn expressed severe disappointment when the delegation arrived in Berlin without its full anticipated complement. Parri surmised that this sentiment may have represented Hahn's concern of a perception of failure on his part, a 'black spot' as the delegation arrived without its planned MPs.⁵⁷⁶ The missing element of the proposed delegation - University contacts and parliamentarians - included the type of influential representatives sought for interaction by the GDR authorities. The disappointment expressed by Hahn was perhaps demonstrative of the value ascribed by the GDR's friendship movement to one type of delegate over another.

Before travelling onwards to Bautzen, the visiting Welsh delegates followed a fairly typical GDR delegation itinerary, in which as per usual, the attributes of the GDR and its 'actual existing socialism' were displayed. Activities included visiting key sights in Berlin such as the *Pergamon* museum and visiting the *Spreewald*.⁵⁷⁷ All interviewed delegates recollected being shown the Berlin Wall, including hearing the justifications for its construction and the GDR's 'shoot to kill' policy as a result of FRG hostility.⁵⁷⁸ Thomas recollected how it had been 'interesting to get the GDR's version as such views were not included in the home media, though I didn't go expecting to be pleasantly surprised'.⁵⁷⁹ Morris-Jones, in his article for the Welsh-language journal *Llais Llyfrau*, described how seeing the Berlin Wall had allowed him to hear the Eastern perspective and to see that it had a greater symbolism beyond the concrete and barbed wire 'lurking' in his mind. Such comments support the emphasis placed by the GDR authorities on pursuing the policy termed 'diplomacy through delegation', which afforded the opportunity of presenting a different perspective on the GDR to its Western visitors. It also explains the continuous pursuit of attaining favourable commentary from visiting Western delegates, both domestically and abroad, particularly when so few methods of communication were open to the GDR in the Western media. Nevertheless, GDR aspirations to promote the state as worthy of imitation were met with some scepticism. Powell recollected a visit to the *Palast der Republik* and hearing no word of critical commentary by members of the state, at least

⁵⁷⁵ Interview with Brynach Parri, 28.09.2013.

⁵⁷⁶ Interview with Brynach Parri, 28.09.2013.

⁵⁷⁷ Morris-Jones, 'Taro Cis ar y Sorbiaid', p. 14.

⁵⁷⁸ Interview with Ned Thomas, 07.04.2013.

⁵⁷⁹ Interview with Ned Thomas, 07.04.2013. [My translation].

on an official basis. Yet, key messages regarding the GDR's position on peace and achieving friendship were heard and absorbed by the delegates. The visitors were shown a map displaying the location of American missiles at a time when Reagan was locating arms in the FRG. The impressions of the delegates interviewed, confirmed that there had been a great emphasis on the GDR's anti-nuclear position, the need for peace and friendship as well as great sympathy on the part of the GDR with the activities of the CND in Wales.⁵⁸⁰

In addition to the standard GDR delegation activities, the itinerary included a significant proportion focusing specifically on the Sorbian situation. This was substantially reduced from the delegation's original expectation however - one interviewee recollected that what was meant to be an entire week with the Sorbs ended up being just three nights, with the remainder spent in Berlin.⁵⁸¹ Such a short period of time with the Sorbs may have been due to a few possible scenarios. It is likely that LfV personnel were not sufficiently knowledgeable of the Sorbian situation to conduct an entire itinerary relating to the Sorbs. Additionally, there may have been fears of allocating too much hosting responsibility to the Sorbs and subsequently allowing the delegates a disproportionate amount of independent interaction with those insufficiently politically qualified to represent the state, notwithstanding possible western (two-way) influences. A further scenario – and perhaps the most likely - is that the Sorbian situation was used by the GDR friendship movement to incentivise the delegation's visit for an opportunity to predominantly display the positive attributes of the GDR, especially if parliamentarians were expected. During the Sorbian stage of the itinerary the delegates were not accommodated in the main Sorb town of Bautzen, but rather in the grand hotel for Westerners in Dresden with the delegation hosted entirely at the GDR's expense. This type of accommodation clearly demonstrated 'that they wanted to make an impression' and plausibly, it made it easier for the authorities to control what was happening during the visit.⁵⁸² An interpreter was provided to the delegates, though as Thomas recollected, she had clearly not received a sufficient briefing, having no prior awareness of the existence of the Sorbs.⁵⁸³ As Parri summarised, 'it was like getting an interpreter from Yorkshire to discuss Wales to the Sorbs'.⁵⁸⁴ In Bautzen, a formal reception was held in the town hall with visits to the Sorbian History and Culture Museum, the 'Serbski Dom' (House of the Sorbs, the Domowina) and the Sorbian Literature Museum.⁵⁸⁵ A firm recollection for all interviewees was learning of the persecution experienced by the Sorbs under previous political regimes, mirroring exactly the same messages absorbed by the Flintshire educationalists over twenty years earlier. Key principles regarding state support for the Sorbs were promoted to the visiting

⁵⁸⁰ Interview with Robat Powell, 16.03.2014.

⁵⁸¹ Interview with Ned Thomas, 07.04.2013.

⁵⁸² Interview with Brynach Parri, 28.09.2013. [My translation].

⁵⁸³ Interview with Ned Thomas, 07.04.2013.

⁵⁸⁴ Interview with Brynach Parri, 28.09.2013. [My translation].

⁵⁸⁵ Morris-Jones, 'Taro Cis ar y Sorbiaid', p. 14.

delegates; in his article for *Llais Llyfrau*, Morris-Jones highlighted the Sorbs' constitutionally-protected rights, their methods for promoting the language, the structure of the school system as well as the establishment of institutions and the generous sponsorship of drama companies and arts groups.⁵⁸⁶

When visiting the Domowina publishing house, the delegates were afforded an insight into GDR provisions for preserving and promoting the Sorbian language, leading to some comparisons being made with the situation in Wales. As Morris-Jones pointed out, 'naturally we were interested in the arrangements of the publishing house (there has long been a debate in Wales on this topic)'.⁵⁸⁷ In his article, Morris-Jones highlighted the significant co-operation between Sorbian authors and the publisher's panel of readers who were incentivised to recommend improvements rather than reject manuscripts, primarily a result of the limited availability of contributors. Although recognising that this approach was a monopoly, he outlined how this encouraged Sorbian literature in the longer term, 'I am sure that many Welsh authors would be more than prepared to 'foot it' over to Sorbian Lusatia. Yes, they have it well!'.⁵⁸⁸ Three full-time Sorbian authors were funded by the state, with books published in the Sorbian language receiving a significant subsidy, as much as 90% of the cost of producing a book.⁵⁸⁹ Although the Sorbs only received around 5 hours per week of Sorbian material on the radio and just a few occasional programmes on television, to the Welsh visitors, the support granted for the publishing of a daily newspaper was of great significance.⁵⁹⁰ An afternoon was spent in the offices of the daily newspaper and in his article, Morris-Jones emphasised its publication frequency in italics – '*yes, daily*. [...] It is clear that this state puts great emphasis on sponsoring the arts generally'.⁵⁹¹ Whereas Wales had no daily Welsh-language newspaper (a fact which remains the case to this day), the delegates learnt that the Sorbian newspaper, which sold 3000 copies daily, was priced at just 50 *pfennig*, despite costing 2 *marks* per copy to produce.⁵⁹² The scant provision of broadcast media on the other hand would have been familiar to the Welsh delegates, particularly before the establishment of S4C (the Welsh language television channel) in 1983. Writing in 1971, Ned Thomas declared:

Television and radio are more obviously an imposed system in Wales where a linguistic minority is given only a token number of broadcasting hours at off-peak times while in other countries which have come together on the basis of co-operation, not domination, communities of the same size have a comprehensive service.⁵⁹³

⁵⁸⁶ Morris-Jones, 'Taro Cis ar y Sorbiaid', p. 14.

⁵⁸⁷ Morris-Jones, 'Taro Cis ar y Sorbiaid', p. 15. [My translation].

⁵⁸⁸ Morris-Jones, 'Taro Cis ar y Sorbiaid', p. 15. [My translation].

⁵⁸⁹ Morris-Jones, 'Taro Cis ar y Sorbiaid', p. 15.

⁵⁹⁰ Morris-Jones, 'Taro Cis ar y Sorbiaid', p. 14.

⁵⁹¹ Morris-Jones, 'Taro Cis ar y Sorbiaid', p. 14. [My translation].

⁵⁹² Morris-Jones, 'Taro Cis ar y Sorbiaid', p. 14.

⁵⁹³ Thomas, N. (1971) *The Welsh Extremist*. Available at: <http://archif.cymdeithas.org/dadlwytho/ned-thomas-the-welsh-extremist.pdf> (Accessed: 03.02.2014), p. 6.

This was clearly an issue of significance to several of the visiting delegates and the comparable Sorbian situation would have been a point of commonality between the visiting Welsh-speakers and the Sorbs.

Researching this delegation captures, in part at least, the views of ordinary Sorbian people outside the confines of the SED/LfV material. When interviewing the delegates in 2013/14, impressions were shared of the views expressed by Sorbian people encountered in the GDR, including the perception that many of those they met considered Welsh-speakers as being in a similar situation to their own. Consequently, several delegates believed that these Sorbs had perhaps been more candid in their assessment of the Sorbian situation when speaking privately to the delegates. Brynach Parri recollected a private discussion with Jurij Koch, a Sorbian writer:

I think he may have had difficulties with the party because of some of his views [...] he was a firm communist in his own way, but he was a nationalist and was judgemental of the way the system treated them. Despite this, there was gratitude that they were doing so much to promote the language with the publishing and everything. The newspaper published then, was a tremendous cost, but something that Wales has never succeeded in having.⁵⁹⁴

Whereas several interviewees recollected considering the LfV's promotion of the Sorbs as 'some sort of exhibition to be displayed to foreigners [...] a bit like look at how well we treat our minorities', speaking to the Sorbs directly enabled a more valid perception to be generated.⁵⁹⁵ Parri recollected a further example of transparency when the delegation went to learn of bilingual education provision in one of the Sorbian schools:

But for people like us, we knew exactly what it was like, we had taught in Welsh language schools and we knew that children spoke English on the schoolyard. And what was incredibly interesting was when we asked about what language the children spoke on the playground the Sorbs completely opened up. We discussed with them the difficulties that they had with the government, they were complaining about the fact that they were treated as something to be put in the shop window.⁵⁹⁶

Most interviewed delegates remembered this episode. Powell recollected how the initial response to the question relating to the language spoken on the yard was answered with 'that is a question asked by experts!'⁵⁹⁷ Another example of the cynical use of the Sorbian situation by the LfV was a visit to meet a youth group. Despite the event having been scheduled within the official itinerary, there was no-one present on arrival and two or three individuals were hurriedly summoned. When these young individuals were asked what they knew about the Sorbian language and provision of books and other resources, the impression generated was that they had been drilled in facts, answering in the third person by reporting how 'they' had books, or 'they' had a broadcaster in Cottbus. When travelling around from village to village and periodically asking whether Sorbian was spoken there, the response

⁵⁹⁴ Interview with Brynach Parri, 28.09.2013. [My translation].

⁵⁹⁵ Interview with Brynach Parri, 28.09.2013. [My translation].

⁵⁹⁶ Interview with Brynach Parri, 28.09.2013. [My translation].

⁵⁹⁷ Interview with Robot Powell, 16.03.2014. [My translation].

from Dietmar Hahn was usually ‘No, but it is in the next village’.⁵⁹⁸ Powell recollected how the delegation did not hear any Sorbian being spoken naturally whilst in the GDR and how it had been very difficult to see the normal situation of the Sorbs.⁵⁹⁹ This impression was confirmed by Morris-Jones who had no specific memory of opportunities for speaking with ordinary Sorbs.⁶⁰⁰ On the last night in Bautzen, during an evening of folk dancing, Thomas recollected that during one dance, a young man said to him in German, ‘do not believe a word they say’.⁶⁰¹ Such examples demonstrated how the visiting Welsh-speakers were not wholly convinced of the arguments and positions presented by the LfV hosts. Powell recollected perceiving two different levels of communication in the GDR – a formal level used at meetings for example, when official positions and statistics would be conveyed or discussed and a second, informal level amongst those who could speak freely with one another.⁶⁰² Despite these eye-opening encounters and the perceptions formed around the credibility of some statements made by the LfV, the delegation returned to Wales recognising that in some respects, the situation of the Sorbs was superior. Ned Thomas had previously articulated his thoughts on the fate of Welsh-speakers in 1971:

A healthy language, like a healthy body, does not need to have its temperature taken all the time; but the Welsh-speaker is constantly asking how the language is doing, noticing a contraction here, a small victory there, forecasting doom, pledging himself to do more, self-consciously buying Welsh books and records, starting Welsh schools and nursery classes, campaigning for equal status for the language in public life. The first thing to be said is that these things would not have to be striven for so self-consciously if they were provided as a matter of course, which they are in many bilingual and multilingual countries. The Welsh speaker has to assert his identity, because this identity will otherwise not be respected.⁶⁰³

The support provided to the Sorbs by the GDR would therefore have made a significant impression to the visiting delegates. The LfV hosts would have appreciated the overt interest shown in a facet of GDR life, which arguably had not been of any significant interest to the West since the last interaction with the Flintshire educationalists in the early 1960s. This previous contact was still remembered by the Domowina; during their visit, the delegates noticed a large framed picture of a Sorbian folk group competing in the Llangollen International Eisteddfod in the Domowina building.⁶⁰⁴ Speaking in 2014, Morris-Jones considered that Welsh-speakers were perhaps in a slightly better position than the Sorbs in terms of learning material content. This was likely due to a stronger literary tradition in Wales and the Sorbs being a smaller minority with fewer contributors available. Yet Morris-Jones considered that being able to function in a more limited circle could also be advantageous for the Sorbs, facilitating decision-making, language promotion and sharing generous subsidies.⁶⁰⁵ On his return, he

⁵⁹⁸ Interview with Robat Powell, 16.03.2014. [My translation].

⁵⁹⁹ Interview with Robat Powell, 16.03.2014.

⁶⁰⁰ Telephone Interview with Dewi Morris-Jones, 08.05.2014.

⁶⁰¹ Interview with Ned Thomas, 07.04.2013. [My translation].

⁶⁰² Interview with Robat Powell, 16.03.2014.

⁶⁰³ Thomas, *Welsh Extremist*, p. 25.

⁶⁰⁴ Interview with Robat Powell, 16.03.2014.

⁶⁰⁵ Telephone Interview with Dewi Morris-Jones, 08.05.2014.

wrote: ‘from my perspective, I cannot see the Sorbs succeeding to lead a life completely in their own language, yet considering the circumstances (in particular the historic), they are managing very well.’⁶⁰⁶ All interviewees agreed that visiting the GDR and the Sorbs had been an interesting experience. Ned Thomas, for example, stated how he had learnt a great deal.⁶⁰⁷ Morris-Jones summarised in his article that many of the challenges observed (in schools for example), were remarkably similar to the situation in Wales.⁶⁰⁸ Yet despite recognition by the delegates of the resources provided by the state, there was an awareness of the cost which came with such financial support. As Ned Thomas observed, ‘the propaganda told [the Sorbs] that their [Sorbian-speaking population] numbers were better than they actually were, as became evident after the fall of Communism’.⁶⁰⁹

Powell recollected how Dietmar Hahn and the other LfV personnel were not particularly aware of ‘Welshness’ and Welsh identity at the beginning of the delegation, but eventually achieved a comprehensive understanding ‘with our group continuously declaring ‘this is how it is in Wales’, or ‘in our language[...]’.⁶¹⁰ Morris-Jones also disclosed how numerous discussions were held during the delegation in which the situations of Welsh-speakers and the Sorbs were continuously compared, reinforcing a more comprehensive understanding of ‘Welshness’ to the hosts. By the end of the visit the Sorbs and the GDR friendship movement representatives had a much greater awareness of Welsh identity (or at least the type of (Welsh-speaking) identity promulgated by the participants of that particular delegation).⁶¹¹ Just as the endeavours of the Flintshire educationalists were not universally appreciated by Welsh-speaking parents, the delegates of this visit were themselves subject to criticism from other elements of the Welsh-speaking community. Parri recollected how several Welsh-language commentators found the trip objectionable; Robat Gruffudd of the *Lolfa* press for example, wrote a damning article for *LOL* (a Welsh-language satirical magazine) about the delegation. Parri explained: ‘his mother was from Magdeburg [...] he was very judgemental of the fact that we had accepted tainted money from that horrendous regime over there [...] It wasn’t that harsh, but was harsh from his perspective’.⁶¹² Following the visit, the delegates concluded that the Sorbs enjoyed many opportunities to encourage and foster their language which Welsh-speakers did not enjoy. The visit had provided the delegates with an opportunity ‘to see how a small minority functions under a different system’.⁶¹³ Yet although Brynach Parri and Dietmar Hahn remained in contact, no specific activity followed this delegation, indicating limited enthusiasm on the part of the Welsh-speaking delegates to foster long-term relations.

⁶⁰⁶ Morris-Jones, ‘Taro Cis ar y Sorbiaid’, p. 15. [My translation].

⁶⁰⁷ Interview with Ned Thomas, 07.04.2013.

⁶⁰⁸ Morris-Jones, ‘Taro Cis ar y Sorbiaid’, p. 14.

⁶⁰⁹ Interview with Ned Thomas, 07.04.2013. [My translation].

⁶¹⁰ Interview with Robat Powell, 16.03.2014. [My translation].

⁶¹¹ Telephone Interview with Dewi Morris-Jones, 08.05.2014.

⁶¹² Interview with Brynach Parri, 28.09.2013. [My translation].

⁶¹³ Morris-Jones, ‘Taro Cis ar y Sorbiaid’, p. 15. [My translation].

This first delegation had a clear, defined purpose; Welsh-speakers learning of the status of another minority culture. A niche topic even amongst Welsh-speakers, the primary draw had been the Sorbs although all delegates had been interested in experiencing life in the GDR too. Despite the delegation having been referenced as organised by the ‘Welsh branch’ of the Britain-GDR Society, the involvement of the Gwent branch must have been extremely limited – none of the participants came from the Gwent area and the arrangements were undertaken by the LfV.⁶¹⁴ Yet the overtly-Welsh nature of this delegation provided the Gwent branch with a feature (the Welsh language and Welsh nationhood) with which to differentiate its identity from all other Britain-GDR Society branches. Its status as the sole branch in Wales also enabled it to (perhaps opportunistically) assume a de facto position of national representation. Following the Welsh-speaking delegation in 1981 and likely encouraged by Dietmar Hahn and the LfV’s new post-delegation understanding of Wales and Welshness; the Gwent branch proceeded to pursue distinct Welsh-Sorbian relations, despite being located in an area of Wales with very few Welsh-speakers. Youth exchanges with Bautzen were undertaken with the County of Gwent and the Borough of Blaenau Gwent heavily encouraged to progress twinning arrangements with the Sorbian district of Bautzen. The work of the Gwent branch in such a different context to the usual activities of the friendship society was recognised by the branches. In 1985 for example, the Secretary of the West Midlands branch reported that the ‘Friendship Group in Wales is making links with the Sorb community’.⁶¹⁵ It is unclear whether this reference to the ‘Wales’ friendship group was the result of the branch being the only Britain-GDR Society representation in Wales, or was due to its own projection and self-promotion as a national branch; pursuing an unique avenue made possible by the existence of an indigenous language in Wales. An awareness of the Welsh-Sorbian connection was evident in the Society’s newsletter of 1982. A section was included entitled ‘The care for minorities in the GDR - What do you know about the Sorbs?’ which presented the following text:

The Sorbs are a Slavic people who were pushed across Europe by an invading force and for hundreds of years were under the yoke of Feudal lords in much the same way that the Celts were pushed into Wales and suppressed. Like the Welsh, their cultural virility eventually put them into opposition to the oppression and to build their own colleges and other institutions. Folk songs and poetry of an independent sort aroused the Fascist government to attack them.⁶¹⁶

The content of this passage suggests LfV involvement in its formation. A clear connection was made in this text to the similarity of experiences between the two peoples, thus justifying the activities undertaken to promote Welsh-Sorbian co-operation. In 1986, the newsletter of the West of England

⁶¹⁴ Morris-Jones, ‘Taro Cis ar y Sorbiaid’, p. 14.

⁶¹⁵ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3118, ‘Report to West Midlands Branch, Britain/GDR Society, on Secretaries’ visit to GDR 1-8 June 1985, from Margaret Chamings’, p. 2.

⁶¹⁶ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3130, ‘The Care for Minorities in the German Democratic Republic’ in a Britain-GDR Society Newsletter, Undated - c. 1982, p. 2.

branch drew attention to a forthcoming talk from Ray Hill, entitled ‘New Friends in Bautzen’.⁶¹⁷ A relationship with the Sorbs was clearly a promoted feature of the Gwent branch’s identity.

DELEGATION 2: Taking CND Cymru to meet the Sorbs, 26.10 - 2.11.86

In autumn 1986, the GDR hosted a further delegation from Wales, this time wholly co-ordinated by the Gwent branch. Its arrangement followed an instruction from Dietmar Hahn for the branch to arrange a delegation of ‘5 personalities of social and public life from Wales for studying the social position of the national minority of Sorbs in the GDR’.⁶¹⁸ The reason behind this request was noted in an internal LfV briefing paper, which expressed concern that the GDR friendship movement in Wales remained wholly restricted to the locality of Gwent. Despite a growth of interest in the GDR in recent years, there was recognition of a need to i) win influential personalities from the social life of Wales to promote the society from its relative anonymity to a wider audience and ii) develop a specific approach for Wales.⁶¹⁹ A successful execution of this delegation and a later nurturing of relations with new contacts (*Nachkontaktpflege*) was therefore considered to be of highest importance. Dietmar Hahn wrote to Ray Hill and outlined the requirement for a broad, influential group of delegates:

As a friend, I ask you to have an eye so that we would like to receive a delegation that should be composed of personalities such as: members of parliament, publicists, local authorities etc. [...] A delegation, composed as above, can be an enormous support for the work of a branch. Due to its background it enables [us] to reach completely new circles of people when evaluating its visit to use and to elicit interest.⁶²⁰

The delegation’s official purpose was described in a *GDR Review* article: ‘They wanted to see for themselves how the Sorbs, an ethnic minority, live in the GDR. This was of special interest to the guests from Wales owing to the fact that the Welsh people are a national minority in Britain’.⁶²¹ Notwithstanding the implication in the text that the delegation followed a specific request from Wales, the stated purpose echoed the theme and aims of the 1981 delegation, yet for the most part was composed of significantly different demographics. The evidence suggests that only one of the delegates was a Welsh-speaker, in comparison to a full complement of Welsh-speaking delegates in 1981. Within the papers of the CND Cymru Archive in the National Library of Wales, the following correspondence illustrates the Gwent branch’s approach for seeking suitable delegates.

My Society are [*sic*] organising a 5 person delegation to the GDR [...] the delegation will be broad-based and will include a Trade Union representative, a Welsh MP, a member of the

⁶¹⁷ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3118, ‘Newsletter: West of England Branch, No. 14’, November-December 1986, Bl. 1.

⁶¹⁸ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3118, [Letter] Dietmar Hahn to Ray Hill, 16.12.1985, Bl. 2.

⁶¹⁹ SAPMO-BArch, ‘Bericht über den Aufenthalt einer Delegation von Persönlichkeiten des gesellschaftlichen Lebens der walisischen Minderheit Grossbritanniens zum Kennenlernen der DDR und zum Studium der gesellschaftlichen und politischen Stellung der nationalen Minderheit der Sorben: 26.10 – 2.11.1986’, 18.11.1986, DY13/3121, Bl. 2.

⁶²⁰ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3118, [Letter] Dietmar Hahn to Ray Hill, 16.12.1985, Bl. 2.

⁶²¹ ‘Where the Sorbs are at home: Guests from Wales in the GDR’, *GDR Review*, 3/87 (1987), 32.3, p. 50.

Medical Profession, hopefully a Minister of Religion and a person from one of the Peace Movements in Wales. I am writing to you in anticipation that your organisation could take up the peace movement place. The only cost involved will be travel between Britain and the GDR and pocket money. The visit will afford your organisation the opportunity of examining firsthand the peace movement development in the republic and also to explain the CND position to our counterparts in the GDR.⁶²²

The listed demographics were fairly typical of the type usually approached by the GDR. The willingness of the LfV to bear the majority of the financial burden supports the position outlined in the existing literature that attempts to promote 'image cultivation' through delegations, were valued by the GDR authorities. The content of the letter is also quite illuminating, particularly Ray Hill's description of the Gwent branch as being 'my society', perhaps representative of his in-depth involvement in the branch. Throughout the available material recording the actions of the Gwent branch, the principal correspondent and instigator of activities was overwhelmingly Ray Hill, rather than any other member of its Executive. Additionally, the description of the delegation was tailored to appeal to its audience ('peace movement development') rather than the purpose stated by Dietmar Hahn in his original letter to Ray Hill.

Further to the Gwent branch's efforts, the final delegate list included the following representatives from Wales:

- Dennis Hathaway (Leader) - Gwent branch Chair, local Trade Union functionary (TASS), Labour Party member and Engineer,
- William Henry Russell Rees - Member of Council, Labour Party member, former doctor, owner of a local disco club and antique shops, member of the Gwent branch,
- Olwen Mary (Fiandanese) Davies - Member of the CND Cymru's leadership, Welsh representative in the international committee of CND,
- Trevor Clifford Williams, member of the Gwent branch and a Factory Inspector,
- Privichandra Hirabhai (Kenny) Patel, member of the Gwent branch, a Student.⁶²³

Apart from the CND Cymru representative, the remainder of the delegation were local members of the Gwent branch. Although a tenuous link to the required demographics (as described in Ray Hill's letter) was made by these members being (or having been) a trade unionist or a doctor for example, the final delegation clearly did not conform to the LfV's brief of achieving a broad range of prominent delegates from Welsh public life. Assuming that the Gwent branch sought a wide range of suitable participants more akin to its original instructions, it is significant that only CND Cymru accepted the

⁶²²National Library of Wales [henceforth: NLW], CND Cymru Archives C14, [Letter] Ray Hill to Bob Cole, 28.03.1986, Unpaginated.

⁶²³SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3121, 'Bericht über den Aufenthalt einer Delegation... 26.10 – 2.11.1986', 18.11.1986, Bl. 1.

invitation. CND Cymru was the primary peace movement in Wales during the 1980s, a separate (yet associated) entity from the central London CND organisation, following a decision to create a CND movement specifically for Wales in 1983:

[... so] to take on greater responsibility for the campaign [within] own country [it] allows the campaign in Wales to reflect more fully the special features of the Welsh scene, [its] language, politics etc. [to] produce bilingual and Welsh language publications on Welsh issues [...] we owe a great deal to the inspiration which has come to [the central movement] from Wales.⁶²⁴

CND Cymru was active in the Nuclear Free Wales movement, supporting the work of Gwent and South Glamorgan councils in establishing the Welsh Nuclear-free forum.⁶²⁵ A bilingual organisation, CND Cymru led approximately 120 local CND groups and a further 130 affiliated Welsh organisations such as trade unions, political parties and councils.⁶²⁶ Although previous contributors have commented that the peace movement struggled to prosper in Welsh-speaking Wales because of its perceived association with ‘hippy’ English immigrants, the evidence in the CND Cymru archival material presents an alternative scenario for consideration.⁶²⁷ Its leadership during the 1980s at least, was firmly committed to achieving and operating as a fully bilingual organisation, with around half of its membership being Welsh-speakers at a time when only some 18.7% (according to the 1991 census figure) of the population of Wales spoke Welsh.⁶²⁸ This demonstrates an above average attraction to the Welsh peace movement amongst Welsh-speakers. The bilingual policy was not universally accepted by all CND members however. Complaints were received by the CND Cymru leadership in respect of the organisation’s overt Welsh identity and policies. In one example from 1987, a member refused to renew his subscription, complaining against the movement’s bilingual policy – ‘I am more concerned with the preservation of the world than with the preservation of the Welsh language. Without the former, the latter is pointless’.⁶²⁹ In another letter a member requested a switch in membership to the central London entity rather than CND Cymru: ‘I am not interested in belonging to a bilingual nationalistic organisation’.⁶³⁰ In response to this letter, Bob Cole, the Secretary of CND Cymru wrote:

⁶²⁴ NLW, CND/CND Cymru Archive, C2/11, Box 112, [Letter] Bruce Kent (General Secretary of CND) to All Members of CND living in Wales, 01.08.1983, Unpaginated.

⁶²⁵ See for example: NLW, CND Cymru Archive: i) *Ymgyrch Cymru*: Papurau Cymru ar gyfer grwpiau, Rhif 22, Chwefror 1986, ii) *Ymgyrch Cymru*, Papurau CND Cymru ar gyfer grwpiau, Rhif 23, Mawrth 1986 & ii) *Ymgyrch Cymru*: Papurau CND Cymru ar gyfer grwpiau, Rhif 24, Ebrill 1986.

⁶²⁶ NLW, CND Cymru Archive, ‘Llythr newyddion yr aelod unigol’: Awst 1986, (Newsletter), p. 1.

⁶²⁷ See for example: Johnes, M. (2011), ‘Wales and the Cold War’, *Llafur: Journal of Welsh People’s History*, Vol. 10 (4), p. 14. For further information on interactions between the GDR and the British Peace Movement, see: Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, pp. 265 - 276.

⁶²⁸ Jones, H. M. [for: Comisiynydd y Gymraeg/Welsh Language Commissioner] (2012) *Darlun ystadegol o sefyllfa’r Gymraeg*. Available at:

<http://www.comisiynyddygybraeg.org/Cymraeg/Rhestr%20Cyhoeddiadau/Darlun%20ystadegol%20Cymraeg.pdf> (Accessed: 14.05.2014), p. 16.

⁶²⁹ NLW, CND Cymru Archive, C14, [Letter] Morien Morgan to Bob Cole, 05.08.1987, Unpaginated.

⁶³⁰ NLW, CND Cymru Archive, C14, [Letter] Paula Fletcher to CND Cymru, 02.11.1987, Unpaginated.

As a campaigning body committed to dealing with the most important task facing humanity today our aim must be to ensure our membership is as broad and diverse as possible. In Wales this is impossible without recognising and providing for that section of the population whose first language is Welsh. This we do by promoting a bilingual policy and as nearly half our membership is Welsh speaking we feel justified in continuing this policy. We cannot hope to rid the world of nuclear weapons unless we ourselves show a tolerance and awareness of the differences that separate us (and can unite us) as human beings.⁶³¹

It is therefore evident that supplementary to the anti-nuclear interests of CND Cymru, great emphasis was also placed by its leadership on preserving and promoting the Welsh language. A delegation to the GDR not only provided an opportunity to engage with the international peace movement and thus offer an insight into the GDR's activities, the stated purpose of this delegation - a visit to learn of the Sorbian situation - would also offer an alternative bilingual perspective. This after all was the stated aim of the delegation rather than engaging specifically in peace movement activities, despite Ray Hill's description of the visit. The CND Cymru representative chosen to participate in the delegation was Olwen Davies, a Welsh-speaker⁶³² who was not only part of CND Cymru's leadership but also the Welsh representative in CND's International Committee.⁶³³ During the delegation, Davies expressed bilingual greetings to the GDR on behalf of CND Cymru:

I bring you warm greetings from CND Cymru, of Nuclear Free Wales (*Cymru Ddi-Niwclear*), together with heartfelt wishes for international friendship. Let us hope that through such links as these [that] we are forging during this visit, all people in the world will unite together to work for peaceful development and lay the foundations for a lasting peace. Let us work together to make every year an International Year of Peace.⁶³⁴

On arrival in the GDR, the delegation's first activity was participating in an 'information discussion' with Horst Brasch (General Secretary of the LfV) on the policies of the GDR.⁶³⁵ As well as seminars discussing contemporary topics relating to domestic and international policies, the delegates' visits to schools, theatres and museums whilst in the GDR also provided an insight into its cultural and social life.⁶³⁶ In Bautzen, the delegates were taken to see the Domowina press and also met Jurij Grosz, First Secretary of the Executive of the Domowina for a 'lively exchange of experiences and opinions on the

⁶³¹ NLW, CND Cymru Archive, C14, [Letter] Bob Cole to Morien Morgan, 19.08.1987 Unpaginated

⁶³² NLW, CND Cymru Archive, Correspondence and papers concerning the CND Cymru, including Minutes of Council, October 1985 and AGM, March 1985, 'Olwen Davies Election Address' (for a CND Cymru post in 1986/7). Unpaginated.

⁶³³ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3121, 'Bericht über den Aufenthalt einer Delegation von Persönlichkeiten des gesellschaftlichen Lebens der walisischen Minderheit Grossbritanniens zum Kennenlernen der DDR und zum Studium der gesellschaftlichen und politischen Stellung der nationalen Minderheit der Sorben: 26.10 – 2.11.1986', 18.11.1986, Bl. 1.

⁶³⁴ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3121, 'CND Cymru: At ein cyfeillion yng Ngweriniaeth Ddemocrataidd yr Almaen', Undated, Bl. 1.

⁶³⁵ Many Bundesarchiv-held delegation reports frequently document a LfV representative conducting an information discussion with delegates upon their arrival in the GDR.

⁶³⁶ NLW, CND Cymru Archive, 'Ymgyrch Cymru: Cylchlythr aelodau CND Cymru, Rhifyn 1, Rhagfyr 1986 – Ionawr, 1987' (Newsletter), p. 3.

lives of the Welsh people and the Sorbs'.⁶³⁷ Delegates were encouraged to understand how the Sorbs had constitutionally-guaranteed equal rights to other GDR citizens and were equipped with significant facilities for the care of their language and culture.⁶³⁸ Dennis Hathaway, head of the delegation and Chairman of the Gwent branch is reported to have said: 'We are very impressed by the possibility to publish with state assistance such a broad range of attractive books, brochures and periodicals'.⁶³⁹ Such commentary echoed the views made by the Flintshire educationalists over twenty years previously, demonstrating once again a consistency in the GDR's approach to highlighting its treatment of the Sorbs to Western observers. By giving such focus to the Sorbs, the LfV were seeking to replicate the impact made to the earlier 1981 delegation from Wales who witnessed the provisions granted to the Sorbs by the state. As this delegation came from Wales too, it is perhaps unsurprising that the LfV followed an existing method based on previous successes. Yet this is demonstrative of the confused approach of the GDR's agents in dealing with Welsh visitors, assuming their interests and priorities were homogenous. The *GDR Review* quoted the reaction of the delegates in such a way as to portray a specific Welsh minority status and although none of the Gwent branch delegates has been identified as Welsh-speaking, no reference was made in the article to any other possible facet of their identity:

During the conversation both sides stressed that the cultivation of their national traditions and the maintenance of peace were top priorities for the Sorbs and the Welsh people. The guests from Wales were unanimous in their verdict: 'We believe that our national languages cannot survive if we don't keep them alive. What is being done in the GDR for the Sorbs' language, customs and traditions is exemplary. Although we've scored partial success we have to continue fighting for the preservation of our culture.'⁶⁴⁰

The sentiments expressed create two possible scenarios for consideration; firstly, that the Gwent branch, which was described by Sheila Taylor as not being particularly nationalistic, was nonetheless wholly supportive of the Welsh language and was perhaps encouraged by Olwen Davies' views and/or the LfV expectations. This gives rise to the notion that those of the *Welsh Wales* type (traditionally Valleys-based, Labour supporting, non-Welsh speaking but identifying themselves as Welsh) were receptive to elements of the *Fro Gymraeg* type and supportive of the Welsh language, even if they did not speak it. Alternatively, this was the *GDR Review* seeking to report the delegation in such a way as to draw the attention of its readership to the GDR's treatment of minorities. The absence of independent material containing the views of the Gwent branch delegates makes determining a conclusion difficult. Olwen Davies was also explicitly quoted by the *GDR Review*, repeating similar sentiments to the previous passage:

⁶³⁷ 'Where the Sorbs are at home', *GDR Review*, p. 50

⁶³⁸ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3121, 'Bericht über den Aufenthalt einer Delegation von Persönlichkeiten des gesellschaftlichen Lebens der walisischen Minderheit Grossbritanniens zum Kennenlernen der DDR und zum Studium der gesellschaftlichen und politischen Stellung der nationalen Minderheit der Sorben: 26.10 – 2.11.1986', 18.11.1986, Bl. 3.

⁶³⁹ 'Where the Sorbs are at home', *GDR Review*, p. 50

⁶⁴⁰ 'Where the Sorbs are at home', *GDR Review*, p. 50

Here in Bautzen it was particularly interesting for us because we are also a minority and have certain things in common with the Sorbs. Although the Sorbs are much fewer than we Welsh people we've been able to gather many useful experiences. In my opinion it's very good that along with German the Sorb children also learn their national language. [I] want to come back [and] also to encourage my students to come [to] seek to organise an exchange.⁶⁴¹

I am the chairwoman of the district peace network in my area. Our movement is not only against nuclear weapons, it is for freedom in general, against apartheid [...] I will be able to give a report of my visit that will go out to quite a few people. I'll also write a letter to the local press.⁶⁴²

This passage illustrates a Welsh-speaker recognising constructive lessons to share domestically from the 'many useful experiences', but it also suggests that Davies' interest in peace initiatives was greater than any national identifier. In the article, Davies also highlighted positive aspects of life in the GDR such as affordable housing and low unemployment, concluding as a result of this visit that there was no reason for the peace movement and the population of the GDR to protest against their own government. State policies corresponded to the wishes of the people. The LfV observed that Davies would report what had been experienced in the GDR to the Board of the CND in Wales as well as the International Committee of the CND in London. As a CND activist and Councillor of Aberystwyth, Davies allegedly promised to undertake activities 'in support of the NFG in West Wales'.⁶⁴³ This reference to West Wales for GDR friendship activity is the first and only citation of its kind and was clearly an unrealised aspiration. Other than this one attestation, there is no further evidence whatsoever indicating the establishment of any additional Welsh branches of the Britain-GDR Society. What it demonstrates however is an appetite on the part of the GDR friendship movement to expand its sphere of influence in Wales.

A useful counterpoint for examining the veracity of Olwen Davies' views as quoted in the *GDR Review*, is considering a summary of her observations in the CND Cymru newsletter (*Ymgyrch Cymru: Cylchlythr aelodau CND Cymru*) following her return to Wales.

Olwen had a special interest in visiting Banizen [*sic*] – which is a centre for the Sorbian people, people descended from the Slavs with their own language and culture. When visiting a nursery there, [Olwen] saw an exhibition of peace posters and was welcomed with [the] words 'Keine Euroshima' (no Euroshima). The GDR was recognising the international year of peace and World Peace Day was being celebrated by the children, drawing and writing essays on peace. In the underground stations in Berlin there is a permanent exhibition of peace posters. 'We were given a very warm-hearted welcome [...] we were not under direct observation as is the popular misconception, the people were open and friendly and they had a positive attitude towards the future. The general theme which came out of our discussion was a genuine intention that no more wars would be started in Germany, and we exchanged ideas on how, together, we could make a contribution towards developing and retaining peace. We

⁶⁴¹ 'Where the Sorbs are at home', *GDR Review*, pp. 50 - 51

⁶⁴² 'Where the Sorbs are at home', *GDR Review*, pp. 50 - 51

⁶⁴³ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3121, 'Bericht über den Aufenthalt einer Delegation von Persönlichkeiten des gesellschaftlichen Lebens der walisischen Minderheit Grossbritanniens zum Kennenlernen der DDR und zum Studium der gesellschaftlichen und politischen Stellung der nationalen Minderheit der Sorben: 26.10 – 2.11.1986', 18.11.1986, Bl. 2. [My translation].

must continue to visit and make friends with people from different cultures and political structures. People to people – trying to bridge the gap and understand the differences. The visit was extremely interesting and enjoyable. Olwen gave out many Anti-Nuclear Wales badges and Peace Declarations, which were received with enthusiasm. Contacts have now been made and they need to be built upon. If anybody would like to make contact with the people of the GDR, or peace movements in other countries around the world, write to Olwen.⁶⁴⁴

By dispelling myths about GDR society, such published impressions were favourable and validated the SED's concept of encouraging delegates to publicise their views when returning home. Olwen Davies' visit to Bautzen on this delegation was not an isolated interaction between the Welsh peace movement and the GDR. Although the evidence is very limited, further contacts had also been achieved. One notable attestation is the reference in the report of the CND stand at the National Eisteddfod in Fishguard in 1986 of the Dyfed Christian CND group presenting an exhibition on peace contacts with the GDR.⁶⁴⁵

With specific regard to this delegation, Dennis Hathaway of the Gwent branch provided further non CND-specific feedback in the *GDR Review* article:

Back home we'll inform people in the friendship group, our acquaintances and friends all about this. But we are also going to tell them of the concentration of new building and rebuilding in the towns which were destroyed during the war, of people who are friendly, peace-loving, interested and want cooperation with all peoples. We'll advise all of our compatriots to go and see for themselves what things are like in the GDR. It's not so much glittering facades and luxury goods that count but everyday life, the social-welfare provisions that have been introduced for people in the GDR.⁶⁴⁶

Of interest is observing what was of greatest importance to the delegates to report on their return, namely the socialist aspects and achievements of the GDR; features typically of interest to the *Welsh Wales* socialist identity type. The target audience for these views, 'the friendship group, acquaintances and friends', unequivocally demonstrates the limited audience and circle of influence of the Gwent branch, despite the LfV's best efforts to enhance the branch's profile.

Some follow-on activities were undertaken by the LfV post-delegation, including sending documents on the GDR's peace activities to Olwen Davies and several of the Gwent branch members.⁶⁴⁷ Further correspondence was also exchanged including a letter sent from Werner Rumpel, General Secretary of the Peace Council of the GDR to CND Cymru outlining the efforts made by the GDR in demanding an end to nuclear testing.⁶⁴⁸ A month after the delegation's return, Bernd Zufelde of the *Nationale*

⁶⁴⁴ NLW, CND Cymru Archive, 'Ymgyrch Cymru: Cylchlythr aelodau CND Cymru, Rhifyn 1, Rhagfyr 1986 – Ionawr, 1987' (Newsletter), p. 3. [My translation].

⁶⁴⁵ NLW, CND Cymru Archive, E2, 'CND Stand – National Eisteddfod Fishguard 1986 report', p. 3

⁶⁴⁶ 'Where the Sorbs are at home', *GDR Review*, p. 50

⁶⁴⁷ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3121, 'Betr. Beschaffung und Versand von Friedensposten', 5.11.1986, Unpaginated.

⁶⁴⁸ NLW, CND Cymru Archive, C14, [Letter] Werner Rumpel (General Secretary of the Peace Council of the GDR) to CND Cymru, 22.12.1986, Unpaginated.

Freundschaftsgesellschaft DDR-Großbritannien wrote to Olwen Davies on the theme of peaceful co-operation and to offer further GDR support to CND Cymru.

As you know, I am attentively watching the activities of the peace forces in your country. Therefore I was also reading with interest and sympathy about the CND AGM in Blackpool. I feel that the Resolution adopted by the 1,400 delegates manifested the great number of our allies. This concerns in particular the support of a comprehensive freeze on nuclear tests, the prevention of the SDI project and the elimination of nuclear medium-range missiles from Europe. We highly welcome it that e.g. Joan Ruddock assessed the proposal commonly drawn up by the SED and the SPD as an important contribution towards nuclear disarmament. It would be good, if you could inform your friends in Wales about that. I myself am willing with pleasure to make available more detailed information about the domestic and foreign policies of the GDR to you and your colleagues.⁶⁴⁹

The primary purpose of the delegation had been to foster relations with prominent personalities from Welsh public life and to raise the profile of the Gwent branch and its activities. Although the pre-delegation briefing report had specified that relations were to be maintained with any new contacts following the return of the delegation, the limited follow-on interactions demonstrate that the aims of the LfV had failed. Not only had the Gwent branch managed to present a delegation which did not conform to the requirement set by the LfV, those who came to the GDR provided limited opportunities for widening the LfV's network and broadening its influence in Wales. Triumphant conclusions were nevertheless reported in the feedback documentation to the GDR authorities, declaring that 'the aim of this delegation to strengthen the relatively weak friendship movement with the GDR in the Welsh part of Great Britain [had] been achieved'.⁶⁵⁰ With the reality appearing to have been very different, this comment is either an indicator of the poor reliability and veracity of the LfV's interpretations or provides an insight into the distorted appreciation of the GDR friendship movement's impact in Wales, perhaps subjectively influenced by the contemporaneous twinning activity undertaken in Gwent.⁶⁵¹

DELEGATION 3: The Gwent Branch visit the GDR, 02. – 08.12.1988

The final cultural delegation under review in this chapter took place in December, 1988. Despite a flurry of civic activity between Gwent and Bautzen in the mid-1980s (see the next chapter for a full evaluation), interactions between the two areas had significantly decreased by the time of this delegation. Evidence of cultural delegations to and from Wales during the final stages of the GDR's existence is limited, suggesting diminished enthusiasm from all parties. No information documenting

⁶⁴⁹ NLW, CND Cymru Archives, C14, Letter from Bernd Zufelde (LfV) to Olwen Davies, 26.01.1987, Unpaginated.

⁶⁵⁰ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3121, 'Bericht über den Aufenthalt einer Delegation von Persönlichkeiten des gesellschaftlichen Lebens der walisischen Minderheit Grossbritanniens zum Kennenlernen der DDR und zum Studium der gesellschaftlichen und politischen Stellung der nationalen Minderheit der Sorben: 26.10 – 2.11.1986', 18.11.1986, Bl. 2. [My translation].

⁶⁵¹ A potential reflection of the pressure exerted by the authorities on state representatives to achieve successes in their efforts for the GDR.

this particular delegation exists in the friendship movement section of the *Bundesarchiv*; the only material available is contained in the *Staatssicherheit* (Stasi) archive. Despite this limitation in sources, material from this archive not only provides specific dates, key facts and assumptions, but also identifies the delegates, the itinerary and the formal objectives of the delegation.⁶⁵² Its official purpose was to support the Gwent branch of the Britain-GDR Society to i) achieve greater political influence and appeal, ii) develop existing contacts with the County Council of Gwent and iii) reignite relations between the Britain-GDR Friendship Society and the District Committee of the Dresden LfV.

The creation of direct contacts between the Dresden district committee and the Gwent branch will have a favourable impact on foreign information transmissions in particular in preparation for the 40th anniversary of the GDR. [...] The focus on the development of a dialogue of reason and realism, as well as the promotion of a true real image of the GDR.⁶⁵³

The participants of the delegation were mostly members of the Gwent branch, including Ray Hill and Denis Hathaway, with a few civic members such as James Kirkwood (Councillor) also accompanying the delegation, representing the by now waning twinning agreement between Gwent/Blaenau Gwent and Bautzen. The composition of this delegation therefore was arguably an attempt to revive the existing twinning arrangement between Blaenau Gwent & Bautzen and pursue a potential twinning between Gwent and Dresden.

Of particular significance with this delegation was the shift in content and purpose when compared to previous delegations to and from Gwent. Whereas all earlier delegations had consistent political considerations including promoting the ‘actual-existing socialism’ of the GDR or highlighting its anti-nuclear policies, there had previously been specific, comprehensive objectives for comparing the circumstances of Sorbs and Welsh-speakers. The aims of this delegation made no reference to Welsh/Sorbian co-operation and were instead now wholly consistent with those typical of delegations undertaken by other British friendship society branches, with no differentiating features. The delegation itinerary included sessions on the GDR’s peace and security policies, in which the contribution of the GDR to the creation of a nuclear-free and chemical- weapon-free corridor in Europe was emphasised. Another fixed itinerary activity was highlighting the GDR’s ‘successful economic strategy’ of the 1980s to illustrate ‘the dynamic development of the economy’ and a dialogue on the work of socialist democracy in government and society in the GDR. Such discussions, despite the actual troubled state of the GDR economy by this period, demonstrate a typical denial of reality by the GDR authorities, particularly when interacting with Western audiences.

⁶⁵² Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik [henceforth: BStU], MfS HA XX Nr. 6418, Bl. 36-42.

⁶⁵³ BStU, MfS HA XX Nr. 6418, Bl. 37. [My translation].

Whereas previous delegations from Gwent had predominantly focused on Bautzen and its environs, this visit included only a very brief stop-over, which was arguably due to the participation of a civic delegate (possibly) representing the troubled twinning arrangement. Instead, this delegation was mostly based in Berlin and Dresden, with limited Sorbian-related content other than a morning visit to the Sorb museum whilst in Bautzen. In Dresden, further discussions were held on increasing co-operation between the Gwent and Dresden branches of both British and GDR-based friendship societies, including talks between the representatives on issues such as nuclear disarmament, the easing of tensions and securing world peace. Typical GDR delegation sightseeing activities were scheduled, such as visits to the Art Gallery and Opera in Dresden and the TV Tower in Berlin, an approach which conformed to what Berger & LaPorte described with trade union delegation itineraries as ‘presenting East Germany as a country of high culture for all’.⁶⁵⁴ As ever, the Welsh delegates were encouraged to share impressions of their visit to domestic media outlets including participating in interviews for the *GDR Review* as well as the regional GDR press. What this generic, ‘standard-issue’ delegation itinerary demonstrates is how interactions between the LfV and the Gwent branch had by this point moved away from recognising a specific Welsh identity. Instead and based on the aims and objectives of this late 1980s delegation, there was nothing to differentiate or distinguish the Gwent branch’s activities from any other type of delegation from Britain. No specific Welsh element, identity or feature was encouraged or expressed. This may have also been influenced by the domestic pressures experienced by the GDR during this period, when in response to Gorbachev’s reforms, the GDR sought to strongly re-emphasise its credentials as an anti-fascist state. As such, any emphasis on the Welsh language and its culture would have been considered secondary to the promotion of core, socialist messages.

Conclusion

Wallace declared how the impact of the GDR’s cultural relations was ‘never more than marginal’ and ‘measured against the ambitious aims of its loudly trumpeted strategy [...] were underdeveloped and ineffective.’⁶⁵⁵ This can also be considered as the case in Wales. The Gwent branch, whilst influential in civic circles (due to its members’ existing contacts), never made a significant impact with the wider Welsh public (such as through growth in membership or greater awareness of the GDR) and certainly not to the expectations set and held by the LfV. To a certain degree, the role of the Gwent branch remained consistent throughout the 1980s, behaving and conducting its activities in a way which conformed to the LfV (and therefore the GDR’s) requirements. The branch’s activities were largely consistent with those of other Britain-GDR Society branches, at a time of a decentralisation for the ‘British-GDR’ friendship movement, as exemplified by the contemporary founding of the Scotland-GDR Society. The establishment of the ‘Wales’ branch was representative of this trend. In some

⁶⁵⁴ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 141.

⁶⁵⁵ Wallace, ‘Cultural Activities’, pp. 394-5.

respects however, the identity of the branch was multi-faceted and continuously evolving. By embracing a theoretical connection with the Sorbs, the Gwent branch was essentially defining itself as a Welsh representation. A unique position, promoting a Welsh identity allowed the branch to differentiate itself from other branches of the British-GDR Society and become a national representative within the GDR friendship movement. This identity materialised despite the branch having no (identified) Welsh nationalist or Welsh-speaking members, instead displaying political affiliations which traditionally conformed to the *Welsh Wales* identity type. Despite its activities in supporting a Welsh-Sorbian connection, the branch's membership was not perceived as particularly nationalist.⁶⁵⁶ To promote the link, a working understanding of the Sorbian situation was required. A letter from the central Britain-GDR Society leadership to the LfV in April 1984, requesting any available brochures or publicity on the Sorbs to be sent to Gwent suggests that the Gwent branch was ill-equipped to do so, particularly during the early stages of its promotion.⁶⁵⁷ The branch's influence was never more than marginal, as demonstrated by the participation list achieved for the second delegation reviewed in this chapter. Despite its ambitions, the prominence and influence of those delegates fell short of the original intention and is a stark indicator of the difficulties experienced by the friendship society in Britain when it sought to expand its activities.

Although the LfV identified the Sorbs as another avenue for promoting friendship activity in Britain, their approach lacked a level of sophistication or convincing sincerity. Sheila Taylor surmised that some people in the GDR found having a particular interest in the Sorbs amusing, with the authorities often perceiving the Sorbs as an anachronism and as 'something which would die out in the end'. The LfV was a small organisation of appointed people of whom the Sorbs would never have heard. Suddenly, the Sorbs were descended upon when somebody who had an interest in their community visited the GDR.⁶⁵⁸ Notwithstanding the challenges arising when interviewing participants after a significant period of time (and their post-reunification awareness of the GDR's activities), the evidence of the Welsh-speakers from the 1981 delegation suggests a much greater consciousness and recognition of the LfV's propaganda and exploitation of the Sorbs than the material evaluated for the chapter discussing the impressions of the Flintshire educationalists. This may be due to the Sorbs having been more open and/or the fact that a greater proportion of the material amassed for this chapter was generated after the demise of the GDR. Although a specific projection of Wales and Welshness had been set by the Welsh-speaking delegation of 1981, the Gwent branch and the LfV were largely unenthusiastic when the momentum for such a feature diminished, particularly as the lack of *Fro Gymraeg* representation in the Gwent branch made it unsustainable. Whereas the first delegation had set the scene, subsequent delegations led by the Gwent branch could not match the

⁶⁵⁶ Telephone Interview with Sheila Taylor, 24.04.2014.

⁶⁵⁷ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3129, [Letter] Jack Berlin to Dietmar Hahn, 11.04.1984, p. 1.

⁶⁵⁸ Telephone Interview with Sheila Taylor, 24.04.2014.

projected Welsh identity which had preceded them – the identities and interests of the later participants were too different. As Sheila Taylor speculated, had Welsh-speakers and the Sorbs decided between themselves that they wanted to develop closer links – and whereas such an activity may still have been assisted by the LfV - it would have been more likely to flourish. ‘But things never worked that way round, from the bottom up.’⁶⁵⁹ By the end of the decade, the prominence of the Gwent branch had diminished amongst the British-GDR friendship movement, despite the significant investment and attention afforded to the branch by the LfV for the majority of the 1980s – itself an indicator of the strength of the GDR’s motivations in pursuit of its aims. When an LfV delegation came to Britain in March 1988, multiple friendship branch areas were visited but no reference was made to the Gwent branch.⁶⁶⁰ The branch’s distinction had relied on its existing (and by then waning) civic connections and a Welsh language-influenced identity to which its members had never belonged. The absence of such elements prevented any notable or long-term successes for the GDR friendship movement in Wales.

⁶⁵⁹ Telephone Interview with Sheila Taylor , 24.04.2014.

⁶⁶⁰ SAPMO-BArch DY13/3317, Information über den Aufenthalt einer Delegation der Liga für Völkerfreundschaft in Grossbritannien vom 15. bis 24. März 1988?, Undated, Bl. 1.

CHAPTER 5 - THE TWINNING OF GWENT/BLAENAU GWENT AND BAUTZEN

During the mid-1980s, the County Council of Gwent and the Borough Council of Blaenau Gwent in South Wales sought a twinning agreement with the district of Bautzen in the GDR. This was the only Cold War twinning arrangement between Wales and the GDR, although there were others at the British level. The execution of the twinning was facilitated through the Liga für Völkerfreundschaft (the GDR's League of International Friendship, hereafter referred to as the 'LfV'). This chapter evaluates the circumstances behind the twinning, determines the motivations and incentives of all associated parties and explores why Bautzen was proposed as a twinning partner. The success and impact of the twinning relationship is also analysed to determine whether the objectives for the arrangement were realised. The overall findings of this chapter conclude that the twinning was pursued by local Labour politicians who sought to contribute to a peaceful co-existence with the Eastern Bloc, at a time of renewed Cold War tension. For the GDR, the execution of such a twinning facilitated further opportunities to interact with the West, particularly as British-GDR relations became decentralised.

Berger & LaPorte highlighted twinning arrangements as an example of the GDR's approach of encouraging at grass roots level, a more positive image of the GDR abroad, improving public awareness of the state and promoting arguments against nuclear armament and wider Cold War tensions.

[...] twinning arrangements would serve as a platform for promoting a more positive image of the GDR through public exhibitions and increased media coverage. In particular, the GDR sought to exploit the sympathies of local leftwing politicians for what they perceived as 'socialist construction' in East Germany and détente in international relations. [Twinning were] a vehicle with which to promote the so-called 'coalition of reason' against nuclear rearmament and cold-war tensions in East-West relations.⁶⁶¹

A strategic focus on sympathetic Labour-held councils was a recognised approach, as these were considered by the GDR authorities as 'particularly promising targets'.⁶⁶² The findings of this chapter further strengthen this assumption by demonstrating that political circumstances specific to Gwent and Blaenau Gwent strongly contributed to the establishment of the twinning. Historically a Labour Party stronghold, the political representation of Gwent was indicative of how the party 'dominated Welsh politics between 1945 and 1997'.⁶⁶³ Of the 78 Gwent County Council seats won in May 1985 for example, 67 were held by Labour Party councillors, with the remainder shared amongst the other

⁶⁶¹ Berger, S. & LaPorte, N. (2010) *Friendly Enemies: Britain and the GDR 1949-1990*, New York: Berghahn Books, p. 282.

⁶⁶² Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 282.

⁶⁶³ Scully, R. (2013) 'The History of One-Party Dominance in Wales, Part 2: Labour Hegemony', *Elections in Wales*, 9 October. Available at: <http://blogs.cardiff.ac.uk/electionsinwales/2013/10/09/the-history-of-one-party-dominance-in-wales-part-2-labour-hegemony/> (Accessed: 09.08.2014).

parties or independent candidates.⁶⁶⁴ Local Labour councillors with pro-Soviet sentiments (typical of the Old Labour party faction identified by Lilleker) promoted the twinning. They sought an alternative approach for pursuing peaceful co-existence with the Soviet Union by developing a dialogue between East and West. This was the period of the Second Cold War, when Reagan and Thatcher had ‘abandoned the reconciliatory stance of their predecessors [...] and the collapse of détente led to the re-emergence of a deep fear of nuclear war’.⁶⁶⁵ Lilleker described such politicians as ‘believing that they were acting with the best intentions and on behalf of humanity as a whole. They created a linkage between the ideals of peace and co-existence and the goal of attaining a socialist future’.⁶⁶⁶ In some respects therefore, this twinning was consistent with other examples of agreements between Labour-held councils and other areas of the GDR. Welsh Labour however often had to consider issues absent from English politics such as the challenges of nationalism and the language question.⁶⁶⁷ A closer evaluation of the twinning reveals how elements relating to Welsh language and culture were considered, including a demand to avoid discriminating against Wales in favour of other parts of Britain, the further use by the GDR authorities of the Sorbian situation and a projection of a specific understanding of Welsh identity by the GDR authorities to their Welsh twinning partners.

Reference has been made in the existing literature to the GDR’s preference for formalising twinning arrangements through agreements signed by the respective mayors of both twinning partners, thereby confirming a joint responsibility for world peace. Material describing the twinning partnerships was to be distributed at exhibitions and to the press, with study delegations also encouraged between the ‘widest possible spectrum of citizens’.⁶⁶⁸ Berger & LaPorte also referenced the connections between ‘communist-dominated local branches of the Britain-GDR Society and the ‘Old Left’ of the Labour Party holding electoral control in a significant number of British cities during the 1980s’.⁶⁶⁹ Ray Hill was identified in the previous chapter as a prominent member of the Britain-GDR Society’s Gwent branch, having promoted the GDR in Gwent by using his existing contacts with local Labour councillors. This chapter further evaluates the role of the local Gwent branch in generating, arranging and sustaining the twinning with Bautzen. Howarth also highlighted the twinning of Blaenau Gwent and Bautzen in a short study of relations between both Scotland and Wales with the GDR, indicating that such an interaction displayed independent regional tendencies away from the historic London-centric approach of engaging with the GDR at a national level. This contribution is further developed in this chapter by supplementing the existing research with additional Welsh material, including the use of oral testimony from the participants of the twinning and the evaluation of Welsh-based material

⁶⁶⁴ Gwent Archives, G-10-C-1, ‘Gwent Weekly Digest No. 103’, 05.05.1989, p. 1.

⁶⁶⁵ Lilleker, D. (2004) *Against the Cold War: The History and Political Traditions of Pro-Sovietism in the British Labour Party, 1945-1989*, London: I.B. Tauris, p. 172.

⁶⁶⁶ Lilleker, *Against the Cold War*, p. 205.

⁶⁶⁷ Hopkin, D., Tanner, D. and Williams, C. (eds.) (2001) *The Labour Party in Wales 1900-2000*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, p. 12.

⁶⁶⁸ Berger, & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 283.

⁶⁶⁹ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 285.

such as County/Borough Council documentation and additional press reports. Such sources facilitate an analysis of whether the twinning was an example of what Lilleker described as ‘a more individual approach; one of personal contact and rapprochement at the personal, rather than governmental level’.⁶⁷⁰

Representatives of Gwent County Council initiated the request which led to the establishment of the twinning. Councillor John Pembridge, then Chairman of Gwent County Council and a member of its Twinning committee was the primary catalyst.⁶⁷¹ Pembridge wrote to Inge Schönherr of the LfV in October 1985, seeking an area in the GDR with which to twin with ‘my county’.⁶⁷² Pembridge, who participated in an earlier local government delegation to the GDR in 1984,⁶⁷³ suggested Bautzen as a suitable twinning partner to the LfV, having been made aware of the town and the Sorbian people as a result of an article in the *Panorama-DDR* magazine and by members of the Gwent branch.⁶⁷⁴ His letter implied a sense of urgency behind his request: ‘the appropriate committee of the County Council will shortly make a decision on the inclusion or not of a GDR area within its twinning relations’ suggesting that the selection of an unusual, non-standard twinning partner may have been a specific achievement or a priority sought by a County Council Chairman nearing the end of his official tenure.⁶⁷⁵ The reaction of Horst Brasch (General Secretary of the LfV) was encouraging. Such an arrangement complemented the activities of the LfV, which presented itself as a key facilitator of twinning partnerships with areas of the GDR.

[...] twinings with countries outside the community of socialist states is arranged and supported by the 'International Friendship League of the German Democratic Republic', its Committee for local authorities and its 15 County Committees (14 counties and Berlin). The International Friendship League finances expenditures in foreign currency, organizes conferences for the exchange of experiences in twinning [and] supports [the] publicity of twinning in media of the GDR.⁶⁷⁶

Following Ambassador Kern’s earlier 1978 visit to Coventry (in relation to the twinning arrangement between Dresden and Coventry) and in preparation for a GDR delegation to Coventry in 1979, the

⁶⁷⁰ Lilleker, *Against the Cold War*, p. 205.

⁶⁷¹ This active interest was confirmed by the then Twinning Officer of Gwent, Bernard Assinder, during an interview on 07.10. 2013.

⁶⁷² Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (Berlin) [henceforth: SAPMO-BArch], [Letter] J. J. Pembridge to Inge Schönherr, 17.10.1985, Bl. 226.

⁶⁷³ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, ‘Hinweise für die Arbeitsgespräche des Generalsekretärs und 1.

Vizepräsidenten der Liga für Völkerfreundschaft, Gen. Horst Brasch, mit dem Rat der Grafschaft Gwent und den Vertretern der Gwent-Branch der Britain-GDR Society anlässlich seines Aufenthaltes in der Grafschaft Gwent vom 28. – 30.5.1986’, 12.05.1986, Bl. 159 – 162.

⁶⁷⁴ ‘Für Beziehungen, die dem Frieden dienen’, *Sächsische Zeitung*, 08.04.1986, Bl. 5.

⁶⁷⁵ SAPMO-BArch, DY13-3299, [Memo] Kasper to H. Brasch, ‘Herstellung von Gebietspartnerschaftsbeziehungen zwischen Gwent (Wales) und dem Kreis Bautzen’, 11.11.1985, Bl. 223.

⁶⁷⁶ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, ‘Information’, (Undated), Bl. 6. Wider twinning material in the *Bundesarchiv* suggests that the LfV commonly took the initiative for establishing British-GDR twinning arrangements.

MfAA made it clear that the involvement of the LfV and the friendship movement was necessary to secure successful twinning arrangements in non-socialist countries.⁶⁷⁷

Brasch's internal reaction within the LfV in response to Pembridge's proposal was positive: 'We are pleased about this, as it is necessary to consider the nationalities in our work in Great Britain, clearly the Welsh must also be treated equally'.⁶⁷⁸ Brasch therefore viewed the potential twinning as a crucial step in the GDR's approach to courting nationalities in Britain, following the contemporary decentralisation of friendship group activity away from London. The existing or then-developing arrangements between Dresden and Coventry, Karl-Marx-Stadt and Manchester and also Halle and Glasgow meant that by this stage the GDR had established or was progressing twinning arrangements with one Scottish and two English towns. One nation missing such an arrangement was Wales. Howarth extracted the following statement from the Bundesarchiv's LfV material when reviewing the twinning: 'Functionaries [of the friendship group] in Wales led us to understand that the exclusion of Wales in the development work of community relations between the GDR and Great Britain, could be considered discriminatory'.⁶⁷⁹ Although the reference to the NFG (Friendship Society – Gwent Branch) was omitted in this extract, this element is crucial as it indicates the influence of the Gwent branch on the LfV's understanding, with emotive wording ('discrimination') used to encourage the LfV's co-operation. From the perspective of the LfV, local friendship society involvement was an integral support element. A successful twinning arrangement with Gwent was a more realistic prospect than one with the capital city of Cardiff for example, due to the absence of GDR friendship group presence elsewhere in Wales. Following the favourable response from the LfV to his proposal, Pembridge wrote on 11.12.1985:

[...this] is very encouraging indeed and I shall be taking this letter with me to a meeting of our Twinning Committee [...] on the 13th December and hopefully, as a result of this meeting, my Council will make a final decision. I shall then write to you and let you have the result as soon as possible. I am keeping my fingers crossed and hoping that all will go well at this meeting.⁶⁸⁰

This statement demonstrates how the proposed arrangement was still (at this stage) subject to wider Council support and agreement. It is inconclusive whether the use of the phrase 'keeping fingers crossed' was a stylistic feature of Pembridge's writing or whether it indicated some nervousness on his part regarding the acceptability of the proposal to wider Council membership. By January, 1986 however, Pembridge confirmed to the LfV that the proposal to progress the twinning had been

⁶⁷⁷ PA AA, MfAA, C2734 Bd.2, 1973-75 Dresden-Coventry, 'Konzeption für den Aufenthalt einer Delegation der Stadt Dresden in Coventry in der Zeit vom 16.04.1979', Vorlage für das MfAA, 31.01.1979, Bl. 29-30.

⁶⁷⁸ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter] Horst Brasch to Gottfried Ullman (Bezirkskomitee Dresden der LfV), 22.01.1986, Bl. 204-205. [My translation].

⁶⁷⁹ Howarth, 'Projecting the Self', p. 98. Full statement contained in SAPMO-BArch, DY13-3299, [Memo] Kasper to Horst Brasch, 'Herstellung von Gebietspartnerschaftsbeziehungen zwischen Gwent (Wales) und dem Kreis Bautzen, 11.11.1985, Bl. 223. [My translation].

⁶⁸⁰ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter] John Pembridge to Inge Schönherr, 11.12.1985, Bl. 212.

accepted by the twinning committee of Gwent County Council. ‘Just like you I also hope to develop the friendly relations between us so that such relationships, as you have said, can contribute to greater mutual understanding, trust and lead to peaceful co-existence of the peoples’.⁶⁸¹ This sentiment echoed the LfV’s (and Brasch’s) comments in earlier correspondence, citing motivations for pursuing the twinning arrangement as developing friendly relations for peaceful co-existence. John Pembridge was clearly the prime instigator and driving force behind the twinning – not only making the initial proposal but also leading the twinning arrangement through the Council fora. Within the body of archival material, certain facts assist in understanding Pembridge’s views and the motivations behind his involvement and enthusiasm. Described as an ‘active Trade Unionist’, Pembridge had served as a Labour Councillor since 1974, was a former Vice-President of the Newport Labour Party and Deputy Mayor of Newport. His biographical description for the LfV highlighted a particular interest in youth services and developing links with other countries.⁶⁸² An existing friendship between Pembridge and Ray Hill (Secretary of the Gwent branch of the Britain/GDR Society) was noted by the LfV authorities in pre-delegation briefing reports.⁶⁸³

Notwithstanding John Pembridge’s own motivations and actions, the execution of any twinning arrangement was subject to the agreement of wider Council members. An existing twinning arrangement had existed between Gwent and Karlsruhe (FRG) since 1964, a feature which would itself have been of interest to the GDR. The mid-1980s however was a period of prolific twinning activity on the part of Gwent County Council with areas both sides of the Iron Curtain. Twinning activity such as the example of Gwent/Blaenau Gwent and Bautzen fell into a UTO model of twinning, considered a ‘mechanism for bridging between different groups of people’.⁶⁸⁴ Low-level relations offered an opportunity to improve the understanding of peoples ‘separated by geographical distance, along with different backgrounds, traditions, and ideologies [...] binding two peoples together to generate an understanding [which would in turn] lead to reciprocity and friendship’.⁶⁸⁵ In 1984, Gwent’s philosophy on twinning was as follows: ‘[we] confirm our commitment to twinning activities firstly as a contribution to peace and understanding between people of different nations and

⁶⁸¹ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter (translated)] J. J. Pembridge to H. Brasch, 06.01.1986, Bl. 208-209.

⁶⁸² SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Programme] ‘The Visit of Herr H. Brasch & Herr M. Rudolph of the German Democratic Republic to the County of Gwent, 28th & 29th May 1986’, pp. 104-108.

⁶⁸³ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, ‘Hinweise für die Arbeitsgespräche des Generalsekretärs.....’, Bl. 159 – 162.

⁶⁸⁴ European twinning activities during the Cold War period are defined as being of two different types, both having developed in post-War environments: i) the Council of European Municipalities (CEM) ‘bonding’ model, where town twinning was considered a ‘device for bonding between people sharing certain characteristics’ (the typical model used for the majority of twinings in Britain) and ii) that of the United Towns Organisation (UTO), with twinning perceived as a ‘mechanism for bridging between different groups of people’. Owing to British governmental pressure to discourage the attempts of localities to twin with partners in the Soviet bloc (due to concerns about possible Communist penetration), the vast majority of twinning arrangements in Britain during the Cold War period were made with Western European partners and conformed to the CEM model. See Clarke, N. (2011) ‘Globalising Care? Town twinning in Britain since 1945’, *Geoforum*, 42, pp. 119-121.

⁶⁸⁵ Zelinsky, W. (1991) ‘The Twinning of the World: Sister Cities in Geographic and Historical Perspective’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 81 (1), p. 14.

cultures and secondly as having the educational objective of assisting Gwent's young people with their studies.⁶⁸⁶ This position demonstrated the value ascribed to twinning arrangements by Gwent Council members - not only for the purposes of peace and the furthering of international détente but also the subsequent benefits and opportunities afforded to the young people of Gwent. These sentiments echo the description made by Berger & LaPorte of the priorities of councils composed of pro-Soviet 'Old Labour' members during this period. 'They were motivated, above all, by issues of peace and on the left, by sympathy for a country supposedly building socialism. Many Labour-dominated councils in the 1980s took up CND's promotion of local 'partnerships for peace' which coincided fortuitously with the GDR's promotion of a 'coalition of reason'.⁶⁸⁷ In South Wales in particular, these sympathies may have had particular resonance as a result of the historic socialist-communist political culture so prevalent in the South Wales Valleys, corresponding to Balsom's *Welsh Wales* identity type.

In the minutes of Gwent Council's Twinning Committee, there is evidence of engagement with the local Gwent branch of the Britain-GDR Friendship Society. In December 1984, correspondence was received from the branch requesting that the GDR be considered as a country with which to establish a twinning arrangement. Mindful of the existing twinning arrangements with Karlsruhe in the FRG, the Committee concluded that *Landkreis Karlsruhe* be firstly consulted, to understand their reaction to the possibility of Gwent twinning with an area in the GDR.⁶⁸⁸ Unfortunately, no material is available which captures any reaction from *Landkreis Karlsruhe*, but as the twinning with Bautzen went ahead it is reasonable to assume that either no protest was registered or that the Council decided to proceed regardless. In the Committee Meeting referenced by Pembridge as the session in which he would seek approval and confirmation for the twinning arrangement with Bautzen, the committee considered the following subjects (categorised as 'Future twinning Policy'):

⁶⁸⁶ Gwent Archives, G-10-M-5, Minutes of Twinning Sub-Committee, 26.01.1984, p. D6.

⁶⁸⁷ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 299

⁶⁸⁸ Gwent Archives, G-10-M-5, Minutes of Twinning Sub-Committee, 19.12.1984, p. D5

<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION</u>
Twinning with an Eastern Bloc Country	Agreement in principle to twinning with Bautzen in the German Democratic Republic subject to the Council providing sufficient finance.
Developing links with the Third World	Unable to recommend at this time.
Present position in connection with links in France	We consider at the present time that there is no need to take further steps towards formal twinning with an area in France.
An approach for twinning with the town of Hertogenbosch in Holland	Not to pursue.

Table 4: Gwent County Council Twinning options and committee recommendations⁶⁸⁹

From such a diverse range of opportunities – demonstrating the scale of Gwent County Council’s twinning ambitions - the decision was made to twin with an area in the GDR. Materials in the Gwent archives and from the local press serve to highlight how anti-nuclear considerations were prominent on the County’s agenda at this time. One record from Gwent Council’s Policy Committee minutes in 1987, noted how a motion to use a Nuclear Free Zone logo (the dove of peace) on County Council stationery and vehicles had been passed.⁶⁹⁰ CND Cymru also recognised the County’s efforts in establishing a nuclear-free zone.⁶⁹¹ *Gwent Gazette* published the Council’s proposal for a course in peace studies in Gwent schools as a result of the County Council’s adoption of a ‘firm anti-nuclear stance’. Mindful of public perception however, the article in the *Gwent Gazette* noted how the Council believed a ‘softly-softly’ approach was required with regard to its implementation ‘to avoid protests that [the Council] is trying to turn young people into a generation of pacifists’.⁶⁹² Such examples of Gwent’s anti-nuclear and peace movement efforts suggest that the GDR’s anti-nuclear messages as promulgated by the LfV on behalf of the GDR, would have found a sympathetic audience and may have been influential in the choice of Bautzen as a suitable twinning partner.

The participation of Bautzen in the twinning was clearly mandated by the LfV authorities following John Pembridge’s proposal. It was Brasch who conveyed Bautzen’s acceptance in November, 1985: ‘I am in a position to inform you that the District of Bautzen would be pleased to enter into a friendly relationship with the County of Gwent’. It was also Brasch who suggested a visit ‘for common

⁶⁸⁹ Gwent Archives, G-10-M-5, Minutes of Twinning Sub-Committee, 13.12.1985, p. D5

⁶⁹⁰ Gwent Archives, G-10-M-6, Minutes of Policy Committee, 20.07.1987, p. D1.

⁶⁹¹ National Library of Wales [henceforth: NLW], CND Cymru Archives, ‘Ymgyrch Cymru: Papurau CND Cymru ar gyfer grwpiau. Rhif, 22, Chwefror 1986’, p. 2.

⁶⁹² ‘A study of what war means’, *Gwent Gazette*, 07.10.1982, p. 3.

discussion with us and the representatives of Bautzen' the following year.⁶⁹³ What is evident when evaluating the archival material is the limited independent involvement of the Bautzen authorities and its local population in executing the arrangement. Bautzen's role was clearly as a prescribed partner, determined by the LfV and with stipulated actions to follow. Correspondence from Brasch to the local SED branch in Bautzen and to senior Bautzen council representatives provided appropriate direction, assuming full compliance and support. One such example was the correspondence from Brasch to Hans Modrow (a member of the SED's Central Committee and the First Secretary of the SED's Dresden district headquarters) on 21.01.1986: 'I wish to ask you to inform the district leadership of the party in Bautzen of your approval [for the forthcoming delegation]'.⁶⁹⁴ The majority of the material relating to Bautzen's involvement in the twinning is included in the Bundesarchiv-held documentation of the LfV. In 2013, the Bautzen District Archive (*Kreisarchiv*) confirmed that no material relating to Gwent/Blaenau Gwent twinning exists in the Mayoral Secretariat (*Sekretariat des Bürgermeister*) and there are no references in the council minutes or town records (*Rats- und Stadtverordnetenprotokollen*) regarding visiting delegations from Blaenau Gwent.⁶⁹⁵ The limited material in the Bautzen County Archive (*Landkreisarchiv*) primarily describes the very few activities undertaken between the twinning parties following signature of the Twinning Agreement. Although the available Gwent and Blaenau Gwent archival material is not particularly extensive, the contrast in the availability of material between one element of the twinning partnership and the other is striking, implying a lack of engagement or direct involvement on the part of Bautzen in particular. Conversely, all twinings initiated by the Bautzen authorities following the demise of the GDR are comprehensively recorded and continue to exist to the present day; ample material is available in Bautzen's archival holdings relating to twinning arrangements with Dreux (France, 1992), Jablonec and Nisou (Czech Republic, 1993) and Jelenia Gora (Poland, 1993). The short duration of the Blaenau Gwent twinning, coupled with an overall lack of awareness of its existence by those in Bautzen today, illustrates its negligible impact there. This is also demonstrative of how the twinning was firmly directed by central government agencies such as the LfV, suggesting that any West-oriented initiatives considered valuable by the authorities required tightly controlled contact and organisation.

The mid-1980s was a period where twinning partners were also sought by Blaenau Gwent, then a Labour-majority Borough Council under Gwent County Council's authority. The Borough Council established a monthly Twinning Sub-Committee and considered several possible twinning partners, including the town of Oberhausen-Rheinhausen in the FRG.⁶⁹⁶ Blaenau Gwent's twinning interest was conveyed to Gwent County Council contemporaneously with the discussions held between Pembridge

⁶⁹³ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter] Horst Brasch to J. J. Pembridge, 22.11.1985, Bl. 217-218.

⁶⁹⁴ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter] Horst Brasch to Dr. Hans Modrow, 21.01.1986, Bl. 206. [My translation].

⁶⁹⁵ Email correspondence with Frau Silke Kosbab of the *Stadtarchiv Bautzen*, 09.09.2013.

⁶⁹⁶ Gwent Archives, A300-M-75 (No. 73), Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of the Council (Twinning Sub-Committee), Item no. 976/1557, 27.11.1986, p. 541.

and the LfV. During his visit to Gwent in May 1985 (hosted by Gwent County Council), Horst Brasch met with Brian Scully (Mayor of Blaenau Gwent) to discuss formalising a twinning with Bautzen. Blaenau Gwent was amenable to twinning with a ‘non-generic’ partner and thus open to entering into an arrangement with an area which was symbolically different to the more typical FRG or French twinings usually executed by Welsh councils. One of Blaenau Gwent’s objectives was to use twinning arrangements to further peace and understanding with other peoples.⁶⁹⁷ To seek, identify and implement twinning arrangements with potential partners, the Council created a policy document which identified aims and objectives for any future twinings. The need for public support was highlighted and procedures for organising and financing a twinning were defined.⁶⁹⁸ The report declared that the primary aim of Blaenau Gwent’s twinning activities was to ‘widen horizons and promote international friendship’ and to ‘contribute to peace and goodwill between all countries of the world’. It advised against establishing a twinning and then forgetting about it; entering such an arrangement should ‘represent the desire of those concerned to share experiences, to exchange ideas, to become friends, to visit each other and perhaps to co-operate in discussing common problems, and by so doing obtain a sympathetic understanding of each other’s point of view’.⁶⁹⁹ A recommendation was made that any twinning should also be geographically feasible:

There is no value in making a twinning unless there can be useful contact, communication and exchange of information and possibly people. A twinning must be non-political and a free, independent arrangement between two communities. To have value and continuity the relationship should not be tied to any other organisation or be used to promote any other objectives – however admirable these may be.⁷⁰⁰

Public engagement was essential to ensure the effectiveness of any twinning, and a meeting of civil leaders and interested citizens was recommended at an early stage of organisation. Securing a long-term, wide cross-section of support was crucial.⁷⁰¹

The role of the Gwent branch in promoting a twinning relationship with Bautzen was significant. When interviewed, Bernard Assinder, the then Gwent Twinning Officer and Blaenau Gwent Councillor, confirmed Ray Hill’s proactive involvement.

Ray was a friend of mine because I’d gone to college with him [...] Ray was involved in all sorts of left-wing kind of stuff and I was as well at the time so when I got on the County Council, Ray basically came in one day and said he was looking for me, “You want to twin with East Germany” who he was very involved with. [...] he wrote to Gwent County Council and the letter came to me.

[He was] very pro-GDR to create links with Wales and purely because of his politics more than anything else, because he was on the left-left of the party [...] Ray’s politics, they

⁶⁹⁷ Interview with Brian Scully, 29.08.2013.

⁶⁹⁸ Gwent Archives, A300-M-74 (No. 72), Item no. 14/616 (8), 02.09.1986, p. 6.

⁶⁹⁹ Gwent Archives, Item no. 14/616 (8), p. 1.

⁷⁰⁰ Gwent Archives, Item no. 14/616 (8), p. 2.

⁷⁰¹ Gwent Archives, Item no. 14/616 (8), p. 3.

weren't mainstream Labour, they were left-wing, but Ray was a bit of a one-off, he really was. Some of his ideas I didn't agree with, some of them weren't even really that left-wing, he was a bit of a mixture [...] He was totally keen on twinning with a socialist society and how we could learn from it, he was into that in a big way. [...] But he was passionate, really passionate about it, that we could learn so much from each other and Ray was a pacifist as well, he believed that the only way we could stop nuclear war was to talk to each other and that was his passion, that was his driving force.⁷⁰²

This description of Ray Hill is representative of the type of individual who subscribed to the British-GDR friendship movement, the core of the GDR's (small) bedrock of support in Britain. The recollection also demonstrates the reasoning proposed by the Gwent branch that twinning with the GDR would be a constructive step towards preventing the outbreak of nuclear war. The LfV authorities clearly valued Ray Hill as a catalyst for progressing twinning activities, particularly due to his friendship with John Pembridge. A need to ensure the equal involvement of the Gwent branch in the twinning arrangement was emphasised by the LfV, who sought that this requirement be recognised by the County of Gwent.⁷⁰³ A request was made in a letter from Brasch to Pembridge to invite Ray Hill to participate in the delegation to the GDR in April 1986.⁷⁰⁴ The LfV, noting the limited financial means of the Gwent branch, was sufficiently convinced of Ray Hill's value to ensure the cost of his flights were covered.⁷⁰⁵ As the prospect of a twinning arrangement developed, Dietmar Hahn also acknowledged Ray Hill's contribution: 'We all know that without your active support and the assistance of our friends in Cwmbran this encouraging development would hardly have been possible'.⁷⁰⁶ Following the later Blaenau Gwent delegation, the LfV complimented the co-operation of the Gwent branch: 'This is only one example of the excellent work for the cause of friendship between our people that was performed by the Gwent branch'.⁷⁰⁷ Ray Hill and the Gwent branch were evidently considered a reliable conduit of GDR messages and a useful proponent of the GDR's approach to image cultivation (*Imagepflege*) in Gwent.

The association of Michael Foot with the area of Blaenau Gwent (as the local Member of Parliament during this period) is strongly and perhaps inevitably, considering his profile, highlighted in the existing literature. Although described as being 'in no way a friend of the GDR', his attendance at a Gwent civic reception for guests from the GDR has been cited, as this had created an opportunity for Horst Brasch to have his photograph taken with Foot, which was later printed in the *GDR Review*. This publication reported that Foot recalled 'the struggle of the Anti-Hitler-coalition and the fighting of German anti-fascists in its ranks, [he being] in favour of a worldwide coalition to prevent a war that

⁷⁰² Interview with Bernard Assinder, 07.10.2013.

⁷⁰³ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Memo] 'Delegation des Grafschaftsrates aus Gwent/Wales zur Anbahnung von Regionalbeziehungen mit Kreis Bautzen.', 17.03.1986, Bl. 193.

⁷⁰⁴ Note the example is only in draft format. SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Draft letter] Horst Brasch to J. J. Pembridge, 20.01.1986, Bl. 203.

⁷⁰⁵ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Memo] 'Delegation des Grafschaftsrates...', Bl. 193.

⁷⁰⁶ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3118, [Letter] Dietmar Hahn to Ray Hill, 16.12.1985, p. 1.

⁷⁰⁷ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3118, [Letter] Berndt Zufelde to Ray Hill, 19.12.1986, p. 1.

could destroy civilisation in a nuclear holocaust'.⁷⁰⁸ The theme of anti-fascism under discussion during this interaction would be recurrently deployed in all twinning activities. The existing literature implies that the association with Foot was of particular significance to the authorities of the GDR. When the LfV considered the proposal made by Gwent (and later Blaenau Gwent) to twin with an area of the GDR however, there was no early recognition or strategic consideration in mind specific to the area's association with Foot. Only when Brasch met Foot during a delegation visit to Gwent, did this association register with the LfV as an element which could potentially offer some political capital. Brasch stated internally within the LfV that not only was the twinning of interest for the purposes of furthering a policy for peace, détente and co-operation, but that it was also an avenue for approaching personalities such as Michael Foot who had national audiences and influences.⁷⁰⁹ Interactions between GDR representatives and Foot were limited however to some benign yet courteous correspondence, with Foot expressing little beyond good wishes for the success of the twinning, presenting limited opportunities for further promotion (notwithstanding the feature in the *GDR Review* magazine). No political capital was exploited as a result of Foot's association with Blaenau Gwent.⁷¹⁰ In both interviews, neither Brian Scully nor Bernard Assinder recalled any specific involvement by Foot in the twinning. It is clear that there was sufficient impetus and motivation behind the initiative for the twinning arrangement to be pursued by interested Labour Party local politicians regardless of any such involvement, with Foot's proximity a peripheral feature of the twinning arrangement rather than driving its purpose and execution.

1 – 4. April 1986: Gwent Council delegates (Labour Party members) and Ray Hill of the Gwent branch of the Britain-GDR Society to Berlin/Dresden/Bautzen

The delegation from Gwent County Council in April 1986 was the first formal step undertaken as part of the twinning arrangement. Hosted by the LfV - not the Bautzen authorities - the delegation embarked on an extensive tour of the GDR. The Twinning Sub-Committee had recommended the following participants: the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Policy Committee, Councillor Ms. F. J. O'Kelly and the Chief Executive Officer, a delegation consisting wholly of Labour Party members.⁷¹¹ Councillor Frances O'Kelly was described in the LfV material as a member of the Young Communist League. The political affiliations of this delegation not only gives an insight into the type of delegate interested in pursuing the twinning, but also illustrates the dominance of Labour Party members in council leadership positions in Gwent. Once the strictly prescribed and comprehensively detailed itinerary in Berlin and Dresden was completed, the delegation's final task was to travel to Bautzen. Here, several meetings were held with

⁷⁰⁸ Berger & LaPorte, *Friendly Enemies*, p. 284.

⁷⁰⁹ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter] Horst Brasch to Lothar Müller, 08.12.1986, Bl. 44.

⁷¹⁰ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter] Michael Foot to Lothar Müller, 11.11.1986, Bl. 58.

⁷¹¹ Gwent Archives, G-10-M-5, Minutes of Twinning Sub-Committee, 12.03.1986, p. D17.

representatives of the district of Bautzen, with a cross-section of civic life encountered including a visit to the local Kindergarten, the school of POS Wilhelm Pieck and the Domowina.⁷¹² A key milestone was the signing of a statement of intent by Lothar Müller as Chairman of Bautzen District Council and John Pembridge on April 3rd, 1986, containing key aims, objectives and aspirations for the twinning arrangement:

Wishing to become more acquainted and to help promoting [*sic*] confident and friendly relations between the citizens of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the German Democratic Republic, contacts will be established between the representatives of the County Council of Gwent and of the district of Bautzen. The cooperation and acquaintance of the citizens in both territories shall particularly contain:

- Exchange of study delegations
- Exchange of youth delegations in partnership with youth tourism
- Information exchange especially about the mental⁷¹³ and cultural heritage of the Sorbian people living in the GDR and about education and health service system.

Other forms of cooperation can be completed and agreed in the following years.⁷¹⁴

The focus on youth activity was consistent with Gwent Council policy that any twinning partnership should provide benefits to the youth of Gwent.⁷¹⁵ Johnes highlighted contemporary concerns of youth civil disobedience in industrial Wales due to high unemployment in the 1980s.⁷¹⁶ Blaenau Gwent in particular experienced the challenges of high youth unemployment in the area, leading to an emphasis during this period on using twinning arrangements for wider civic benefit.⁷¹⁷ In the statement of intent, there was no reference whatsoever to Wales or Welsh identity. Instead, the people of Gwent were referred to as citizens of the United Kingdom. This supports an assumption that the Labour Councillors pursuing this twinning were of the pro-Soviet left of the Old Labour party and were very much located within a UK-wide movement. The Statement's last principle on exchanging information was one-sided with no indication given of the rich cultural heritage of the Welsh as also being available for exchange, which may have been representative of the visiting Gwent councillors' limited knowledge. There is no evidence that any of the initial tranche of delegates from Gwent were Welsh-speakers. The overt reference to the Sorbian people however did draw attention to minority considerations in the twinning; either a possible indicator of the GDR's understanding of Wales's own minority culture and challenges; or perhaps a cynical approach to emphasise the GDR's claim of its

⁷¹² SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, 'Programm für 7 Persönlichkeiten der Grafschaft Gwent', 26.03.1986, Bl. 195-197.

⁷¹³ Note: this was changed to 'health' in the later version submitted to the Gwent Twinning Committee.

⁷¹⁴ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Statement of Intent], 03.04.1986, Bl. 129.

⁷¹⁵ Gwent Archives, G-10-M-5, Minutes of Policy Committee, 22.02.1984, p. D1.

⁷¹⁶ Johnes, M. (2012) *Wales since 1939*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 258.

⁷¹⁷ Regular reports were submitted to Council meetings reporting on the number of unemployed youth in the area. In February 1986 for example, a figure of 1033 unemployed 'young people' was reported in Blaenau Gwent, with a figure of 4714 provided for Gwent. Gwent Archives, A300-M-72 (No.70), Item no. 2304, 26.2.1986, Report reference D8602D2, p. 1.

positive treatment of national minorities. The language used (such as ‘mental’ – though this was later amended in the English version to ‘health’) indicates that the initial draft was not likely written by a native speaker of English. This suggests that it may have been an initiative on the part of the LfV authorities to press for a written statement of intent whilst hosting the delegation, though this is of course speculative. Notwithstanding this possibility; the wording agreed between the parties was sufficiently acceptable for John Pembridge to sign the statement on behalf of Gwent Council. Upon the delegation’s return, following what was meant to have been a visit sanctioned by the Twinning committee to ‘discuss possible twinning links’, a report was submitted by Pembridge to the committee. The use of ‘possible’ indicates that from the committee’s perspective, the visit was considered (at least initially) to be a fact-finding activity only. Nevertheless, the response of the committee was as follows: ‘We recommend: i) the confirmation of the action of the Chairman of the Council in signing the statement of intent [and] that the action of the Chairman in inviting the Secretary General of the International Friendship League to Gwent in May be confirmed.’⁷¹⁸

28. – 30. May 1986: Horst Brasch & Manfred Rudolph of the LfV visit Gwent

The second official twinning delegation saw representatives of the LfV (not of Bautzen) visiting Gwent a month later. They were met at Newport railway station by Geoffrey Prior (Gwent Public Relations and Information Officer) and Bernard Assinder (then Gwent Twinning Officer and later Blaenau Gwent Councillor delegate to the GDR) with full Gwent Council hospitality was afforded to the visitors, who attended the annual meeting of the Council and a formal civic dinner at County Hall. Reflecting on the annual meeting, Brasch presented his recollections in the *GDR Review*:

After a short constructive discussion by the 78 councillors in the presence of 150 local citizens it was unanimously decided to the applause of all to negotiate about the establishment of partnership relations with Bautzen district in the GDR. [...] The outgoing council chairman, John Pembridge and his successor in office, Garth Jenkins, who are both members of the Labour Party, stressed that every nation had the right to fashion and develop the social system of its own choice without interference from abroad. In keeping with this principle and in awareness of the grave international situation, they said, the exchange of opinion with a region in a socialist country was a contribution to the maintenance of peace.⁷¹⁹

Despite the questionable narration of events - ‘unanimously decided to the applause of all’ - this extract reinforces the assumption (and also illustrates Brasch’s understanding) that the primary motivation behind the twinning in Gwent was the opportunity it created to pursue peaceful co-operation in the ‘second’ Cold War phase, as sought by ‘Old’ Labour Party members with pro-Soviet sympathies. As well as such events providing material for use in *GDR Review* articles, further opportunities existed to raise Welsh awareness of the GDR. It was reported that an interview with

⁷¹⁸ Gwent Archives, G-10-M-5, Minutes of Twinning Sub-Committee, dated 17.04.1986, p. D10.

⁷¹⁹ ‘For Reason and Friendship in the Interest of Peace: Reflections on a visit to Britain by Horst Brasch, Vice-President of the GDR Friendship League’, *GDR Review*, 31.08.1986, p. 50.

Brasch was shown three times on BBC Wales for example.⁷²⁰ This visit saw the first interaction between Blaenau Gwent and the LfV. By this date, Gwent's Twinning Committee had transferred the twinning partnership to Blaenau Gwent. Gwent's newly-formed (yet ultimately unrealised) aspirations to twin with the *Kreis* (Region) of Dresden may have contributed to this decision.⁷²¹ Bernard Assinder recollected: 'We wrote to Blaenau Gwent and somehow I was [also] on the twinning subcommittee at Blaenau Gwent. [...] So that's how it started basically was from me doing lobbying and pushing a few people'.⁷²² During the visit, Brasch and Rudolph met Mayor Brian Scully and jointly signed what has been referenced in various sources as a 'Friendship Agreement' or a 'Declaration of Intent to establish friendship links'.⁷²³ Although multiple references to it exist, no copy is available in any archive, though it is reasonable to assume that it broadly reflected the principles agreed by the preceding Gwent delegation. This visit also provided the LfV with an opportunity to strengthen relations with the Gwent branch of the Britain-GDR Society and several Gwent councillors. Pre-visit briefing notes for Brasch are a valuable insight into the priorities of the LfV during this period and illustrate the themes identified for discussion with representatives of Gwent Council. These included exploring the possibility of future demonstrations in Gwent in 1988 and the further strengthening of youth exchange activities. Topics for discussion with the Gwent branch included preparing for a future delegation of personalities from Welsh social and public life to study the political status of the Sorbs in the GDR⁷²⁴ and the use of youth exchanges between Gwent and Bautzen for the extension of the friendship movement.⁷²⁵ It is clear from the briefing reports that the inputs of the Gwent branch were considered constructive by the LfV, providing grass-roots support to the GDR's activities in Wales.

29.11 – 6.12 1986: Blaenau Gwent delegation to Bautzen

A return delegation led by Mayor Brian Scully travelled to Bautzen in November 1986 to formalise the twinning arrangement. Again, the delegation itinerary was prepared and executed by the LfV rather than the Bautzen authorities, demonstrating that the twinning continued to be controlled by the LfV. Similarly to the Gwent delegation in April 1986, a structured itinerary was prepared for the Blaenau Gwent visitors, focusing initially on the GDR's sights and anti-fascist memorials (such as the Sachsenhausen memorial) in Berlin and Dresden. Following the delegation's arrival in Bautzen, discussions were held to develop the twinning, resulting in a proposed working programme for 1987/88. Once again, the delegates from Wales were afforded an insight into Bautzen civic life with a

⁷²⁰ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3123, 'Bericht über den Aufenthalt einer Abordnung der Liga für Völkerfreundschaft in Grossbritannien vom 25. 5. – 5. 6. 1986', Bl. 7.

⁷²¹ Gwent Archives, G-10-M-6, Minutes of Twinning Sub-Committee, 24.09.1987, p. D.10 and G-10-M-6, Minutes of Twinning Sub-Committee, 05.01.1988, p. D10.

⁷²² Interview with Bernard Assinder, 07.10.2013.

⁷²³ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Programme] 'The Visit of Herr H. Brasch & Herr M. Rudolph....', Bl. 104-108 and also Gwent Archives, A300-M-72 (No. 70), Item no. 119/2881, 29.05.1986, p. 992.

⁷²⁴ Note: this resultant delegation was discussed in the previous chapter.

⁷²⁵ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, 'Hinweise für die Arbeitsgespräche des Generalsekretärs....'. Bl. 159 – 162.

visit to a Kindergarten and to the Wilhelm Pieck school, (where an exhibition on Gwent/Blaenau Gwent was viewed by the delegates), the Cathedral and places of work such as the *VEB VEGRO Kirschau* and the *VEB Weinbrand Wilthen*.⁷²⁶ In an annual activity report drafted by the Bautzen authorities, it was observed that the visitors had shown great interest in these establishments as well as in the municipal areas and trade union issues of the state.⁷²⁷ What is particularly notable, is how none of the institutions referenced in the itinerary, provided the delegates with an insight into the Sorbian situation, possibly demonstrative – despite the aspiration to share Welsh/Sorbian experiences in the twinning agreement - of the LfV’s remoteness to the Sorbian way of life or alternatively, a lack of demand from the visiting delegates to pursue such interests. Instead, one of the most remarkable features of this delegation was the signature of a peace declaration between the visiting Blaenau Gwent delegates and members of the *VEB Feuerfestwerke* workforce. During their visit to the works, the LfV gave the delegates an opportunity to describe their contribution to peace, disarmament and détente, as well as an overview of the political, social, cultural and educational situation of their area. Such an opportunity came as a surprise to the visiting delegates and in particular to Brian Scully who was invited with minimum notice to make a speech to the workforce summarising Blaenau Gwent’s positions.

We were introduced to a large assembly room, large enough to hold several hundred people [...] Immediately, double doors suddenly opened at the other end and within seconds the room was full with the men [from] the shop floor. At this point [a GDR representative] began to read a prepared speech of welcome [...] this lasted approximately half an hour. Eric Evans, our Town Clerk advised me to take some notes, however I had no suitable piece of paper on my person so removed a few cigarettes I had from the packet and tore it up and scratched some notes. [I] introduced myself as the leader of my local authority, referred to being a socialist and mentioned that we live in a mixed economy of public and private finance. I went on to explain of my personal pride in two local sons born locally i.e. Aneurin Bevan MP, the minister responsible in the first post war Labour Government for delivering a free health service for all citizens of the United Kingdom, free at the point of need and included Neil Kinnock, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, both committed to an anti nuclear proliferation. I then spoke on our industrial background built on coal and steel and since their closure the community had suffered from high unemployment leaving great challenges to find alternative jobs. These jobs were not ready available and long years of austerity and deprivation. This resulted in high indices of poor health. [...] Our nation Wales is steeped in culture, music, choirs, arts, rugby, football etc and I informed my audience that we were a nation with our own language so therefore a bilingual nation. Our hosts provided a warm welcome and their hospitality was excellent.⁷²⁸

⁷²⁶ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Programme] ‘International Friendship League of the GDR. Programme for the visit of a delegation of the Council of the Borough of Blaenau Gwent from 29th November to 6th December 1986’, Bl. 60-63. A VEB or *Volkseigener Betrieb* is a nationally-owned company.

⁷²⁷ Kreisarchiv Bautzen, Bestand Rat des Kreises Bautzen, Tb. Ratssitzungen, SGB 170, Akte ‘Internationale Beziehungen’, ‘Information über den Stand der internationalen Arbeit auf kommunales Bautzen’, 28.01.1987: Bl. 2.

⁷²⁸ Email correspondence with Brian Scully, 24.09.2014.

The crowd of employees and visitors present numbered 180 in total and this event was reported in the LfV material as having been a highlight of the visit. Brian Scully's speech was interpreted as having confirmed the importance of peace to all present. On life in the GDR, it was reported that the visitors had declared the lack of unemployment in the GDR as enviable and how what they had witnessed in the GDR bore no relation to pre-existing conceptions. In this report, no attention was drawn to any mention of commonality with the Sorbs, the features reported were instead wholly socialist in nature. Following the speeches, a joint peace declaration was adopted between the employees of the VEB Feuerfestwerke and the delegates of Blaenau Gwent.⁷²⁹

We, the assembled German and Sorb workers of the nationally-owned factory of Feuerfestwerke Metro, district of Bautzen, a factory producing fireproof pottery, manifest our strong will as well as a representative delegation Borough of Blaenau Gwent (United Kingdom of Great Britain) to do everything for keeping and safeguarding peace. We make all people understand the actual reasons of the danger of war and how this danger can be prevented. Being inspired by the great and human ideal of a world without any wars and arms we join the movement for peace and life comprised of men of widely different views and opposed political attitudes from all over the world. Our activities, the specific circumstances of our people are considered, will increase a world-wide coalition becoming stronger and stronger. This coalition of political realities and common sense fights against the nuclear danger of war and with it the total destruction of unique earth. In our opinion the defence of life and therefore our earth is really a universal historical problem. That is why we want to contribute to a peaceful existence side by side of states. On the basis of our joint programme we are going to ease international tensions and we want to help that all people here in Europe as well as on the whole earth are kept safe from the atomic destruction.⁷³⁰

What practical bearing this event and the signed declaration had on the twinning arrangement or why it was signed between a works organisation and Blaenau Gwent Council (rather than in a civic capacity) is unclear. A plausible conclusion is that such an undertaking was envisaged to impress on the visiting delegates the commitment of all facets of GDR society to peace and co-existence, amplified by grand statements alluding to the importance of all coalitions in easing international tensions. Additionally, the ever-present objective of seeking external endorsement of the GDR and its policies by Western visitors was through this event, overtly and publicly fulfilled.

In some respects, the content of the twinning's Working Programme conformed to the aims of Blaenau Gwent's twinning policy, including provisions for broadening geographical and political horizons for the improvement of international understanding. References in the agreement to the 'struggle for peace and disarmament' also corresponded to another of Blaenau Gwent's policies at this time, having subscribed to the Wales Nuclear Free Zone Forum.⁷³¹ The Working Programme, signed in December 1986, contained principles to 'familiarise each other with their difficulties and promote

⁷²⁹ Kreisarchiv Bautzen, 'Information über den Stand', 28.01.1987, Bl. 2.

⁷³⁰ Kreisarchiv Bautzen, 'Information über den Stand', 28.01.1987: Bl. 6. [My translation].

⁷³¹ Gwent Archives, A300-M-75 (No. 73), Item no. 1283/1816, 23.12.1986, p. 632.

dialogue between the people of both countries [...] in the spirit of friendship'.⁷³² The first principle was making available 'information [...] about the activities of the population for supporting the struggle for peace and disarmament [...] economic, social and cultural activities [...] and] the way of life and cultural heritage of the Sorbian people living in the GDR and the Welsh people in Great Britain'. A further provision was building relations between the 'Wilhelm Pieck' school in Bautzen and a school in the Borough of Blaenau Gwent. Additionally, both partners endeavoured to promote youth delegations. Finally, it was assumed that in alternate years, delegations to and from each partner district would be undertaken, with a purpose of 'exchanging experiences concerning communal matters [and] a meeting with citizens of both Districts, as this will extend the relations and friendship of both partners'. By the time of the Blaenau Gwent delegation, several of these activities had already been undertaken by the LfV. The Secondary Modern School of Wilhelm Pieck had already been selected, in which an exhibition (*Schauecke*) of Blaenau Gwent was displayed using the photos and the Gwent Coat of Arms exchanged by the earlier Gwent delegation.⁷³³ The exhibition was formally opened by Horst Brasch in October, 1986, where he gave a speech explaining the traditions and culture of 'the Celtic minority'.⁷³⁴

When compared with other British-GDR twinings involving Labour-controlled councils, the wording of the agreement displays considerable consistency. The draft twinning agreement between Halle and Glasgow for example, contained principles of 'exchanging information[to] make citizens aware of life and development in other countries' and 'opinions on questions interesting to both sides and international problems which can affect [the] lives of citizens'. Reference was also made to youth group exchanges.⁷³⁵ Similarly, Bradford Council Labour Group's proposed policy on international friendship and peace links described an aspiration 'to broaden existing links and to encourage new and further friendships between people of the Bradford Metropolitan District and those from other lands in pursuit of better international understanding and peace'; also encouraging youth exchanges.⁷³⁶ This consistency demonstrates how the Blaenau Gwent-Bautzen twinning conformed in many respects to other British-GDR twinings undertaken by Labour-controlled councils during the 1980s, subscribing to the unofficial international détente pursued by a faction of the Labour Party in response to the climate of the Second Cold War. What made this twinning particularly distinctive however, was the connection to the Sorbian people and the links to minority languages – a feature absent from any Scottish or English twinning. This unique element was somewhat uncharted territory for the LfV. Its emphasis on promoting the Welsh language in an area with few Welsh-speakers was clumsily

⁷³² Gwent Archives, A300-M-75 (No. 73), Item no. 1831 (8), 23.12.1986, pp. 1-3.

⁷³³ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter] Horst Brasch to B. J. Scully, 29.07.1986, Bl. 120-121.

⁷³⁴ Howarth, 'Projecting the Self', p. 100.

⁷³⁵ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3322, 'Erklärung über Freundschaft zwischen dem Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Halle/Saale, Deutsche Demokratische Republik, und des Lord Provost der Stadt Glasgow, Schottland im Vereinigten Königreich von Grossbritannien und Nordirland', 07.03.1988, Bl. 1.

⁷³⁶ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3322, 'Bradford Council Labour Group: International Friendship and Peace Links: A Policy Draft', 22.10.1986, Unpaginated.

adopted, particularly as this part of Wales was overwhelmingly populated with non-Welsh speaking *Welsh Wales* identity types.

The decision to twin with Bautzen was ratified by Blaenau Gwent Councillors a few weeks following the return of the delegation in December 1986. ‘Consideration [was] given to the proposed twinning agreement. It was noted that a full report on the delegation's visit to Bautzen would be presented to the January Council Meeting. Resolved: that the agreement be accepted and concluded with Bautzen and the further report awaited’.⁷³⁷ The agreement was therefore endorsed without any public consultation, even prior to the disclosure of a feedback report to the Council. This suggests that those who pursued and supported the twinning arrangement considered they had a mandate to approve its execution, regardless of the views of the electorate – a feature more likely to occur in homogenous political areas with weak political opposition.

Autumn 1987: Delegation from Bautzen to Blaenau Gwent

A further delegation travelled from Bautzen to Blaenau Gwent in the Autumn of 1987, though unfortunately minimal material is available for analysis. A sole indication of the date of the delegation is contained in a letter of thanks from Bernd Zufelde of the LfV (note: not the Chairman of the District of Bautzen) to then Mayor Harry Evans in November 1987.⁷³⁸ The former Blaenau Gwent delegates to Bautzen interviewed for this chapter were dimly aware of a return delegation having occurred, yet were not involved in it. This was primarily due to a change in the political leadership of the Blaenau Gwent Council by mid-1987, as a result of recent election results. The prospect of a return delegation from Bautzen to Blaenau Gwent was also reported in the Gwent local media. Despite the controversy which arose as a result of the expenditure of the delegation to the GDR in December, 1986 (see below), Blaenau Gwent Council ensured that a sum of £750 was allocated towards ‘the estimates for hospitality for East German visitors’.⁷³⁹

A variety of sources are available to evaluate the motivations behind the Gwent/Blaenau Gwent delegates’ interests and their perceptions of the GDR, including oral interviews, reports from the GDR press, self-penned articles as well as letters and reports published in the Welsh media. Unfortunately, it was not possible to pursue an interview with John Pembridge, as he emigrated from Wales several years ago. Additionally, other than minor ad-hoc reports in the local press and limited archival references to his opinions in the twinning committee, few public statements were made by Pembridge. Fortunately the *Sächsische Zeitung*, during the first Gwent Council delegation to Bautzen, conducted an interview with Pembridge, detailing his perceptions of the GDR and his ambitions for the twinning arrangement. Clearly, the candidness and accuracy of any statement made in the GDR may have

⁷³⁷ Gwent Archives, A300-M-75 (No. 73), Item no. 1831, 23.12.1986, p. 635.

⁷³⁸ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter] Bernd Zufelde to Councillor H. Evans, 12.11.1987, Bl. 2.

⁷³⁹ ‘Iron curtain twin town visit slated’, *Gwent Gazette*, 12.02.1987, p. 7.

differed from what was shared at home in Gwent, but at the very least, it reveals what Pembridge was prepared to state publicly (or what was perceived to have been said) whilst in the GDR. Declaring himself ‘buoyed’ by the enthusiasm of Gwent’s youth for Bautzen, Pembridge drew parallels between the positions of the Sorbs and the Welsh, each a national minority with their own culture.⁷⁴⁰ This had apparently led Gwent to consider Bautzen in order to learn of the treatment of national minorities in the GDR. The joint focus on peace was prominent in talks between the Gwent delegates and the GDR representatives with Pembridge confirming his shared commitment to unifying all peace-loving people and strengthening the global peace movement. Statements such as ‘our mass media present a different representation of the Eastern bloc countries than what we see here, [they are] often presented as underdeveloped, but we experience the complete opposite’, displayed Pembridge’s enthusiasm for engaging with the GDR and his description of the proposed twinning, as one which should be made permanent, indicated his anticipation of a long-term arrangement.⁷⁴¹

Councillor Frances O’Kelly, one of the Gwent delegates, wrote an article for *Checkpoint*, (a local community paper), to inform readers of the purpose of the delegation and the results achieved.⁷⁴² This article was penned in consideration of holding public office and being ‘accountable to the electorate’. There was clearly an awareness of a need to justify the activities of the delegation and transparently keep the public informed. The cost incurred by the delegation (Gwent Council paid for the flights, although all travel, accommodation and subsistence costs were financed by the GDR authorities) was justified as the visit had been a useful exercise in overcoming Cold War tensions. Highlighting ‘shifts in international politics and the balance of power [with] different potential enemies’, O’Kelly confirmed that Gwent Council sought to establish friendship links with an Eastern Bloc country, citing the existing links fostered by the Gwent branch of the Britain-GDR Society as an explanation for why Bautzen had been chosen. This again demonstrates the influence of the Gwent branch within the Council and adds weight to LfV’s views that twinings with a local friendship group presence were more likely to be successful. O’Kelly’s impressions of the GDR were also provided: ‘naturally we asked as many questions as possible’, with several priorities such as housing, cheap food and employment described in very positive terms, reading almost as a political manifesto. The GDR was described as having no unemployment, rents which had not been raised since 1945 and a place where 90% of women were able to return to work following paid pregnancy and maternity leave benefits. These highlighted features were all socialist in nature, rather than cultural. The list of virtues was overwhelmingly positive with no criticism of the GDR in the text. The sole point of political controversy discussed, was a mention of Soviet missiles on GDR territory, but again the language was

⁷⁴⁰ ‘Beeindruckt vom neuen Dresden’, *Die Union*, 04.4.1986, S. 4.

⁷⁴¹ ‘Beeindruckt vom neuen Dresden’, *Die Union*, 04.4.1986, S. 4.

⁷⁴² ‘Council’s E German trip fosters new understanding’, *Checkpoint*, May 1986, sent to LfV for reference and included in DY13/3299, Bl. 131.

subjective, justifying the GDR position as having ‘resisted’ and ‘reluctantly agreed’ to missile presence, drawing parallels with US cruise missiles at Greenham.

Efforts were made in the article to illustrate common ground between Wales and the GDR, referencing the encouragement of the Sorbian culture as supported by national government policy. A statistic of 1.8% of total Welsh-speakers in Gwent was provided as a point of similarity with the Sorbian minority situation. The fact that Welsh was taught in only 2% of the primary schools in Gwent at this time demonstrates the niche nature of any Sorbian/Welsh connection.⁷⁴³ This was a feature which would not have been of any interest to the majority of the Gwent electorate.⁷⁴⁴ The article closed with a statement referencing contemporary royal personages, ‘my opinion is that we have a lot more in common with ordinary working people in this Communist country than we do with the Fergies and Andys of this world’.⁷⁴⁵ The message of learning of and from others, breaking barriers and improving international understanding was consistently cited by other Gwent delegates in the local media. Michael Perry (Gwent County Council Chief Executive) was quoted in a *Western Mail* article stating that despite the Iron Curtain dividing Europe, this ‘did not mean that people either side had opposing views of life [...] the understanding and trust between ordinary people, which may help to ensure peaceful co-existence will be developed by a better knowledge of each other’.⁷⁴⁶ Councillor Lloyd Turnbull’s contribution to the local media also sought to draw parallels between Gwent and Bautzen, yet his statements contained several factual inaccuracies.

Bautzen had a minority language group displaced from Czechoslovakia in the 1930s, Mr Turnbull said. ‘They’ve got a similar minority group in the Zorbs [*sic*] who have their own language as we have with Welsh in Gwent but they’ve got no serious problems or aggro where we have’ he said. ‘We discussed how they got over the language problem and it seems they teach the language to children up to 11 years of age as we do with Welsh and then allow it as an optional second language from there. That seems to be accepted there where it isn’t in Gwent, perhaps we could learn from them.’⁷⁴⁷

The misunderstanding of the origin of the Sorbian people and the erroneous referencing of ‘Zorbs’ rather than ‘Sorbs’ indicate a poor understanding on an element of proposed commonality between Gwent and Bautzen. Despite using the minority language similarities between the Sorbs and the Welsh to justify the delegation, the references made by Turnbull regarding challenges with the Welsh language within Gwent, the ‘aggro’, the ‘getting over the language problem’, do not indicate an overwhelming sense of support for one of the most obvious features of Welsh culture, suggesting that the twinning arrangement was not motivated by nationalist or linguistic reasons.

⁷⁴³ Johnes, *Wales since 1939*, p. 328.

⁷⁴⁴ Johnes also cites that Welsh-speaking among children between 3 and 15 years old increased by 81% in Gwent between 1981 – and 1991, but this percentage increase would have been based on a very small figure. Johnes, *Wales since 1939*, p. 330.

⁷⁴⁵ ‘Council’s E German trip fosters new understanding’, *Checkpoint*, included in DY13/3299, Bl. 131.

⁷⁴⁶ ‘Twinning Plan’, *Western Mail*, 21.04.1986, p. 9.

⁷⁴⁷ ‘Twinning Trip to Germany No Holiday’, *South Wales Echo*, 16.04.1986, sent to LfV for reference and included in DY13/3299, Bl. 133.

Brian Scully shared his recollections of the twinning and his impressions of dealing with and visiting the GDR, providing a first-person contribution for analysis. On the appeal of the GDR specifically, Scully confirmed that Blaenau Gwent Council sought left-wing oriented opportunities for twinning, rather than following the usual practice of twinning with French or West German areas. ‘For its politics it was different, the Iron Curtain was up, to get in there we thought was an achievement. Nothing but knowledge could come out of that. The education for the young people would have been enormous [...] As a change from France and West Germany, we wanted something a bit different with culture and young people [...] I thought it would be Russia but it turned out to be Bautzen.’⁷⁴⁸ This comment confirms that Blaenau Gwent’s primary motivation for the twinning was the Old Labour, pro-Soviet aspiration of furthering peaceful co-existence rather than specifically cooperating on minority languages and culture, which was essentially a supplementary feature specific to Bautzen. The active search for a twinning partner in a socialist country differentiated Blaenau Gwent from the majority of other civic twinning partners during this period, which was undoubtedly attributable to the political landscape of the area at this time. Blaenau Gwent Council was dominated by Labour Party members and situated in an area where prominent political figures of the Labour movement such as Aneurin Bevan and Michael Foot had been or were based.⁷⁴⁹ Though also located within the boundaries of Gwent County Council, Monmouthshire Council for example, an area of much greater political conservatism, had chosen to investigate partnering with Waldbronn in the FRG. The implication is that specific political circumstances in Blaenau Gwent during this time lent themselves to partnering with an area in the GDR, whereas another area within Wales would not necessarily have been as receptive to the prospect. Part of Bautzen’s appeal to Blaenau Gwent as a twinning partner was the GDR’s commitment to anti-nuclear policies.⁷⁵⁰ This suggests that the pro-peace movement messages promoted by the LfV and in the correspondence from Bautzen’s civic representation found a receptive audience. The repeated nature of the GDR’s declarations of anti-nuclear and peaceful co-existence positions were observed by Bernard Assinder:

[...] the one thing they seemed to focus on an awful lot was about nuclear weapons, you know in conversations when we’d met the various councillors [...] it always seemed to come up you know, they really feared it.⁷⁵¹

Such positions did not convince all members of the Blaenau Gwent Council. Delegate Councillor Barrie Davies (Independent, non-Labour), declared in the *Gwent Gazette*: ‘the great emphasis [...] placed on nuclear peace, wherever we travelled, this exercise in my opinion nearly reached brain-washing proportions. This I felt ‘stunk of hypocrisy’ bearing in mind East Germany harbours the

⁷⁴⁸ Interview with Brian Scully, 29.08.2013.

⁷⁴⁹ In May 1985 for example, of the 11 Gwent County Council seats apportioned to the Blaenau Gwent area, 10 were Labour representatives with just one Independent member. Gwent Archives, G-10-C-1, ‘Gwent Weekly Digest No. 103, 05.05.1989, p. 7.

⁷⁵⁰ Interview with Brian Scully, 29.08.2013.

⁷⁵¹ Interview with Bernard Assinder, 07.10.2013.

biggest arsenal of nuclear weapons in Europe'.⁷⁵² This view was representative of a range of opinions declared by Davies on the GDR, as discussed further below.

Reference has been made above to the prominent role played by the LfV in arranging and executing the twinning. One of the statements made in the LfV literature described how it did not 'interfere in bilateral twinning activities', but that ensuring LfV involvement was a constructive act for foreign partners.⁷⁵³ Notwithstanding the presence of LfV personnel rather than the Mayor or representatives of Bautzen on delegations to Gwent, later correspondence strongly illustrated a disconnect between the civic parties subject to the twinning. A letter from Geoffrey Prior (Gwent Public Relations and Information Officer) to Dietmar Hahn of the LfV in June 1986 for example, included the following statement: 'While I understand that this [Declaration of Intent] has to be approved by the authorities of Bautzen, I would appreciate your advice as to how to proceed to develop this relationship'.⁷⁵⁴ A letter from Lothar Müller, Chairman of Bautzen's District Council to Brian Scully in July 1986 also demonstrated the central co-ordination role of the LfV: '[I am] pleased to learn through Mr. Brasch [...] of your intention to establish relations [with] the District of Bautzen. The Declaration of Intent signed by you and Mr. Brasch is approved by me on behalf of the District Assembly and District Council'.⁷⁵⁵ Recognition was however given to the pivotal role and co-operation of Müller and his staff in Brasch's congratulatory message following the visit of the Blaenau Gwent delegation: 'through your kindness and empathy, it has been possible to take a further step forward in our twinning partnership', indicating the necessity of the co-operation of the civic twinning partner in these activities.⁷⁵⁶ Although several cultural events and factory visits saw Gwent/Blaenau Gwent delegates introduced to aspects of Sorbian and GDR culture including performers and workplace representatives, the majority of those involved in twinning interactions held positions of political or civic authority in the GDR. Despite a clear expectation on the part of the Welsh visitors of reciprocal delegations to Gwent/Blaenau Gwent – with such exchanges being a fundamental feature of Blaenau Gwent's twinning policy – limited interactions occurred between non-civic representatives. Bernard Assinder recollected the Blaenau Gwent delegates' negligible engagement with ordinary citizens of the GDR:

[...] we were under the misapprehension, perhaps assumed that they'd send a delegation of people over here. Of course they didn't have free travel, and you know we were amazed by how poor it was wherever we went [...] but we didn't really engage with ordinary people much at all, we were driving through Dresden in a big black limo and the other traffic, if there was traffic as such, you know, they all stopped to let us go through [...] It was very organised, we didn't really meet any ordinary people, we were meeting members of the party and the

⁷⁵² 'Iron curtain twin town visit slated' in *Gwent Gazette*, 12.02.1987, p. 7.

⁷⁵³ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, 'Information', Bl. 6.

⁷⁵⁴ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter] G. Prior to D. Hahn, 05.06.1986, Bl. 153.

⁷⁵⁵ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter] Lothar Müller to B. J. Scully, 24.07.1986, Bl. 101

⁷⁵⁶ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter] Horst Brasch to Lothar Müller, Bl. 44. [My translation].

council [...] bureaucrats and administrators. The only time we actually spoke to ordinary people in Bautzen was in the bar and the hotel we stayed in.⁷⁵⁷

This limited exposure to the Bautzen public illustrates once again how the GDR rarely sought to encourage genuine personal contact outside any organised, official relations with visitors from the West. Representatives from Bautzen adhered to the LfV-issued instructions regarding the core GDR messages to be relayed to the visitors. The following feedback was provided in the annual report of the *Bautzen Landkreis* on its international activities, demonstrating an understanding that the role and position of the Sorbs was to be promoted, in clear conformance to the expectations of the authorities:

With any informative discussion [...] the political objective was to make them aware of the growing, active and constructive role of the GDR in the campaign for the securing of peace and for the development of international friendship. [...] In hosting delegations and visiting individuals, especially those from the non-socialist countries, the equal position of the Sorbs as a national minority in the GDR was stated, including their all-round contribution and co-responsibility for the further development of a socialist society and the promotion of their traditions, culture and language through the socialist state.⁷⁵⁸

One of the key principles of Blaenau Gwent's twinning policy was ensuring early public engagement to generate sufficient support for the twinning. One recommendation was specific to the proposed Bautzen twinning, highlighting how a public meeting should be arranged to ascertain the level of support for the proposed arrangement.⁷⁵⁹ A warning was also included in the policy against the possible public perception of 'civic junketing', recommending that 'care should be taken to see that any visits funded from public funds have a sound purpose, that the results will be beneficial to the community, that their purpose is understood by the community and there is wide local support'.⁷⁶⁰ In reality, limited public awareness existed of the Gwent/Blaenau twinning proposals and agreements both before and during the period of delegations. When the initial Declaration of Intent was signed between John Pembridge and Horst Brasch, the media exposure was minimal. A small article on page 12 of the local *South Wales Argus* (with picture) highlighted the event, reporting that 'Young people in Gwent could get a chance to look behind the Iron Curtain if proposals to twin the county with the Bautzen area of East Germany are accepted'.⁷⁶¹ Yet there was no follow-up reporting on the event or its potential implications, with no public reaction highlighted. In Blaenau Gwent Council's Ordinary Meeting minutes, dated 25.09.1986, a member declared that holding a public meeting to discuss the Bautzen twinning was not yet necessary at that stage, despite the statement of intent having been signed between Mayor Scully and Brasch in May and a delegation to Bautzen planned for later that year. When another member referred to the need to 'involve people of the towns in the Borough', the

⁷⁵⁷ Interview with Bernard Assinder, 07.10.2013.

⁷⁵⁸ Kreisarchiv Bautzen, Bestand Rat des Kreises Bautzen, Tb. Ratssitzungen, SGB 170, Akte 'Internationale Beziehungen', 'Information über den Stand der internationalen Arbeit auf kommunalpolitischem Gebiet im Kreis Bautzen, 27.01.1988, Bl.1. [My translation].

⁷⁵⁹ Gwent Archives, A300-M-74 (No. 72), Item no. 14/616 (8), 02.09.1986, p. 6.

⁷⁶⁰ Gwent Archives, Item no. 14/616 (8), p. 6.

⁷⁶¹ 'Signing for closer links', *South Wales Argus*, 24.04.1986, p. 12.

response from the Mayor was that ‘actual details would be submitted at a later date once the twinning had taken place’.⁷⁶² This decision could be interpreted in two ways: either the Labour Council members in favour of the twinning resolutely believed that the twinning arrangement promoted such important ideals (such as the promotion of peace and anti-nuclear pursuits) which overrode any such consultation requirements; or, perhaps they foresaw that public opinion would not have been favourable to the prospect of a twinning partnership with the GDR and therefore sought to present it as a *fait accompli*, post signature of the agreement. As the Labour Party enjoyed a ‘hegemonic position [...] essentially unchallenged’ in the South Wales Valleys, electoral consequences were likely not an issue for consideration.⁷⁶³

The coverage in the Welsh media was limited throughout the twinning process. *The Western Mail* ran a brief report entitled, ‘*Historic Twinning links between Gwent and a region of Communist East Germany expected to be forged in October*’, but the majority of the local media and the recorded public reaction mostly highlighted the cost incurred by the Councils in supporting the twinning initiative.⁷⁶⁴ The *South Wales Echo* in ‘Twinning trip to Germany “no holiday”’, published a defence from the ‘Labour-controlled’ Gwent Council, as represented by Lloyd Turnbull, who said ‘that the delegation had come to no conclusions about whether to pursue twinning with the East German area. [...] The delegation will report to the council with a recommendation’.⁷⁶⁵ This stated position on the as yet unconcluded decision to twin was curious, particularly as by this date, Pembrokeshire had already signed a Declaration of Intent. Although the twinning has previously been described as an expression of ‘an issue close to the Welsh nationalist heart’, this article suggests that Turnbull at least, considered the Welsh language a burdensome feature of Gwent life and civic responsibility.⁷⁶⁶ As the ability to speak the Welsh language is usually regarded as the strongest indicator of Welsh nationalism, the fact that none of the delegates has been identified as Welsh-speaking raises questions as to their personal versus publicly-stated motivations and whether claims of sharing experiences and minority cultural commonalities were instead used to justify the expenditure incurred by the delegations. At the wider Welsh level, Martin Johnes noted the critical public perception of activities undertaken in ‘one-party’ areas of local government, ‘where nepotism and a lack of real democracy were a problem’.⁷⁶⁷

A query was raised in Blaenau Gwent’s Finance Committee regarding the cost of the delegation in December 1986. A report illustrating a breakdown of the costs incurred was requested, which was initially opposed by several members of the Committee, discussed and then actioned following a

⁷⁶² Gwent Archives, A300-M-74 (No. 72) Item no. 616/976, 25.09.1986, pp. 349-350.

⁷⁶³ Jones, R. W. & Trystan, D. (2000) ‘A ‘Quiet Earthquake’: The First National Elections to the National Assembly for Wales’, *Crest Centre for Research into Elections and Social Trends Working Paper*, (85), p. 2.

⁷⁶⁴ ‘Twinning Plan’, *Western Mail*, 21.04.1986, p. 9.

⁷⁶⁵ ‘Twinning trip to Germany “no holiday”’, Bl. 133.

⁷⁶⁶ Howarth, ‘Projecting the Self’, p. 100.

⁷⁶⁷ Johnes, *Wales since 1939*, p. 269.

vote.⁷⁶⁸ A figure of £4,751.84 was later reported⁷⁶⁹ and the Mayor was asked to justify some of the expenditure, such as the choice of hiring a coach rather than using the mayoral car or public transport.⁷⁷⁰ The response of the public was critical. One newspaper article which referenced the cost of £4,750, quoted the only non-Labour opposition member to have participated in the delegation, Councillor Barrie Davies, who called for the twinning agreement to be ‘abandoned’.⁷⁷¹ In a letter to the *Gwent Gazette* entitled ‘*The ratepayers are not all cuckoo*’, a reader wrote: ‘at this moment of writing, so I am told, the mayor and a few of his companions are on German soil on another money wasting break, which is as much benefit to the borough as Mr. Foot’s freedom “do”’.⁷⁷²

When questioned in 2013 as to whether the general public had demonstrated a positive interest in the twinning, Bernard Assinder responded: ‘They weren’t. The Labour Party was, the members of the party were, the younger guys who were more left wing. Yes, they were. But I think the general public thought it was just another jolly, you know?’⁷⁷³ Councillor Barrie Davies (Independent) felt strongly against the twinning and had no hesitation in making his views public. Davies was the sole non-Labour delegate from Blaenau Gwent on the delegation to Bautzen and was a last-minute addition following the sickness of an original Labour Party member. His participation was at least a nod towards the recommendation in the Council’s twinning policy to ensure cross-party involvement. Davies was quoted in the *Gwent Gazette* as believing that the ‘twinning project should not continue’, stating that it ‘stunk [*sic*] of hypocrisy.’ The twinning arrangement would not benefit the residents of Blaenau Gwent because of propaganda and other cultural hurdles. ‘Everywhere we went, every visit we made, we were surrounded by propaganda against the Americans and SDI and I found it very disturbing’.⁷⁷⁴ Davies declared that the travel restrictions on the citizens of the GDR meant that any visiting participants would be ‘hand-picked’, the delegates were ‘bombarded with propaganda’ in the GDR and that he saw no conceivable benefits to Blaenau Gwent from the twinning.⁷⁷⁵ In a public response which classically illustrated the receptivity of the old pro-Soviet Left in Wales to initiatives such as this twinning, Brian Scully stated that he had been impressed with what he had seen and declared how ‘this twinning will be to the eternal benefit of the youth of the borough, for the choirs and cultural organisations [...] We knew the culture would be very different before we went over there [...] Work towards world unity is not going to come from the politicians but from the young people and the cultural groups getting together’.⁷⁷⁶ This view remained Brian Scully’s opinion in

⁷⁶⁸ Gwent Archives, A300-M-75 (No. 73), Finance Committee, Item no.1687, 09.12.1986, pp. 582-585.

⁷⁶⁹ Gwent Archives, A300-M-76 (No. 74), Finance Committee, Item no. 976/2174(6), 10.02.1987, p. 757.

⁷⁷⁰ Gwent Archives, A300-M-76 (No. 74), Item no. 2174/2324, 26.02.1987, p. 800.

⁷⁷¹ ‘German trip cost £4,750’, *Gwent Gazette*, 19.02.1987, p. 11.

⁷⁷² [Letter] ‘The ratepayers are not all cuckoo’, *Gwent Gazette*, 18.12.1986, p. 4.

⁷⁷³ Interview with Bernard Assinder, 07.10.2013.

⁷⁷⁴ The USA’s Strategic Defence Initiative (‘Star Wars’).

⁷⁷⁵ ‘Iron curtain twin town visit slated’, *Gwent Gazette*, 12.02.1987, p. 7.

⁷⁷⁶ ‘Iron curtain twin town visit slated’, p. 7.

2013.⁷⁷⁷ Contrary to the recommendation of the Council's twinning policy however, the promotion of these perceived benefits to the public was happening after the signing of the agreement, not in advance. Bernard Assinder was prepared to publicly disagree with Davies' 'totally distorted picture' of the suitability of twinning with an area in the GDR.⁷⁷⁸ Drawing attention to an interview broadcast on a GDR local station with himself and Davies, Assinder recollected how both had 'praised the numerous things that had impressed us during our visit'. Bernard Assinder challenged Davies' propaganda claim, reporting that although a great deal of emphasis had been given to the theme of nuclear weapons, he had viewed this as being a result of a fear held by the GDR regarding the prospect of a nuclear war. 'I would argue that it is no bad thing for little children to preach the message of peace which is what we saw in the GDR'.⁷⁷⁹ This view remained consistent in 2013:

He said it was all propaganda, he didn't believe any of this. You'd go to the kindergarten and the kids would be singing this song about peace and friendship and the message about anti-nuclear was really powerful. In the factories we went to, the same thing wherever we went, it was just this message that came over [...] Barrie said, "No, it's all propaganda, I don't believe it!" I, for my own personal view, I still hold it now, they had a real fear of the West attacking them with nuclear weapons, they had a really fear about it.⁷⁸⁰

Bernard Assinder also countered Davies' claims about the 'confinement' of freedom as a 'reflection of prejudice', for which there was no evidence, using examples of existing youth exchanges between Gwent and the GDR to demonstrate that visitors were ordinary GDR citizens and not 'hand-picked'. This was a strong statement in support of the GDR, addressing a widely-held public perception of the restrictions experienced by its citizens. It was also an overt public discussion reflecting a real disagreement within Council membership and political factions of the suitability of an area in the GDR as a twinning partner for Blaenau Gwent. On the subject of freedom of movement, Davies recollected his discussions with erstwhile GDR visitors to Gwent who had confirmed that a return visit would be unlikely. Davies further stated that a visit to the 'free world' was a 'dream' to the majority of GDR citizens and exemplified the volume of escapes (both successful and unsuccessful) from the GDR as a demonstration of this restriction, consolidating and reaffirming the quintessential features of the GDR recognised by most *Gwent Gazette* readers.⁷⁸¹ His views on the GDR's propaganda were also featured, including a damning statement on the futility of a twinning arrangement with an area in the GDR: 'I will always vehemently oppose totalitarianism and lack of democracies in countries like East Germany. [Councillor] Assinder has failed to mention any facet of East German life we could introduce to our country to enhance and improve our existence'.⁷⁸² On the benefits of the twinning arrangement to Blaenau Gwent specifically, Bernard Assinder declared:

⁷⁷⁷ Interview with Brian Scully, 29.08.2013.

⁷⁷⁸ [Letter] 'Distorted picture of twinning visit', *Gwent Gazette*, 05.03.1987, p. 4.

⁷⁷⁹ [Letter] 'Distorted picture of twinning visit', p. 4.

⁷⁸⁰ Interview with Bernard Assinder, 07.10.2013.

⁷⁸¹ [Letter], 'Distorted' comments will upset some ...', *Gwent Gazette*, 19.03.1987, p. 4.

⁷⁸² [Letter], 'Distorted' comments will upset some ...', p. 4.

Whatever differences we have in our political systems and ideology, what we do have in common is our humanity and unless we can meet and discuss the issues that divide us then mutual fears and prejudices will prevail. We have, through our twinning, opened a small avenue through which our young people may resolve those differences and I cannot see how that can bring anything but good or why anyone would oppose it.⁷⁸³

Despite Bernard Assinder's robust response to his earlier statement, Davies proceeded to further publicly protest, stating that his inclusion in the delegation was only as a result of a late withdrawal of another delegation member.⁷⁸⁴ In an interview however, Bernard Assinder contradicted this viewpoint:

He went out there with preconceived ideas and he didn't alter them. That's part of the reason why we took him with us, because he was very "We shouldn't be twinning with them" you know, "Commies" and all this, you know, so we said, 'Why don't you come?' [We said] we'll take a member of the opposition and we recommended it should be him, so that's how he came.⁷⁸⁵

What this public disagreement illustrated was the reliance on the Council's Labour Party members to both promote and enforce the twinning, convinced by a belief in its value for the Blaenau Gwent area. As a consequence of this stream of open correspondence between Bernard Assinder and Barrie Davies, Ray Hill of the Gwent branch sought in a further letter to the newspaper to defend the virtues of twinning with an area in the GDR and by doing so, widened the range and scope of the branch's activities in Gwent.

The hawkish comments contained in the letter hardly befit a person with so-called independent views. The dictionary describes the word independent as 'not subject to bias or influence', but I will leave it to your readers to pass judgement whether [Councillor] Davies's views fit into that category [...] Surely friendship links [are] not about changing the political and cultural way of life of those you form friendship ties with, but about gaining a better understanding of each other's ways and showing the necessary tolerance to accept each other's differences.⁷⁸⁶

In view of Ray Hill's efforts in promoting the twinning from its initial conception through to its execution, such a belief was undoubtedly strongly-held and made in faith of the anticipated benefits of the arrangement. Aside from the public dispute in the local media, issues were also raised by the Secretary of the local Town Twinning Association, expressing concern on the suitability of twinning a 'Town' (Bautzen) with a 'Borough' (Blaenau Gwent). 'We feel that it is wrong for a Borough to twin with a town. Who is going to accommodate any visitors? Would it be Tredegar, Ebbw Vale?'⁷⁸⁷ The absence of a focal town for the twinning may have been an influential factor on the longevity of the arrangement. Not having a local twinning organisation, administering the twinning would have

⁷⁸³ [Letter] 'Distorted picture of twinning visit', p. 4.

⁷⁸⁴ [Letter], 'Distorted' comments will upset some ...', p. 4.

⁷⁸⁵ Interview with Bernard Assinder, 07.10.2013.

⁷⁸⁶ [Letter] 'Hawkish Comments!', *Gwent Gazette*, 23.04.1987, p. 4.

⁷⁸⁷ Gwent Archives, A300-M-73 (No. 71), Item no. 71 (10), dated 05.06.1986, p. 1.

generated a vacuum of logistical support, necessary to make the twinning concept a workable interaction. In practice however and with hindsight, the volume and type of visitors permitted to travel from GDR on twinning delegations were doubtlessly severely restricted by the GDR authorities.

Considering another Blaenau Gwent twinning partnership, such as the arrangement with Oberhausen Rheinhausen in the FRG offers an opportunity to compare public support and engagement. This twinning was executed almost contemporaneously. Members of Blaenau Gwent's Twinning Sub-Committee visited Oberhausen Rheinhausen in January 1987, within a month of the return of the Blaenau Gwent delegation from Bautzen. This followed an assumption made by Gwent County Council that the borough of Blaenau Gwent was of a sufficient size to accommodate further twinning arrangements.⁷⁸⁸ Unlike the twinning partnership with Bautzen however, the arrangement between Blaenau Gwent and Oberhausen Rheinhausen is still ongoing. In September 2013 for example, the *South Wales Argus* reported on youth delegations from Oberhausen Rheinhausen visiting a Blaenau Gwent youth camp, an ongoing feature of a twinning relationship which continues to thrive.⁷⁸⁹ When asked for his thoughts as to why the Oberhausen-Rheinhausen twinning had outlasted the Bautzen arrangement, Bernard Assinder surmised that a crucial differentiator was the engagement of the local population.

Oberhausen Rheinhausen was looking for a twinning partner. You had ordinary people in the town wanting to get involved, you know it wasn't their bureaucracy, it was just ordinary people. When we went out there, we stayed in people's homes, we didn't stay in a hotel. We mixed with the locals, we went to the local carnival, the town festival. We met the fire brigade and everybody really, went to people's houses, it was a totally different experience.⁷⁹⁰

This was in stark contrast to the experience of the Blaenau Gwent delegates in Bautzen.

We went to have dinner one night at an old hunting lodge, way up in the mountains, in the forest. It was incredible, this place must have been owned by some aristocrat a long time ago. But again, they were all bureaucrats, the mayor, or the chief fire officer or whatever, you know? So there were no ordinary people that we actually met.⁷⁹¹

The twinning arrangement between Blaenau Gwent and Bautzen was short-lived, which was contrary to the original intention and the sentiments expressed by all parties. Following the return of the Blaenau Gwent delegation in December 1986, Brian Scully wrote to his mayoral counterpart in Bautzen stating how the Council looked forward to many years of future co-operation and in particular to a visit of a return delegation from Bautzen to Blaenau Gwent - not just to experience the

⁷⁸⁸ Gwent Archives, A300-M-75 (No. 73), Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of the Council (Twinning Sub-Committee), Item no. 976/1557 (7), 27.11.1986, pp. 1 – 2.

⁷⁸⁹ 'Europeans visit Blaenau Gwent youth camp', *South Wales Argus*, 20.8.2013 [Online]. Available at: http://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/10623456.Europeans_visit_Blaenau_Gwent_youth_camp/ (Accessed 16.09.2013).

⁷⁹⁰ Interview with Bernard Assinder, 07.10.2013.

⁷⁹¹ Interview with Bernard Assinder, 07.10.2013.

sights but to also meet its citizens.⁷⁹² In response, Müller stated ‘our collaboration will contribute to the peace’ and accepted the invitation to visit.⁷⁹³ The return delegation to Blaenau Gwent occurred in the Autumn of 1987, though as highlighted previously, very little material is available relating to the planning or execution of the visit. It would appear that the LfV sent representatives, as illustrated by correspondence from Bernd Zufelde of the LfV to the new Mayor, Harry Evans in November 1987, thanking the Borough on behalf of the Friendship Society GDR-GB and the LfV for the hospitality received. ‘The greetings you had conveyed through us to the Bautzen District Council are being returned to you.’⁷⁹⁴ This statement indicates once again the limited involvement of Bautzen civic personnel in the delegation activities, with the LfV acting as conduit.

In the interim, several efforts had been made by representatives in Bautzen – possibly under the direction of the LfV – to engage with counterparts in Blaenau Gwent, frequently referencing the shared commitment for peace. Müller stated how earnestly the people of Bautzen wanted to prepare new activities to ‘serve the campaign for peace, for the benefit of the world’ in fulfilment of the principles of the agreement.⁷⁹⁵ A memo was sent by the headmaster of the Wilhelm-Pieck school in Bautzen describing a painting competition for school children held from January to August 1987. The categories listed for the painting competition promoted a peace theme, being: ‘My homeland - the GDR’, ‘We want peace all over the world’ and ‘GDR- state of peace’, with the best paintings to be sent to the Borough Council of Blaenau Gwent. This activity partially fulfilled one of the aims included in the twinning arrangement of arranging school exchanges.⁷⁹⁶ Material in the *Landkreis* archive of Bautzen makes reference to the comprehensive school of Ebbw Vale being a partner school to the Wilhelm Pieck school, but there is no evidence of any engagement on its part.⁷⁹⁷ In 1987, the Bautzen authorities sent brochures and books to Blaenau Gwent, whose content related to the Soviet plans for the destruction of medium-range missiles and the peace policies of the GDR.⁷⁹⁸ Such activities were overwhelmingly based on peace and co-operation on anti-nuclear policies. No reference was made to the Sorbian situation, indicative of a lack of engagement or even familiarity with the topic; a feature which contemporaneously mirrored the dilution of the Gwent branch’s Welsh identity, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Some further benign correspondence was exchanged between the two twinning partners in 1987 and 1988 (such as a letter from Lothar Müller (Chairman of the Bautzen District Council) to Mayor Harry Evans of Blaenau Gwent in December, 1987 and a letter from Mayor Peter Law of Blaenau Gwent to Lothar Müller in November, 1988) but in reality, the momentum had diminished and all sentiments

⁷⁹² SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter] Brian Scully to Lothar Müller, 8.1.1987, Bl. 40.

⁷⁹³ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter] Lothar Müller to Brian Scully, 28.01.1987, Bl. 32.

⁷⁹⁴ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter] Bernd Zufelde to Councillor H. Evans, Undated, Bl. 2.

⁷⁹⁵ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter] Lothar Müller to Brian Scully, 17.12.1986, Bl. 42.

⁷⁹⁶ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Memo] S. Klohs (of Wilhelm-Pieck Schule). Undated, Bl. 15.

⁷⁹⁷ Kreisarchiv Bautzen, ‘Information über den Stand ...’, 27.01.1988, Bl.2.

⁷⁹⁸ Kreisarchiv Bautzen, ‘Information über den Stand ...’, 27.01.1988, Bl.2.

expressed were courteous, mostly exchanging cordial greetings rather than spurring definitive actions.⁷⁹⁹ A few further delegations occurred between Gwent and Bautzen between 1986 and 1988 but these were initiatives arranged by the Gwent branch of the Britain-GDR Society, rather than official delegations representing the civic twinning arrangement. Despite the lack of formal civic engagement, these visits were used by the Bautzen authorities to demonstrate a further strengthening of the twinning partnership in domestic reports detailing Bautzen's international activity.⁸⁰⁰ No evidence exists to suggest that the twinning arrangement was ever formally brought to a close. Instead, the relationship faltered as a result of decreased engagement from both sides of the Iron Curtain. By 1987, the key figures behind and involved in the early stages of the twinning arrangements (such as John Pembridge and Brian Scully), were no longer in positions of power at their respective councils. Pembridge relinquished the role of Chairman of the County Council on the 28th of May, 1986 although his communiqué to the LfV, 'this does not mean that I shall not be involved in the continuing relations between our two countries [...] it just means that I shall be working in a different role' implied an interest on his part to continue the association.⁸⁰¹ John Pembridge even provided a private home address for further contact, yet his name is not referenced again in any later archival material.⁸⁰² The death of Horst Brasch in August, 1989 and the contemporary challenges experienced by the GDR prior to its eventual demise are also likely to have contributed to the end of the twinning relationship.⁸⁰³

Additionally, newer Council leaders in Blaenau Gwent were insufficiently interested in sustaining the arrangement. In the first local elections following signature of the twinning agreement (May 1987), the Labour Party in Blaenau Gwent Borough Council suffered a dilution of representation.⁸⁰⁴ Bernard Assinder's view on the failure of the twinning was that it was due to newer Council members who were unfamiliar with the twinning and its background. 'There was a new influx of councillors who knew nothing about it so basically it died a death. There was no one left to push it, I was no longer on the Council because of other issues'.⁸⁰⁵ Brian Scully reflected that the atypical cultural nature of the twinning may also have been influential.

⁷⁹⁹ In Müller's letter, reference was made of the importance of the Reagan/Gorbachev summit; in Law's letter an offer was made for a further delegation to visit. Both included in Kreisarchiv Bautzen, Bestand Rat des Kreises Bautzen, Tb. Ratssitzungen, SGB 170, Akte 'Internationale Beziehungen'.

⁸⁰⁰ Kreisarchiv Bautzen, Bestand Rat des Kreises Bautzen, Tb. Ratssitzungen, SGB 170, Akte 'Internationale Beziehungen', 'Information über den Stand der internationalen Arbeit auf kommunalpolitisches Gebiet im Kreis Bautzen', 26.01.1989, Bl. 2.

⁸⁰¹ SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter] John Pembridge to Dietmar Hahn, 11.04.1986, Bl. 173.

⁸⁰² SAPMO-BArch, DY13/3299, [Letter] John Pembridge to Dietmar Hahn, 11.04.1986, Bl. 173.

⁸⁰³ Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur (2009) 'Biographische Datenbanken: Horst Brasch', Available at: <http://www.bundesstiftung-aufarbeitung.de/wer-war-wer-in-der-ddr-%2363%3B1424.html?ID=392>, (Accessed: 17.04.2015).

⁸⁰⁴ See for example: 'Labour holds grip but majority cut' in *Gwent Gazette*, 14.05.1987, p. 1.

⁸⁰⁵ Interview with Bernard Assinder, 07.10.2013.

In conclusion I think it is a true reflection that the cultural divide was a step too far to benefit our young people at their stage of development and our delegation discussed what we had experienced and arrived at a consensus that Bautzen was not for us in so far as twinning was concerned.⁸⁰⁶

Having never sought cross-party support, conducted any public engagement activities or co-opted a local twinning society, the sustainability of the twinning relied on the engagement of a few key individuals. A change in leadership with differing priorities, as well as the limited interest displayed by the Bautzen civic authorities, contributed to the rapid collapse of the twinning arrangement.

Conclusion

The twinning activities of Gwent/Blaenau Gwent and Bautzen arose at a time of increased global tension during a ‘Second Cold War’ and was an example of what Lilleker described as attempts to ‘maintain unofficial dialogue and create an atmosphere of mutual understanding’.⁸⁰⁷ A twinning arrangement offered conciliatory opportunities to establish friendly relations with an area within the Soviet sphere of influence, complementing Gwent’s contemporary anti-nuclear position and the activities of the Welsh peace movement. In this respect, the partnership mirrored other British-GDR twinning aspirations, such as the arrangement between Manchester and Karl Marx Stadt – itself another British example of enthusiastic and sympathetic Labour Party members pursuing opportunities to achieve friendly co-existence across the Iron Curtain. Although contributors to the existing literature suggested that this twinning progressed from Welsh nationalist considerations, this study’s evaluation of the participants and their motivations has illustrated how those engaged did not belong to the *Fro Gymraeg*. Instead, these individuals were displaying identifiers quintessential of the *Welsh Wales* identity type, in a Labour Party stronghold. Although Lilleker stated unambiguously that holding pro-Soviet sympathies was a minority activity even within the Labour Party, sufficient enthusiasm existed in Gwent and Blaenau Gwent to pursue the twinning, influenced by the area’s political heritage.⁸⁰⁸ It has been demonstrated that Blaenau Gwent was open to twinning with any area in the Soviet Union, illustrating beyond doubt that the primary incentive was to improve unofficial détente and pursue peaceful co-existence. The Gwent branch’s influence on its network of local Labour councillors led to the proposal of Bautzen. Subsequently, it was possible to include the then-prominent Welsh-Sorbian considerations, which were being separately pursued by the Gwent branch and the LfV, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. In practice, neither twinning partner could sustain the promotion of indigenous Welsh or Sorbian linguistic or cultural considerations, yet some councillors elected to use the minority connection to justify the initiative and by proxy, the expenses incurred. The efforts of the Welsh civic contingent were a manifestation of the enthusiasm of a few key individuals, who wished to make a mark and who were sympathetic to the GDR. In

⁸⁰⁶ Email correspondence with Brian Scully, 24.09.2014.

⁸⁰⁷ Lilleker, *Against the Cold War*, p. 172.

⁸⁰⁸ Lilleker, *Against the Cold War*, p. 2.

practice, most were happy to undertake a statesman-like role in establishing the twinning, but the enthusiasm to engage in its execution, implementation and sustainment rapidly diminished. The later pursuit of Dresden as a twinning partner by Gwent County councillors indicates how potentially, the ‘thrill was in the chase’, rather than ensuring the successful implementation of the existing agreement between Blaenau Gwent and Bautzen.

The engagement of the LfV was enthusiastic from the initial proposal. Having been made aware by the Gwent branch of the GDR’s ‘discrimination’ against Wales in its twinning activities, the LfV proceeded to exploit a further available opportunity to interact with the West, as British-GDR relations became decentralised. Despite the LfV’s enthusiasm for the proximity of well-connected Labour politicians to the twinning, existing literature tends to over-emphasise the significance of these connections, which in reality had no practical bearing on the establishment or the execution of the twinning. The evaluation of this twinning supports the statement made in existing Britain-GDR scholarship of the importance and influence of the Britain-GDR Society in supporting such arrangements and the reliance on left-wing politicians to nurture an engagement. The efforts of the Gwent branch of the Britain-GDR Society were crucial. Had representatives of the branch not undertaken such extensive foundation work such as organising youth twinings, exhibitions, Peace Bus events and approached local councillors to promote the twinning, it is extremely improbable that any formal partnership activity with the GDR would have occurred. The twinning enabled the Gwent branch to prove its value to the LfV, not only creating new opportunities for engagement but visibly supporting and promulgating the messages of the GDR in Gwent too.

The fragility of the twinning arrangement between Gwent/Blaenau Gwent and Bautzen was exposed as soon as a few key individuals were removed from positions of leadership or engagement. The lack of public awareness and commitment in Gwent was a fundamental factor, mirrored by the reciprocal absence of Bautzen’s population in the twinning. With standard approaches for controlled interaction deployed by the LfV and non-civic participants not being permitted to freely engage, the Bautzen contingent was only ever a token representation, subject to prescribed activities within the parameters set by the LfV. No particular success came of the twinning. Agreed objectives were only partially achieved, with the relationship – aside from some later Gwent branch delegations and interactions – collapsing within a few years of its inception.

CONCLUSION

By considering Wales independently, this thesis has contributed an alternative narrative to the study of the GDR's relations with the West during the Cold War. The identity and motivations of those who engaged with the GDR in Wales have been analysed and contextualised by considering to what extent their ideas regarding 'Welshness' and Welsh identity influenced their positions and perceptions vis-à-vis the GDR. The findings of this research suggest that the most significant and intriguing interactions between Wales and the GDR occurred as a result of the Welsh language and domestic concerns regarding its status. The Welsh language and its culture was a point of commonality with the linguistic minority of the Sorbs, enabling the GDR to achieve political capital and goodwill from a set of circumstances the state had independently sought to advance and constitutionally-protect. Elements specific to Wales, such as its indigenous Welsh language and culture thus meant that a further category of citizens engaged with the GDR, contributing a demographic beyond those which have so far been assumed in the field of British-GDR relations. This influenced the methods and approaches deployed by GDR agents pursuing the state's foreign policy objectives of achieving recognition and later, improving the image of the GDR internationally. The promotion of the Sorbs to illustrate the emphasis placed by the GDR on protecting minorities is a new element to contribute to the existing scholarship. This approach was tailored to a minority culture in Britain, rather than a more mainstream political audience, indicative of the GDR seeking to broaden its message or appeal through the cultivation of all available prospects and networks. This study has also supported and developed several existing assumptions in the literature by demonstrating that in some respects, Welsh interactions with the GDR were often consistent with those already understood in a British context. The views and activities of Trade Union officials and sympathetic Labour politicians with pro-Soviet sentiments are prime examples of this. Despite these commonalities, the case studies in this thesis have nonetheless identified nuances or events specific to Wales which influenced these interactions, leading the GDR to tailor its methods and consider alternative approaches in its engagements with Welsh representatives.

This thesis has not considered how fairly (or otherwise) the Sorbs were treated by the SED, but rather the perception by Welsh contacts of their status. The GDR's Sorbian policy was in some respects paradoxical; despite the earlier post-war period's flood of constructive infrastructure and constitutional protections, the status of Sorbian language and culture remained continuously under threat through the GDR's industrialisation policy. Chapters 1 and 2 however, illustrated how the GDR's promotion of the policies and activities undertaken to support the Sorbs successfully appealed to an element of the Welsh-speaking community. What attracted the Welsh-speaking educationalists from Flintshire in the late 1950s and early 1960s was the perceived equality afforded to the Sorbian language, a contrast with the contemporaneous status of the Welsh language. This was also the case

for Welsh-speakers in the early 1980s (as evaluated in chapter 4) who also sought to compare the support granted to Welsh culture with the Sorbian situation. The GDR's cultural policies towards the Sorbs meant that a faction of engaged Welsh-speakers had a different way of looking at the GDR and its actions, regardless of their own political subscriptions. The perceived enlightened treatment and development of the Sorbian community was considered progressive relative to the domestic status afforded to the Welsh language during the same period.⁸⁰⁹ Promoting Sorb equality complemented the GDR's anti-fascist message and highlighting such credentials to a further audience in Britain required minimal additional effort - these were actions the GDR undertook regardless, in order to differentiate the state from the conduct of the previous political regime.

From a cultural perspective, agents of the GDR were frequently able to identify a distinct Welsh identity, principally due to the existence of the Welsh language. The multiple references in the archival material to the Welsh as being in 'England' or 'Wales (England)' however, overwhelmingly suggest a perception that Welsh people occupied a geographical (and political) area of a larger entity (such as the Sorbs in Saxony and Brandenburg in the GDR) rather than being of their own distinct nation. This may also have been influenced by the SED considering socialism as the fairest form of equality for the Sorbs rather than any cultural or territorial considerations. Specific perceptions of Wales and what it meant to be Welsh were held by representatives of the GDR, as exemplified by the content of Wilhelm Koenen's speech for the BBC in Chapter 2⁸¹⁰ or Horst Brasch's talk on the Celtic minority to Bautzen schoolchildren in Chapter 5.⁸¹¹ A specific strategy was frequently employed for approaching Wales and Welsh cultural life, as demonstrated by tailoring delegations to learn of the Sorbian community, making commitments to support bilingual education materials and inserting provisions in twinning arrangements to exchange information between Welsh and Sorbian cultures. In other respects however, the GDR's approach often mirrored what was deployed for Britain as a whole. Chapter 3 evaluated the GDR's strategy for cultivating Trade Union contacts for the purposes of achieving recognition and Chapter 5 considered the *Liga für Völkerfreundschaft's* (LfV) activities in engaging with local Labour Party politicians through the promotion of anti-nuclear positions. Although these examples unearthed little divergence from the practices employed with Trade Unionists and Labour politicians elsewhere in Britain, there were nuances specific to Wales which influenced the likelihood of interaction. Whereas the engagement of the Welsh-speakers of the *Fro Gymraeg* type to the GDR was overwhelmingly due to the perceived superior treatment of the Sorbs and their culture, the credence afforded to the GDR's positions from the *Welsh Wales* identity type often arose from political convictions stemming from the distinct political environment of the South

⁸⁰⁹ The Welsh Language Act, securing equal treatment for the Welsh and English languages in Wales (in the Public sector at least) did not come into force until 1993.

⁸¹⁰ As a cultural minority which was not given any fairness by a capitalist British government.

⁸¹¹ The talk Brasch presented on the 'traditions and culture of the Celtic minority'.

Wales valleys and the perceived common values and solidarity shared. Chapter 3 demonstrated the GDR's exploitation of Welsh proletariat fears of rearmament and the perceived dangers of residual fascism in the FRG. Chapter 5 contributed to the existing literature a further case study of left-wing representatives seeking to reduce Cold War tensions. These positions were overwhelmingly tied to wider Cold War themes such as anti-fascism and the use of nuclear weapons.

Although GDR agents often endeavoured to tailor approaches to Welsh audiences (within wider British activity), distinctions between the different Welsh identity types were occasionally misjudged, meaning supposedly personalised messages did not always reach the intended recipient, or more accurately, were not necessarily appropriate to the audience type at all. Chapters 5 and 6 provided examples of this oft-confused and simplistic approach, demonstrated in particular by the LfV's emphasis on the Welsh language and Sorbian exchange with Gwent councillors. Multiple expressions of Welsh identity experienced by the GDR friendship movement in the 1980s likely confused its approaches and methods for détente in Gwent. These chapters also demonstrated the LfV's reliance on the Gwent branch following its pursuit of a decentralisation strategy in the 1980s. The branch could be relied upon to raise awareness of the GDR in Gwent, had influence amongst local politicians and groups of interest to the GDR and was co-ordinated by enthusiastic members. As the only friendship group representation in Wales, the branch arguably believed it held a greater status of national representation compared to other society branches; a figurehead for the GDR friendship movement in Wales. It was however insufficiently versed in facets of Welsh-speaking/*Fro Gymraeg* features to construct a sustainable Welsh language oriented identity.

Relations were sought by the GDR to further its objectives. The activities of the evaluated case studies firmly corresponded to the GDR's two foreign policy aims – pursuing diplomatic recognition in the West until this was achieved in 1973 (as identified in Chapters 1-3) and, subsequently, improving the image of the GDR abroad (exemplified by the interactions in Chapters 4 & 5). Throughout the Cold War, each interaction was scrutinised by the relevant authorities as to its suitability or exploitability vis-a-vis furthering the GDR's aims. As has been demonstrated by this study, this approach also extended to relying on the resources of the *Staatssicherheit* to ensure conformity where required. Yet despite the level of control exerted and the vast effort deployed (both in terms of human resource and financial investment) pursuing the interactions considered in this thesis, the vast majority of the Welsh population remained indifferent to the GDR and were for the most part, wholly ignorant of its positions. All case studies have demonstrated that engaging with the GDR, regardless of class, political or linguistic background, was a niche endeavour. The negative image of the GDR as held in Britain was also the case in Wales. Twinning activity (Chapter 5) was never embraced by the wider Blaenau Gwent public (unlike the contemporaneous twinning arrangement executed with Oberhausen Rheinhausen in the FRG) and Chapter 2 demonstrated how, as time passed, the appeal of the GDR's

anti-fascism was not as important to a younger generation of miners. Interest waned and GDR arguments lost potency and significance. The membership of the Gwent branch (as illustrated in chapter 4) mirrored the typical left-oriented profile of other Britain-GDR society branches. Were it not for the Sorbian minority in the GDR, there is scant evidence that those categorised as belonging to the *Fro Gymraeg* would have sought any interaction with the GDR. Conversely, had not an initial approach been made by Welsh language representatives from Flintshire, it is reasonable to assume that the GDR would have remained broadly unaware of the linguistic and cultural differences in Wales compared to the rest of Britain.

This research demonstrates that of the three identity types taken from Balsom's model, the two types most likely to engage with the GDR were those of the *Fro Gymraeg* and *Welsh Wales*.⁸¹² Representatives of the *Fro Gymraeg* were motivated by uniquely Welsh concerns, which transcended any other impressions they may have held of the GDR and which may otherwise have discouraged contact. The examples of *Welsh Wales* interactions, demonstrate a considerable consistency with the interests, behaviours and motivations of comparable groups identified in the wider field of British-GDR relations. Negligible evidence exists for interactions between the *British Wales* identity type and the GDR. The impression gained from this research however, is that the GDR would have happily engaged with this type too, had the opportunity arisen. Although Balsom's classifications provided useful descriptions to differentiate the various Welsh identity types interacting with the GDR, the model proved in some respects to be too simplistic. The evidence demonstrates that those who interacted with the GDR did not necessarily belong to one distinct identity type only. This research has illustrated how Welsh individuals may have represented two different types in their interactions with the GDR. Huw T. Edwards, for example, was a recognised Labour Party stalwart for the majority of his career and a passionate supporter of improving the status of the Welsh language too. The GDR promoted multiple features, such as its support for minority culture and its socialist principles, all of which appealed to Edwards. Additionally, although Balsom's model provided geographical boundaries to 'locate' the different identity types, this research has further demonstrated the oversimplicity of this model. Those in Flintshire (considered a *British Wales* territory by Balsom) displayed the strongest *Fro Gymraeg* tendencies in this study.

There are several further avenues for exploration, which have not been considered within this research and which could potentially further enrich the narrative of Welsh-GDR relations. Although a search of the *Staatssicherheit* (Stasi) archives did not provide any material relating to activities in the sphere of Welsh Higher Education, anecdotal material from the interviews conducted for this thesis suggests that some German *Lektors* working at Welsh Universities in the 1970s and 1980s were considered

⁸¹² See pp. 20-21

possible Stasi infiltrators. In light of the connections between British Higher Education institutions and the GDR already identified in the existing literature, it is not inconceivable that this may also have been the case in Wales.⁸¹³ The activities of Welsh separatist groups and possible connections with the GDR also remain open for investigation. In his study of the Free Wales Army (FWA), a paramilitary Welsh nationalist organisation in the 1960s, Roy Clews suggested that funding was offered from a GDR source.⁸¹⁴ Although the offer was declined, this reference suggests an awareness on the part of the GDR of such activities in Wales, which may merit further research. Such an association would not have been without precedent; Mac Con Uladh described the GDR's early sporadic support for the IRA and its 'freedom fighters'.⁸¹⁵ Additionally, although the activities between the Welsh and GDR mining Trade Unions significantly decreased from the 1970s onwards, a study of the activities of the Wales TUC (which was only established in 1974), would also be illuminating, particularly if its activities deviated from those of the central TUC organisation. Culturally, there are numerous attestations in the archives of choral and orchestral tours between Wales and the GDR, particularly in the post-recognition period. An in-depth study of such interactions may offer further insights into the GDR's *Imagepflege* strategy. The primary contribution of this study however, is the conclusion that the GDR was willing to engage with minority cultures in areas of strategic interest in the West. This was facilitated by its promotion of its own minority culture and the tailoring of approaches to further engagement. As a result of these findings, supplementary research might well be conducted to evaluate whether a similar approach was adopted with other minority cultures in the West, to further the GDR's foreign policy aims.

By considering relations through a conceptual framework of Welsh identity, it is apparent that the variety in interaction types between Wales and the GDR were representative of the multiple understandings of Welshness which existed in Cold War Wales. Although there were commonalities between Welsh-GDR relations and those between Britain and the GDR, there were differences too, principally driven by language considerations and the status of Welsh nationhood during the Cold War. Such divergences, as identified and evaluated by this study, have contributed a valuable alternative Cold War narrative to the field of British-German Democratic Republic relations.

⁸¹³ See for example: Berger, S. & LaPorte, N. (2010) *Friendly Enemies*, New York: Berghahn, pp. 202 – 209.

⁸¹⁴ Clews, R (1980) *To Dream of Freedom*, Talybont: Y Lolfa, p. 141.

⁸¹⁵ Mac Con Uladh (2005) 'Relations between the Left in Northern Ireland and the GDR', in Berger S. & LaPorte, N. (2005) *The Other Germany: Perceptions and Influences in British-East German relations, 1945-1990*, Augsburg: Wissner-Verlag, p. 92.

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