

**WENDS AND THE *WENDE*: MODERN GERMAN
UNIFICATION (1989-90) AND THE SORBS**

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TABLE OF NAMES AND ABBREVIATIONS

BburgVerf90/GVB1.192	Brandenburgische Verfassung
BRD.....	Bundesrepublik Deutschland [=FRG]
Bündnis 90/Die Grünen.....	[‘Alliance 90/The Greens’]
CDU	Christlich-Demokratische Union [Christian Democratic Union]
DBD	Demokratische Bauernpartei Deutschlands [Democratic Farmers’ Party of Germany]
DDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik [=GDR]
DDRV74	Deutsche Demokratische Republic Verfassung [German Democratic Republic Constitution]
DEBRIV	Der Deutsche Braunkohlen-Industrie-Verein (eV) [German Brown Coal Industry Association]
Die Linke.....	[‘The Left’ – successor party to PDS]
DIW	Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung [German Institute for Economic Research]
Domowina	[‘Homeland’/‘Heimat’ – government-funded Sorbian umbrella group. Formed as an official political organisation, now an unofficial cultural organisation. Larger than <i>Maćica Serbska</i> , with broader remit of defending Sorbian democratic, national, language and cultural interests.]
DSV	Deutscher Schriftstellerverband
EinigVtr.....	Einigungsvertrag [Unification Treaty]
EU	Europäische Union [European Union]

FDGB	Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund [Free German Trade Union Federation]
FDJ.....	Freie Deutsche Jugend [Free German Youth]
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei [Free Democratic Party]
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany [=BRD]
GDR	German Democratic Republic [=DDR]
GG49/BGB1.....	Grundgesetz [Basic Law]
GorEnt90	Gohrischer Entwurf [Gohrischer Proposal]
HSL90	Hochschullehrerentwurf [University Lecturers' Proposal]
JP	Junge Pioniere [Young Pioneers]
Jugendweihe.....	[A communist alternative to (Christian) confirmation]
KPD.....	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands [Communist Party of Germany]
LAUBAG	Die Lausitzer Braunkohle AG [The Lusatian Brown Coal PLC]
LBGR.....	Das Landesamt für Bergbau, Geologie und Rohstoffe Brandenburg [State Office for Mining, Geology and Natural Resources, Brandenburg]
LDPD.....	Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands [German Liberal Democratic Party]
LMBV	Lausitzer und Mitteldeutsche Bergbau- Verwaltung GmbH [Lusatian and Central German Mining Management Ltd.]
LPG	Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft [agricultural co-operative]
Łužisko-serbski narodny wuběrk	[Lusatian-Sorbian national committee]

Maćica Serbska/Mašica Serbska	[‘Sorbian Roots’ – a cultural and educational society of Sorbs. The oldest Sorbian organisation still in existence; founded in Bautzen on 7 April 1847 to conduct and promote Sorbian research.]
MDR.....	Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk [Central German Broadcasting]
NDPD	National-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands [National Democratic Party of Germany]
Nowa Doba.....	[‘New Time’ – Upper Sorbian newspaper – forerunner of Serbske Nowiny]
Nowy Casnik.....	[‘New Journal’ – Lower Sorbian newspaper]
ORB.....	Ostdeutscher Rundfunk Brandenburg [East German Broadcasting Station for Brandenburg]
PDS	Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus [Party of Democratic Socialism – successor party to SED]
RBB.....	Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg [Berlin-Brandenburg Broadcasting]
SaxVerf92/SächsGVB1.92.....	Sächsische Verfassung
SB.....	Serbske Blido [Sorbian Round Table]
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands [Socialist Unity Party of Germany]
Serbske Nowiny	[‘Sorbian News’ – Upper Sorbian newspaper]
SNZ	Serbska narodna zhromadźizna [Sorbian National Assembly/Sorbische Volksversammlung]
SOE.....	[state-owned enterprises]
SorbVV89	Sorbische Volksversammlung
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands [German Social Democratic Party]

Stasi	Ministerium für Staatssicherheit [Ministry for State Security]
USSR.....	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VdgB.....	Vereinigung der gegenseitigen Bauernhilfe [Peasants' Mutual Aid Association]
VEB.....	Volkseigener Betrieb [People-owned enterprise]
Witaj.....	Witaj-Projekt [Welcome Project – a bilingual education programme]

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- 4 March 2009, Dresden Visit to Dresden Museum, Volkskunde
- 8 March 2009, Cottbus Informal interview with P.S. (middle-aged Lower Sorbian woman, Jänschwalde)
- 8 March 2009, Jänschwalde Guided tour, Wendisch-deutsches Heimatmuseum, Jänschwalde
- 10 March 2009, Bautzen Formal interview with Harald Konzack (Head of Domowina in Lower Lusatia)
- March 2009, Cottbus Informal interview with elderly German couple, one of whom was expelled from the former German territories in Poland in 1945
- 12 March 2009, Bautzen Attended Sorbian-language Catholic church service; attended Bautzen Easter Ridings
- 16 March 2009, Bautzen Informal interview with S.B. (early 20s Upper Sorbian woman)

26 July-23 August 2009 Research trip to Cottbus and Bautzen

- 26 July 2009, Bautzen Informal interview with S.D. (middle-aged German woman from Upper Lusatia)
- 28 July 2009, Cottbus Formal interview with Prof. Dähnert (on Vattenfall)
- 30 July 2009, Jänschwalde Informal interview with Frau Starek (Lower Sorbian, Jänschwalde Museum)
- July 2009, Bautzen Guided tour of Sorbian Museum, Bautzen

- 10 August 2009, Horno Informal interview with P.S. (middle-aged Lower Sorbian woman, Jänschwalde) and three generations of the family
- 12 August 2009, Horno Formal interview with Bernd Siegert (Mayor of Horno, from Lower Lusatia; now retired)
- 12 August 2009, Jänschwalde ... Guided tour, Wendisch-deutsches Heimatmuseum, Jänschwalde
- 12 August 2009, Horno Visit to Archive of Disappeared Places, Horno
- July/August 2009, Cottbus Semi-formal interview with Jurij Koch (Sorbian poet & author)
- July/August 2009, Cottbus Semi-formal interview with Werner Meškank (Cottbus Museum)
- 18 August 2009, Cottbus Formal interview with Gregor Wieczorek (Editor, Nowy Casnik)
- 18 August 2009, Cottbus Informal interview with P.P. (middle-aged Lower Sorbian man)
- 18 August 2009, Cottbus Informal interview with member of Łužica choir (middle-aged Lower Sorbian woman)
- 20 August 2009, Bautzen Informal interview with Sorbian Mittelschule Schulleiterin Bautzen
- 23 August 2009, Bautzen Informal interview with S.B. (early 20s Upper Sorbian woman)

18-23 October 2009..... Research trip to Cottbus

- 19-23 October 2009, Cottbus One-week Sorbian language course
- 22 October 2009, Lübbenau Informal interview with M.G. (young German-Sorbian man)
- 22 October 2009, Cottbus..... Interview with author given to RBB Radio (Sorbian-language programme. Interview given in English)

5 November 2009 Interview with author published in *Lausitzer Rundschau*¹

5 July-1 August 2010 Research trip to Cottbus and Bautzen

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7 July 2010, Bautzen Formal Interview with Raphael Schāfer [Rafael Wowcher]. He passed away on 12 July 2011, aged 60.

8-15 July 2010, Cottbus..... One-week Sorbian language course

21 July 2010, Cottbus..... Interview given by author to RBB Radio (German-language programme. Interview given in German)

26 July-13 Aug 2010, Cottbus .. Attended Sorbian Summer School

26 July-13 Aug 2010, Cottbus... Visited WITAJ Project Kindergarten, Sielow

26 July-13 Aug 2010, Bautzen.. Informal interview with D.S. and D.M. (hosts), daily

29 July 2010, Cottbus..... Informal interview with M.W. (middle-aged Polish-Sorb woman)

29 July 2010, Horno/Forst..... Informal interview with P.S. (middle-aged Lower Sorbian woman, Horno/Forst)

29 July 2010, Horno Informal interview with C.M. (middle-aged German man, Horno)

29 July 2010, Horno Informal interview with middle-aged German woman (Archive of Disappeared Places, Horno)

30 July 2010, Burg Informal interview with Horst Adam (former editor of *Nowy Casnik*)

30 July 2010, Cottbus..... Informal interview with civil servant in education ministry in Brandenburg

1 Klinkmüller M., 'Ein Engländer lernt Sorbisch: In Cottbus eine Woche lang die Schulbank gedrückt', *Lausitzer Rundschau* (5 November 2009)

- 1 August 2010, Dissen..... Guided tour, Sorbian Museum, Dissen
- 2 August 2010, Cottbus Informal interview with R.S. (Grüne Liga/Green League)
- 6 August 2010, Cottbus Guided tour, Sorbian Museum, Cottbus
- 6 August 2010, Cottbus Formal interview with Dr Madelena Norberg (WITAJ Project)
- 10 August 2010, Bautzen Museum visit, Sorbian Museum, Bautzen
- 12 August 2010, Jänschwalde ... Guided tour, Wendisch-deutsches Heimatmuseum, Jänschwalde
- 16 August 2010 Interview with author published in *Lausitzer Rundschau*²
- 23 August 2010, Bautzen Formal interview with Marko Suchy (Stiftung für das Sorbische Volk/Foundation for the Sorbian People)
- 24 August 2010, Dresden Informal interview (three Upper Sorbian Catholic men aged between 20-30)
- 24 August 2010 Attended Sorbian village festival in Upper Lusatia
- 25 August 2010, Bautzen Observed bilingual Sorbian lessons in secondary school
- 25 August 2010, Bautzen Taught Year 9 English lesson
- 26 August 2010, Bautzen Taught Year 13 English lesson
- 26 August 2010, Bautzen Informal interview with twelve Year 13 students (of whom all were women, and six were Sorbian)
- 26 August 2010, Bautzen Formal interview with Jewa-Marja Cornakec (former editor of *Rozhlad* periodical)
- 28 August 2010, Bautzen Formal interview with Jewa-Marja Cornakec (former editor of *Rozhlad* periodical)

2 Worlitz U., 'Niedersorbisch wird es schwer haben', *Lausitzer Rundschau* (16 August 2010)

- 27 August 2010, Bautzen Observed bilingual lessons at Sorbian
Mittelschule (History with Year 6, Biology with
Year 7)
- 28 August 2010, Bautzen Spent Polterabend with a mixed Sorbian-German
couple
- August 2010 Informal interview with P.D. (middle-aged
German man)

ABSTRACT

To what extent was German unification (1989-90) a turning point (*Wende*) for the Sorbian national minority? Although a majority of scholars and commentators understand the period as one of ‘revolution’, there are grounds to query how radical or widespread were the changes which the collapse of communism promised to bring. In the case of the Sorbs – a national minority in Germany which was persecuted under the National Socialist regime, which became a protected minority under the German Democratic Republic, and which remains a protected minority under the Federal Republic of Germany – many difficulties persist in the relationship between the Sorbs, the German government, and wider German society, as well as amongst the Sorbs themselves.

There have been extensive policy, legal, and constitutional changes since unification, but these have often led to similar outcomes as would have been expected under the GDR. The economy is one of the biggest challenges in the post-unification era, as the government and broader society seek to balance the legally recognised rights of national minorities with the economic interests of the state and society at large. This conflict is most evident in the continuation of brown coal mining in the Sorbian area of settlement, as well as in the privatisation of the GDR’s agricultural collectives after unification. Sorbian cultural institutions and organisations have remained relatively unreformed, which means that traditionalists have retained the upper hand in successive institutional debates. The case study of Horno, a village in south Brandenburg, illustrates these issues well, as it was destroyed in 2004 to make way for brown coal mining, and was the first village after unification to be relocated in this manner.

These factors lead to the conclusion that German unification was not quite the turning point that it is commonly believed to be, as in many areas of Sorbian life, the continuities seem to outweigh the changes.

DECLARATION

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PREFACE

I first encountered the Sorbs during the final year of my undergraduate degree in German and Linguistics at the University of Manchester. One of my classmates on the course ‘Language Endangerment and Death’ was from south Brandenburg, and they suggested that our group work on the Sorbian national minority for a poster assignment. Although I was aware of the Danish minorities, Frisians, and other linguistic minority groups in Germany, I had never heard of the Sorbs. I was surprised, given my previous ten years of German language study, to discover the existence of a Slavic-speaking minority native to eastern Germany. I began researching the Sorbs for my Master’s thesis in Modern European History, also at the University of Manchester and under the supervision of Prof. Stefan Berger.¹ This doctoral thesis is the result of focused research on the situation of the Sorbs in relation to the post-unification period in Germany. As well as considering a broad and multilingual base of scholarly material, I learned Sorbian language to a basic level, and conducted extensive fieldwork and interviews in the Sorbian area of settlement.

I am grateful for the supervisory guidance of Prof. Stefan Berger, Dr Ewa Ochman, Prof. Stuart Jones, Prof. Matthew Jefferies; for the work and advice of existing scholars of the Sorbian national minority and its language; for the contributions of the many Sorbian people and officials who agreed to be interviewed for this project; for the hospitality of those who accommodated my visits to Lusatia; to the staff of the Jänschwalde Heimat Museum; to the staff and students at the Lower Sorbian language schools in 2010 and 2011; to the staff of

1 Cunningham S., ‘Wenden und die Wende: The Political and Economic Impact of the Transition from the German Democratic Republic to the Federal Republic of Germany upon Sorbian national identity.’ (University of Manchester, School of Arts, Histories and Cultures, 2008. Unpublished MA Thesis).

Sam's Bar; to the Sorbian Institute; to Jon Morgan, Nick Wilshere, and Andrew Wilshere for assistance with copyediting and preparation of the manuscript; to my colleagues and students at the University of Manchester; and to my friends and family, who have supported the progress of this research, each of whom now knows more about the Sorbs than they ever dreamed possible...

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I consider the question: to what extent was German unification (1989-90) a turning point (*Wende*) for the Sorbian national minority? Many have written about the German unification period in the past two decades, and many scholars have either reached the conclusion, or worked on the assumption, that the fall of the Berlin Wall and subsequent events constitute a ‘revolution’. While I do not attempt in this thesis to address directly any of the theoretical disagreements about what ‘revolution’ is,¹ I will undertake a more limited inquiry into how this narrative of radical change compares to evidence of the position of the Sorbian minority before and after German unification. Future research may present the opportunity to consider more deeply how this evidence might contribute to our understanding of the period of German unification in particular, and the question of revolution in general.²

In this opening chapter, I will first briefly introduce the Sorbs (1.2), explain my methodology and theoretical framework (1.3), and examine a range of existing

1 See Foran J. (ed.), *Theorizing Revolutions* (London: Routledge, 1997).

2 As Andrew Port wrote in a book review of Kowalczyk’s *Endspiel*: ‘Calling the events of 1989/90 a ‘popular revolution’ appears to have become a consensus among historians these days. The key puzzle that future generations of historians may wish to tackle is the extent to which 1989/90 really was the turning point that the anniversary literature has made it out to be, and to what extent we may have to revisit continuities and caesuras in twentieth-century German and European history.’ Port A.I., ‘Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel: Die Revolution von 1989 in der DDR* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2009)’ Review article. *German History* 29/2 (2011) pp. 351-354. See also Nehring H., ‘Wir sind das Volk! Wir sind ein Volk! Geschichte der deutschen Wiedervereinigung Deutschland einig Vaterland. Die Geschichte der Wiedervereinigung’. Review article. *German History* 29/2 (2011), pp. 356-360 at p. 360.

scholarly literature and primary evidence (1.4). Following this introduction, I will present and analyse a brief history of the Sorbs (chapter two), discuss the political and legal changes during the unification period (chapter three), examine the economic situation before and after unification (chapter four), and consider evidence drawn from Sorbian cultural, religious, and folk practice (chapter five). To illustrate and test the arguments presented in these chapters, I will also present a case study based on primary research (chapter six), in which I look at the impact of these historical, political, legal, economic, and cultural factors upon the life of a small Lower Lusatian village, Horno (Rogow in Sorbian).

Finally, in chapter seven, I argue that the evidence I present suggests a number of key conclusions in respect of the research question set out above. I conclude that there is more continuity than change in the Sorbian situation post-unification; that there are clear divisions between the Sorbian elite and the general Sorbian population; that under both the GDR and the FRD there is a marked contrast between policy and practice; and that both a narrative of disempowerment, and a certain kind of hegemony, are demonstrated by the evidence I present. Overall, the relatively small changes to the constitution both of Sorbian domestic social and political life, and to political representation and treatment by state and national governments, poses a challenge to the dominant narrative of the 1989-90 unification period as a revolution or turning point, at least in the life of the Sorbs.

1.2 INTRODUCING THE SORBS

The Sorbs, or Wends, are one of four federally recognised ‘national minorities’³ in present-day Germany.⁴ The Sorbs are predominantly to be found in the east of

3 The German government uses the term ‘national minority’, which it defines as those: 1. who possess German citizenship; 2. who have a different language, culture, and/or history from the majority, and/or a different identity; 3. who wish to preserve this separate identity; 4. who are indigenous; and 5. who live within their traditional area of settlement. See Deutscher Bundestag, ‘Antwort der Bundesregierung: auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Ulla Jelpke und der Fraktion der PDS: Drucksache 14/4006’ (Deutscher Bundestag, 2000).

Germany, in a region known as Lusatia (*Lausitz* in German, *Łužica* in Upper Sorbian and *Łužyca* in Lower Sorbian).⁵ Located to the south-east of Berlin and to the north-east of Dresden, the region is only loosely defined: it has no clear natural boundaries, nor any established political borders.

1.2.1 UPPER AND LOWER SORBS

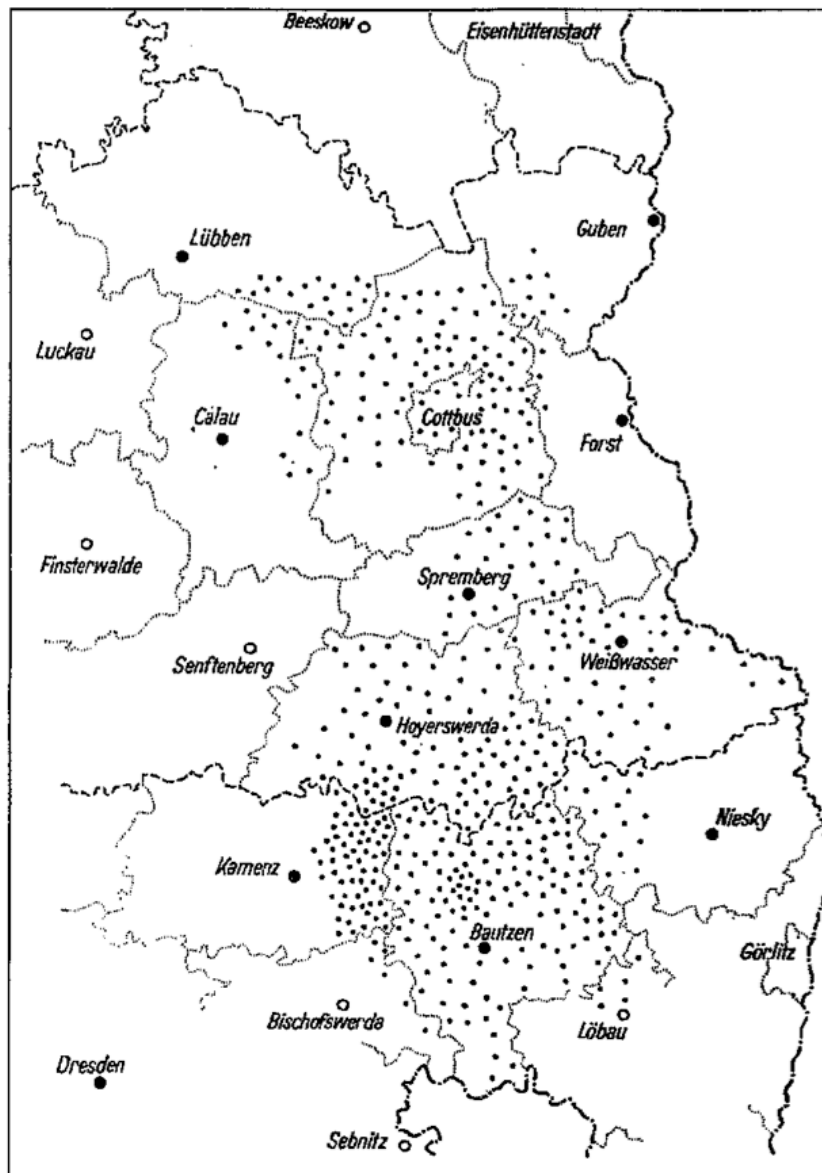
Lusatia consists of both Upper and Lower Lusatia, which roughly correspond to the cultural and linguistic division between Upper and Lower Sorbs, and between the two codified forms of Sorbian language, Upper and Lower Sorbian. It is worth noting that the terms ‘Upper’ and ‘Lower’ do not relate to geographical latitude, but rather to topography. The Upper Sorbian area is further south than the Lower Sorbian area. These names also indicate how long the Sorbs have inhabited the region – certainly, long before it became common to understand geography primarily by analogy with maps.

As well as spanning two federal states and being relatively isolated from one another, the landscapes of the Upper and Lower Sorbian areas are also quite different. The Lower Sorbian area is very flat, consisting of large areas of marshland; whereas the Upper Sorbian area is hillier, and higher in altitude. The most crucial physical distinction, however, is the fact that the lower-lying Lower Sorbian areas are rich in brown coal deposits. This natural resource is largely absent from the higher ground, especially around those areas where significant Sorbian populations continue to dwell.

Available at <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/14/040/1404045.pdf>. Accessed on 30 December 2012.

4 *Bundesministerium des Innern Nationale Minderheiten in Deutschland* (Berlin, 3rd edition, 2011), p. 3.

5 Scholze D., *The Sorbs in Germany* (Bautzen: Stiftung für das sorbische Volk, 3rd edition, 2000), p. 5.



Map of the German-Sorbian area after 1952

..... District (Kreis) boundaries • Communities with a Sorbian population
 ---- Regional (Bezirk) boundary

There is no clear linguistic and administrative boundary between Upper and Lower Lusatia, but Lower Lusatia lies to the north of Weißwasser and Spremberg.

Figure 1. Map of the German-Sorbian area after 1952.
 Source: Barker P., *Slavs in Germany*, 10.

The Lower Sorbian area consists of a collection of villages around the south Brandenburg city of Cottbus (*Chóšebuz* in Sorbian). Around five per cent of the population here is Sorbian. From Cottbus, the river Spree flows south through a traditionally Sorbian area containing various other small settlements, and eventually reaches the town of Spremberg. South of Spremberg, the Spree crosses into the state of Saxony and traverses the Upper Sorbian area – a similar small, rural community centred around the region’s largest town, Bautzen (*Budyšin* in Sorbian) which has a Sorbian constituency of around five per cent. Aside from the meandering path charted by the river, however, little else links Cottbus and Bautzen: for instance, there has never been a direct rail service, and there are currently no motorways connecting the two Sorbian centres.⁶ There is no significant trade between the cities, and little by way of shared enterprise in any field.⁷

1.2.2 ETHNICITY, LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

In keeping with the existing body of English language scholarship on the topic, I will be using the general term Sorb(s) to identify the people of these communities. It is, however, important to note that this is not the term used by all of the Sorbian people. First, the Upper Sorbs use the term *Serbjja*, whereas the Lower Sorbs use

6 Sorbische Volksversammlung, ‘Standpunkt der Sorbischen Volksversammlung zur territorialen Neuordnung der Länder’, *Nowa Doba* (24 February 1990). See Kasper M., *Die Lausitzer Sorben in der Wende 1989/1990: Ein Abriss mit Dokumenten und einer Chronik* (Bautzen: Domowina Verlag, 2000), p. 248. There are two B-roads: B97 and B156. (B-roads are the equivalent of British A-roads).

7 In the course of fieldwork I discussed the issue of trading patterns and shared enterprise with local Sorbs in both Cottbus and Bautzen, but I am unaware of any official statistics on the topic.

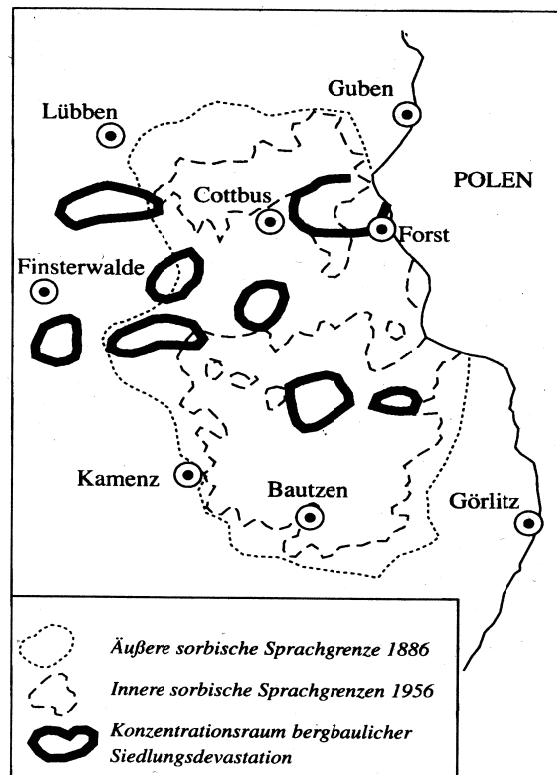


Figure 2. Konzentrationsräume bergbaulicher Siedlungsdevastation.

Translation of legend: 'Limits of Sorbian speech area 1886; Limits of Sorbian speech area 1956; Concentrated areas of brown coal destruction of villages' Source: Förster F., *Verschundene Dörfer: Die Ortsabbrüche des Lausitzer Braunkohlenreviers bis 1993* (Bautzen 1996), p. 21. Reproduced in Pech E. & Scholze D. (eds), *Zwischen Zwang und Beistand* (Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 2003), p. 122.

the term *Serby*.⁸ These should not be confused with the Serbs or Serbia, as there is minimal evidence of any linguistic, cultural or historical links between the two.⁹ Second, the term *Wend* (plural *Wenden*) is also in use, and was more commonly used by Germans prior to the Second World War. However, the term refers not

8 For further details of this debate, see Barker P., *Slavs in Germany: The Sorbian Minority and the German State since 1945* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000) pp. 13-15; Barker P., 'Wends, Serbs or Sorbs? The British Foreign Office and the Sorbs of Lusatia (1942-47)', *German Life and Letters*, 48/3 (1995) pp. 362-370; Stone G., *The Smallest Slavonic Nation: The Sorbs of Lusatia* (London: Athlone Press, 1972), pp. 3-5.

9 Herrmann J. (ed.) *Die Slawen in Deutschland* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985), p. 12.

only to Sorbs, but also to members of any West Slavonic tribe.¹⁰ Moreover, the manner in which the term was used by the National Socialist regime in Germany during the 1930s and 1940s means that it now has the potential to convey a racial slur.¹¹ Despite this, many Lower Sorbs have reappropriated the term *Wend* and use it as a mark of differentiation between themselves and Upper Sorbs.¹²

The Sorbs are regarded as one of the last surviving Slavonic tribes which once populated much of present day Germany (as far north as Rostock)¹³ until the advance of Germanic tribes during the Middle Ages.¹⁴ They do not form part of any larger ethnic or political group, and have no homeland outside of the current German borders.¹⁵ Sorbian, the language of the Sorbs, is not a Germanic language

10 The term *Wend* was derived from the word used by Roman historians for people hailing from the region between the Carpathian mountains and the Baltic Sea. See Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 14. See also Herrmann, *Die Slawen in Deutschland*, p. 43; Blaschke K., 'History of the Sorbs' in *The Sorbs of Germany* (Bautzen: Stiftung für das sorbische Volk, 3rd edition, 2000), p. 10; Barker P., 'Images of dominance and submission in German-Sorbian cultural relations' in Fischer-Seidel T. & Brown C.C., *Cultural Negotiations: Sichtweisen des Anderen* (Tübingen & Basel: A. Franke Verlag, 1998), p. 52; Malone K., 'The name of the Wends' in *Modern Language Notes*, 62/8 (John Hopkins Press, 1947), pp. 556-557.

11 Barker, 'Wends, Serbs or Sorbs?', p. 365, n. 15.

12 See Adam H., 'Sorben oder Wenden?' in *Die Sorben in der Niederlausitz*, information brochure (Bautzen: Domowina Verlag, n.d., c. 1994), pp. 4-5; Norberg M., *Sprachwechselprozeß in der Niederlausitz* (Uppsala: Gotab, 1996), pp. 28-29; Kossatz A., 'Die Sorben (Wenden) – kulturelle Identität einer Minderheit' in Fornet-Betancourt R., (ed.) *Dokumentation des VI Internationalen Kongresses für Interkulturelle Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: IKO Verlag, 2006) pp. 221-225; Karg D. and Schopper F., (eds) *Horno: zur Kulturgeschichte eines Niederlausitzer Dorfes* (Wünsdorf: Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege 2006), p. 392.

13 Rostock comes from the Slavic roz-tok, meaning 'spreading river'. See Šolćina J. & Wornar E., *Obersorbisch im Selbststudium* (Bautzen: Domowina Verlag, 2000), p. 10.

14 Bensch A., *Sorben Serbja: Ein kleines Lexikon* (Bautzen: VEB Domowina Verlag, 1989) pp. 10-11; Šolćina & Wornar, *Obersorbisch*, p. 11; Šurman M., 'Einiges zur Geschichte der Sorben/Wenden' in *Die Sorben in der Niederlausitz* (Bautzen: Domowina Verlag, n.d., c. 1994), pp. 1-2; and Gołabek J., 'Sorb-Lusatian Literature: A Survey' in *The Slavonic and East European Review* 19/53 (1940), p. 276.

15 Oshlies W., *Die Sorben – Slawisches Volk im Osten Deutschlands* (Bonn: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1991), p. 4; and Linseth M. & Soldan A., 'The Sorbian population before and after German Reunification' in *Debatte: Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 8/2 (London: Routledge 2000), p. 149; and Kossatz A., 'Die Sorben (Wenden) – kulturelle Identität einer Minderheit' in Fornet-Betancourt R., ed. *Dokumentation des VI Internationalen Kongresses für Interkulturelle Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: IKO Verlag,

but a member of the west Slavonic branch of Slavic languages and is related to Czech and Polish.¹⁶ The language has two standard, codified forms:¹⁷ Upper Sorbian and Lower Sorbian, which are significantly different.¹⁸ The extent to which they are mutually comprehensible, however, depends on the specific interlocutors, as there is a continuum of spoken linguistic practice which is at variance with these standardised forms of Upper or Lower Sorbian; this variation is such that an Upper Sorb may have no knowledge of Lower Sorbian. During this thesis, except where it is relevant to make these distinctions, I will refer collectively to this continuum of language practice as ‘Sorbian language’.

1.2.3 CONSTITUTION OF THE SORBIAN POPULATION

Since unification, it has been officially claimed that the Sorbs number around 60,000.¹⁹ That is to say that 60,000 people profess some Sorbian language ability, or identify themselves as being of Sorbian ethnicity or descent.²⁰ The Upper Sorbs officially number 40,000. Since unification, Upper Sorbs have been based in the state of Saxony, in an area between the towns of Hoyerswerda, Kamenz and Bautzen.²¹ It is in the area surrounding Bautzen that the majority of the Sorbs’ 15,000 Catholics live. The Lower Sorbs, based in Brandenburg, account for the

2006), pp. 221-225 at p. 225

16 Norberg, *Sprachwechselprozeß*, p. 13

17 Bensch, *Sorben Serbja*, p. 18; and Šolćina & Wornar, *Obersorbisch im Selbststudium*, p. 10

18 Steenwijk H., ‘Wendisch–Sorbisch: sprachliches Begriffspaar oder Ausdruck sozialer Gegensätze’ in *Der Niedersochen Wendisch* (Bautzen: Domowina Verlag, 2003), p. 12; Foy T. & Thiele C., ‘The legal status of the Sorbian minority in the Federal Republic of Germany’, *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 4 (1997), pp. 41-71 at p. 43; and Barker P., ‘Die Neue deutsche Literatur der Slawischen Sorben: On the development of a Sorbian literature in German after 1945’, *German Life and Letters*, 47/3 (1994) p. 254-266 at p. 255

19 *Bundesministerium des Innern Nationale Minderheiten in Deutschland*, p. 31; Šurman M., ‘Einiges zur Geschichte der Sorben/Wenden’ in *Die Sorben in der Niederlausitz*, information brochure (Bautzen: Domowina Verlag, undated, c. 1994), p. 2

20 Barker, ‘Die Neue deutsche Literatur’, pp. 254-255

21 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 21.

remaining 20,000.²² However, the figure of 60,000 is problematic, not least because it has not been updated for over twenty years.²³ Peter Barker examines the difficulty of producing reliable population statistics early on in his book *Slavs in Germany*, which I shall discuss shortly.²⁴ There are two specific reasons for the lack of new data on the Sorbian population. The first is that the government of the GDR chose to suppress Sorbian population statistics from a demographic survey conducted in 1955/6 by Ernst Tschernik. Since the Second World War the government of West Germany – and now the unified government of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) – neither requests nor collects data on ethnicity and race, for the understandable historical reasons of events during the Third Reich.²⁵ The communist government of East Germany also had political reasons for not accurately documenting the size of the Sorbian population. In addition to the current legal obstacles to an accurate survey of the Sorbian population, the established Sorbian elite are also not inclined to conduct any large-scale population survey, the results of which may demonstrate a drop in the number of Sorbian speakers.²⁶ An official decline would, amongst other things, make budget

22 Ladusch M., ‘Was zählt zum sorbischen Siedlungsgebiet?’ in *Die Sorben in Deutschland* (Bautzen: Stiftung für das sorbische Volk, 2009), p. 7.

23 Karg D. & Schopper F., (eds) *Horno: zur Kulturgeschichte eines Niederlausitzer Dorfes* (Wünsdorf: Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, 2006), p. 391; and Michalk F., *Die Sorben – ein slawisches Volk in Deutschland: Eine historische und minderheitenschutzrechtliche Betrachtung in Junge Wissenschaft* 9 (Munich: Vögel, 2002) p. 11; and an unpublished written response by Ludwig Elle to the question of Sorbian population statistics posed by Mathias Vogt (Bautzen 2009). Correspondence in author’s possession. See also Linseth & Soldan, ‘The Sorbian population’, p. 155. Koschmal gives a figure of 30,000-40,000. See Koschmal W., ‘“Globalisierung” als kulturelles Phänomen (am Beispiel der Sorben)’, *Forost* 11 (2003), pp. 75-98 at p. 76.

24 Barker P., *Slavs in Germany*, pp. 20-21.

25 *Bundesministerium des Innern: Comments by the FRG on the 2nd Opinion on Germany by the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (Berlin: 2006), p. 11.

26 Norberg, *Sprachwechselprozeß*, p. 26; and a speech by Nuk J. in *Dokumentation anlässlich der Jubiläumsveranstaltung am 8. November 2007* (Cottbus: Sorbian Institut, 2007), p. 9; and Budarjowa L. *Witaj und 2plus: Eine Herausforderung für die Zukunft* (Bautzen: Sorbischer Schulverein e.V., 2009); and Grós J., *Staatsangehörigkeit: Deutsch, Nationalität: Sorbe* (Schkeuditz: GNN Verlag, 2004), pp. 87-88; and Marti R. ‘(Nje)psijašelne wobjmješa: položenje serbšćiny a dolnoserbškeje rěcy’ in A.D. Dulichenko & S. Gustavsson (eds), *Slavic*

negotiations for Sorbian institutions with the federal and state governments more difficult. Such state subsidy of Sorbian institutions is, however, written in to protocol note 14 attached to article 35 of the unification treaty signed between the governments of East and West Germany. This states that support for Sorbian institutions is never to fall below the level provided in the GDR.²⁷ In 2011 the subsidy was over €16 million.²⁸

1.2.4 THE SORBS IN A EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Before examining the specific situation of the Sorbian minority more closely, a discussion of other European minorities will be instructive. Considering this context will make plain how changes in economic, legal, political and cultural context can impact on minorities, as well as how minorities can effect changes upon such institutions. I shall first give a brief overview of the legal changes internationally after 1990, and then set out some of the experiences of specific European national minorities during this period.

Since the collapse of communism in eastern Europe in the early 1990s, and the subsequent accession to the European Union of many of these newly formed nation-states, an assumption has prevailed that both minority rights and the situation of minorities in general have been on an upward trajectory to match the level of discussion. The view that minority rights and the prestige of minority languages across Europe have been improving in the past two decades is not without foundation, but what European minorities have in common should be

Literary Microlanguages and Language Contacts, Slavica tartuensia VII (Tartu, 2006), p. 112; and Marti R. 'Voprosy kodifikatsii i reformy pravopisaniia v mikroiazykakh (na primere nizhneluzhitskogo iazyka)' in A.D. Dulichenko (ed.), *Slavic Linguistics: Leaving the XX Century*, Slavica tartuensia VIII (Tartu: 2008), p. 172.

27 Bundesministerium der Justiz, 'Vertrag zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik über die Herstellung der Einheit Deutschlands'. Cached version available at <http://web.archive.org/web/20100103071302/http://bundesrecht.juris.de/einigvtr/>. Accessed on 1 January 2013.

28 Šimanowa & Schiemann M. (eds), *Jahresbericht 2007–2009* (Bautzen: Foundation for the Sorbian people, 2004), pp. 20-21.

considered alongside the particular opportunities and challenges facing each minority community.

The collapse of communist regimes throughout Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s was a key moment in terms of minority rights and their codification into national and international laws.²⁹ It is no coincidence that so many international laws were instituted at this time explicitly to protect national minorities: the geopolitical reality of the early 1990s gave many national minorities the chance to voice complaints about their government that had long been suppressed or stifled. Many of these concerns were shared with the majority population. For the first time since the end of the Second World War and the continent's division into eastern and western blocs, minorities saw an opportunity to gain greater political, economic, and cultural control over their own lives. The extension of these western liberal ideals, not merely to nation-states but also to minorities living within them, caused a significant degree of alarm throughout Europe.³⁰ One fear was that a period of potentially deadly collapse in territorial integrity would ensue, with populations of historically mixed ethnic groups each wishing to carve out their own homogenous state or region.

The 1990s saw an unprecedented response to minorities from large multinational organisations.³¹ In November 1992, the Council of Europe adopted the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The Charter sought to provide greater international oversight and protection for traditional languages in territories where they did not form the majority or official national language. Germany ratified this Charter in respect of the Sorbs (amongst others) in 1998. In December 1992, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to

29 Gottlieb G., *Nation Against State: New Approaches to Ethnic Conflict and the Decline of Sovereignty* (New York: Council of Foreign Relations, 1993), pp. 48-88; Moynihan D.P., *Pandaemonium, Ethnicity in International Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 143-171.

30 Preece J.J., 'National minorities and the International system', *Politics* 1 (1998), p. 18.

31 Preece J.J., 'National minority rights enforcement in Europe: a difficult balancing Act', *The International Journal of Peace Studies* 3/2 (1998), p. 27.

National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities came into effect. The Declaration asserted for the first time the responsibilities of states to protect and encourage their own ‘national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic minorities’.³²

In 2000, further legal rights were granted to national minorities within Europe by the Charter on Fundamental Right of the European Union. This specifically mentions the prohibition of discrimination based on, amongst other factors, ‘membership of a national minority’ under Article 21.³³ This became a core part of EU legislation with the ratification of the Lisbon treaty in 2009. Having outlined the important legal changes since 1990, I now consider the experience of other national minorities in Europe: in Spain, the Basque and the Catalan, and the Danish minority in Schleswig-Holstein. This brings to light both similarities and differences with the situation of the Sorbs.

While each national minority of course has its own unique situation, amongst the clearest illustrations of just how different the experience of a national minority can be, given different national and institutional circumstances, are the Spanish national minorities, in particular the Basque and the Catalan. The Spanish national minorities, like the Sorbs, suffered under dictatorial regimes which often directly or indirectly sought to suppress them and their languages. Also in keeping with the Sorbs, Basque and Catalan identities are strongly associated with language use alongside ethnicity.

The Basque situation is very different to that of the Sorbs in Germany. The Basque are both a linguistic and an ethnic minority, and were severely repressed during Franco’s reign. The Sorbs, by contrast, enjoyed privileged minority status under the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The Basques have also sought to

32 ‘United Nations Guide for Minorities’, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at <http://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/minorities/pages/minoritiesguide.aspx>. Accessed on 4 September 2013.

33 ‘EU Charter of Fundamental Rights’. European Commission. Available at <http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/charter/>. Accessed on 4 September 2013.

collect population statistics, and to use them to further their cause through the apparatus of state bureaucracy. These attempts to further the Basque cause, however, do not represent simply a struggle between a minority and a ruling majority. The struggle itself plays an important part in defining and delimiting the Basque identity. As Urla indicates,

As part of a modern regime of truth that equates knowledge with measurement, statistics occupy a privileged position of authority that gives them heightened rhetorical power in a context of competing political ideologies.³⁴

In the case of the Basque, this led many organisations keen on the revitalisation of language to use statistics to demonstrate the danger under which the language was perceived to be: a decline both in Basque speakers, and the situations in which Basque could be spoken. Before 1979, and Basque autonomy, there were estimates of speaker numbers but no official statistics – the same situation as persists today in the case of the Sorbs. Two investigations were undertaken, one by the Basque government, and the other by a pro-nationalist research organisation. Each claimed, through their use of statistics, to have achieved an objective study of the linguistic situation, free from cultural and political influence. However, the reality of the situation is at a far remove from the objectivity claimed by the statistics. For Urla, it is not the accuracy of the statistics that is her main concern, but the effects of a shared belief in the objectivity of numbers, and the power of measurement to reveal the ‘truth’. The use of categorisation is also prevalent, especially to establish not just types of Basque speaker, but also degrees of language skill and language behaviour. This use of statistics is broadly similar in the case of the Catalan minority.

The appropriation of the apparatus of the state for the collection of linguistic data was made much simpler for these two Spanish minorities in that they had their

34 Urla J., ‘Cultural politics in an age of statistics: numbers, nations, and the making of Basque identity’, *American Ethnologist*, 20/4 (1993), pp. 818-843.

own separate administrative regions which contained almost all of their members. The same cannot be said of the Sorbs. In Spain, the collection of data – as well as the use of that data by local government – helped to raise the social profile, prestige, and desirability of these minority languages. Thus their speakers could also see the political and economic importance of the languages. Again, with no separate Sorbian administration to push for such changes across a single region, it has been harder to change the prestige of Sorbian amongst both German and Sorbian communities. The numerical size of minorities, though, is also a factor in this: where the Basque and Catalan minorities have millions of native speakers, the Sorbs number only tens of thousands.

The Danish minority in Schleswig-Holstein is another of Germany's four federally recognised national minorities. It has also come to be seen as something of a lodestar of minority recognition for the Sorbs. This is in no small part due to the federal political and legal framework which they share; but there are also some significant differences between the two minorities' circumstances and attitudes. Unlike the Sorbs, the Danish minority in Schleswig-Holstein do have a *Mutterstaat* (literally 'mother state'), which provides financial and other support directly to the Danish minority. Politically and economically, this places the Danish minority in a much stronger position than the Sorbs. Furthermore, the Danish minority's main political party – the South Schleswig Voter Federation (SSW), which sits in the state parliament – is exempted from the five per cent vote threshold. This ensures that it is always directly represented in parliament.

The Danish minority is also smaller than the Spanish minorities discussed above, numbering about 50,000. In keeping with the Sorbian situation, though, the German government collects no official statistics on ethnicity.³⁵ Due to economic opportunities to use the language, however, its social prestige has increased. In the Danish case, the fact that there is a standard Danish language with an established orthography and vocabulary makes it easier to integrate into the existing

35 This point was discussed above. See in this volume, p. 25.

education system. It also means that there is a wealth of language material available, whereas in the case of the Sorbs each school textbook is created almost from scratch in either Upper or Lower Sorbian.

To place these minorities in a chronological context, it is important also to note that other minorities discussed here escaped from state repression at different times. The Sorbs are amongst the most recent to escape. The Spanish minorities entered a democratic system in 1979, as did the Danish minority in 1945. These more distant memories of state repression also play their part in accounting for the current situation of these different minorities. The memories of repression, both personal and collective, are not abstract points but continue to bear on contemporary decision-making. My methodology of field research, which I explain in the next section, is informed above all by these memories of repression, and the suspicions that accompany them.

1.3 METHODOLOGY AND TERMINOLOGY OF THE THESIS

1.3.1 METHODOLOGY

While conducting the research for this thesis, I used a number of approaches to gather and analyse historical evidence. My techniques included both conventional critical historical work with primary and secondary sources, as well as gathering primary evidence and conducting interviews through fieldwork and research trips. The purpose of this fieldwork was not only to identify important primary documents, but also to obtain oral testimony from a range of Sorbs and to understand how the post-unification period and Sorbian identity is understood and represented in ordinary life.

While this methodology remains decidedly historical, it involves using techniques of ethnographic and anthropological research alongside traditional historians' tools, such as archival research and written sources. Using a methodology with

quasi-ethnographic elements creates other hazards. Towards the end of *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, Mary Fulbrook identifies the difficulty of studying very recent, or even contemporary, events:³⁶

The GDR is not merely an academic stamping ground for the testing of social and political theories. Real people lived in the really existing GDR. [...] Given the politically sensitive nature of all contemporary history, explanation and evaluation can easily develop into retribution, recrimination or self-justification.³⁷

Questions concerning the history of the GDR are still acutely sensitive to many. This sensitivity is likely to be exacerbated in the case of the Sorbian minority, given its long and difficult relationship with successive German governments and with the majority German population. Fulbrook explains her view of the historian's task in such a situation:

It is nevertheless the task of the historian – however personally sympathetic to one cause or another, however hostile to the views or activities of others in the drama – to take a step back and seek to present a sober analysis of all the relevant factors as they are captured in the particular net of categories and concepts.³⁸

1.3.2 ORAL HISTORY AND FIELDWORK

One of the key methodological considerations for this project was the existing body of work undertaken within the field of oral history. Oral history itself has seen a sustained renaissance since the 1960s, often intersecting with other historical movements such as 'history from below', and *Alltagsgeschichte* (literally 'everyday history'). Although oral history is often seen as something of a new development in historical scholarship, it is more appropriately viewed as a re-evaluation of techniques which were common in history before written sources

36 Fulbrook M., *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, New edition, 1997, pp. 286-289.

37 Fulbrook, *Dictatorship*, p. 286.

38 Fulbrook, *Dictatorship*, p. 288.

came to dominate western ideas of historical evidence, from the late nineteenth century onwards.³⁹

The use of oral history was important to this research project for a number of reasons. One of the greatest strengths of oral history, by its very nature, is that it does not rely solely on written and published records. This is especially significant in the case of the Sorbs, as they are a small and diverse ethnic minority whose written materials have generally emanated from, and been authorized by, an even smaller group of well-educated and literate Sorbs. Furthermore, owing to this very fact, there is little diversity of opinion, or of historical record, to be found amongst extant written materials. Additionally, the period of history that I am investigating is one that is relatively recent, and many Sorbs living in the region today have direct and personal experiences of the events that I document and analyse in this thesis. In this context, the use of oral history is key to reflecting the experiences of the wider Sorbian population. There are, however, significant theoretical and practical issues to be overcome when using oral testimony.

This approach makes my research vulnerable to some of the problems, which were experienced by those working in related disciplines: in particular, the insider/outsider problem in anthropology and ethnography.⁴⁰ To put it simply, as an outsider, the researcher can never directly achieve the perspective of an insider in the society they study. This is both because of the extent to which the researcher brings their own body of cultural and intellectual assumptions to their interpretation of what they study; and, conversely, because outsiders are likely to be unable to understand as an insider would the assumptions which make up the standpoint of the persons being studied. However, it is also important to

39 Thomson A., 'Four paradigm transformations in Oral History', *The Oral History Review*, 34/1 (2007), p. 52.

40 Harris M., 'History and Significance of the Emic/Etic Distinction' in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 5 (1976), pp. 329-350; Headland T.N., Pike K & Harris M. (eds), *Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate* (Sage, 1990).

remember the advantages of the researcher's outsider status: for the purposes of this thesis, being at a certain remove from the Sorbian situation may ultimately help me to make more impartial judgements about the core research question of this thesis.

It is also important to note that the insider/outsider problem is one of degrees. The sociologist Nancy Naples addresses this very issue:

The bipolar construction of insider/outsider also sets up a false separation that neglects the interactive processes through which 'insiderness' and 'outsiderness' are constructed. 'Outsiderness' and 'insiderness' are not fixed static positions, rather they are ever-shifting and permeable social locations that are differentially experienced and expressed by community members.⁴¹

In the same chapter, Naples discusses the ability to use her own "'outsiderness' [...] to acquire an 'insider' perspective".⁴² This feature is something which became immediately apparent as soon as I began my fieldwork. On first meeting potential interviewees, especially those where I was not introduced by an 'insider', there was a significant degree of scepticism, apprehension, and even suspicion as to my purpose and identity. The assumptions made about the project and myself were evident on several occasions when I was asked which part of Germany I was from (the underlying assumption being most likely somewhere in West Germany due to the variety of German I spoke). When I revealed that I was, in fact, from England, and had no connections with Germany, the conversational and social dynamic changed dramatically. Not only did interlocutors tend to become more physically relaxed – often starting to smile – but the reaction was often vocalised too. The palpable relief of many that I was a very 'outside' outsider resulted in being given a degree of insider status, in that interviewees became less guarded in their remarks on more controversial topics, such as those concerning life in the GDR, and their personal feelings towards Sorbian identity.

41 Naples N., 'The Outsider Phenomenon', Smith C.D. & Kornblum W. (eds), *In the field: Readings on the field research experience* (New York, Praeger 1996), p. 140.

42 Naples, 'Outsider', p. 141.

The expectations of how much I would know about the local situation were also therefore set very low. This proved to be useful, as it meant that when I did display even very limited insider knowledge it helped me to consolidate these newly formed social connections. For example, on one occasion I was invited over to an interviewee's house for lunch; as soon as I entered the house, I was greeted by a large dog. I asked if he was named after one of the characters from a Sorbian-inspired novel which is well known throughout Germany. The interviewee was surprised that, as an outsider, I would make that connection. The interviewee went on to remark how she often had to explain the name to Germans as they were unaware of its origin.

Further to this, it is not only those from outside the country who can be perceived as outsiders. The difficulties of the dynamic between potential West German researchers and East German interviews with regard to the topic of the GDR is well known, and is discussed at length from a practical point of view by Barbara Schier in her study of an East German village's experiences of the GDR:

Her methodological recommendation to structure interviews in such a way so that 'it most approaches a natural conversational situation, without simultaneously resorting to the rules of everyday conversation' was not possible, as there were not only the usual differences in status found in interviews but additionally there were the West/East differences.⁴³

She continues to document how difficult it can sometimes be to gain people's trust, especially in small communities. This can be exacerbated when an outsider conducts research, as outsiders typically have little or no prior knowledge of the personal histories of those being interviewed. Even something as simple as selecting an interview partner can lead others to make assumptions about the interviewer and their 'true role'.

43 Schier B., *Alltagsleben Im 'Sozialistischen Dorf', Merxleben Und Seine Lpg Im Spannungsfeld Der Sed-Agrarpolitik* (New York, Munich & Berlin: Munich University Press, 2001).

This suspicion of a researcher's intentions is compounded when dealing with a national minority such as the Sorbs, on account of their low social prestige, and given their history of repression. This also became clear during my fieldwork: even discovering whether or not someone was Sorbian, or whether they had any Sorbian connections, to be difficult at times. On several occasions it was only after several conversations with the same individual that they would acknowledge their Sorbian identity, or the fact that they had a Sorbian mother, father, or grandparent. This was in spite of extensive explanations on my part about the nature and scope of the project.

The principal technique for obtaining oral history is the use of interviews and oral testimony. This particular aspect of my research proved to be one of the most difficult, as it involved striking a balance between gathering quality evidence about a contemporary national minority with principles of research ethics. However, the methodological decisions outlined here were carefully considered, and tailored to the Sorbian situation.

Thomson notes that oral historians 'rarely anonymize interviewees'.⁴⁴ This is in contrast to research conducted by social scientists. The issue of anonymity is important in my study, but it also demonstrates the dissonance between research ethics guidelines and the demands of real-world historical research. Van den Hoonaard considers that the importance placed on anonymity can be traced back to the predominance of quantitative research methods, where anonymising data 'is one of the most doable ethical procedures.'⁴⁵ However, he goes on to show how when conducting qualitative research in small communities – especially non-urban environments – the anonymity that the researcher can provide is 'truly a figment of one's imagination, unless the research is conducted in a covert manner'.⁴⁶ He expands:

44 Thomson, 'Four paradigm transformations', p. 57.

45 van den Hoonaard W.C., 'Is anonymity an artifact in ethnographic research?', *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 1/2 (2003), p.141.

46 van den Hoonaard, 'Is anonymity an artifact', p.142.

I might even paint myself into a corner if it were not for the point that the saddle of ethics rests upon the researcher (and even on research participants), rather than a formulaic statement about the need for anonymity.⁴⁷

Furthermore, he notes that the use of interviews to glean information has increased, as has the use of audio recording and transcription. He raises the important point that the decision to record interviews and transcribe them is not without its own ethical concerns. For example, with regard to the issue of preserving anonymity, even notes and transcripts without a name offer ‘sufficient detail to make participants identifiable’. This was a particular concern of mine when discussing controversial topics during interviews, as by the very nature of the narrative interviews that I undertook, it would have been quite easy for someone within the community to identify the speaker.

My decision not to record or transcribe interviews was one I took in response not only to methodological concerns, but also in response to the very real apprehension of interviewees. Many expressly stated that they did not wish to be recorded. Had I conducted only recorded or transcribed interviews, the research would have suffered from a reduced sample size and reduced sample range. I also actively decided not to use formal consent forms, since these raise many of the same issues as recording and transcribing, as many participants would have seen in such a consent form a means of their future identification with potentially controversial comments. However, every interviewee was given the opportunity to terminate interviews, or to revoke comments, at any stage either during or after the event. All participants were fully informed orally as to the nature of the project, in line with formal ethical guidelines.

I conducted fieldwork in the Sorbian region on a number of separate research trips.⁴⁸ During this fieldwork I conducted a large number of interviews, both

47 van den Hoonaard, ‘Is anonymity an artifact’, p. 141.

48 Research trips: 2-16 March 2009 (Dresden, Cottbus, Bautzen); 26-30 July 2009 (Cottbus, Bautzen); 18-23 October 2009 (Berlin); 5 July-1 September (Cottbus, Bautzen). For full

formal and informal.⁴⁹ In most cases, these interviews were conducted on the understanding that no recording or transcription would be made or published. I have non-comprehensive notes from these interviews in my private possession, and I make reference to them as appropriate in the course of the chapters that follow.

As explained above, for ethical reasons, I include neither transcriptions nor recordings in this submission.⁵⁰ In summary, there is also scholarly reasoning behind this decision: it seems to stand to reason that both officials and ordinary Sorbs are likely to be more forthcoming if their precise words are off the record. What was lost in documentary evidence through this technique is at least matched, I hope, by what was gained in the quality and content of the information gathered through oral testimony.

1.3.3 LEARNING THE LANGUAGE

One of the major methodological challenges in the study of the Sorbian minority is learning the language. As part of my fieldwork, I attended two week-long language course summer schools in Cottbus.⁵¹ Through these courses, and through continuing private study, I obtained a basic working knowledge of Lower Sorbian and (to a slightly lesser degree) Upper Sorbian. This allowed me to consult Sorbian-language materials, chiefly newspapers and official documents. Learning basic Sorbian allowed me to consult contemporary and archived newspapers in both Upper Sorbian (*Serbske Nowiny*) and Lower Sorbian (*Nowy Casnik*). There

details, see Table of Interviews and Fieldwork, p. 11 of this volume.

49 For full details see Table of Interviews and Fieldwork, p. 11 of this volume.

50 The ethical issues concerning the interviews which took place during my fieldwork were discussed with my supervisory panel at an early stage in my research, as well as an expert in research ethics at the University of Manchester. I was advised that no formal ethical consent was required for the interviews which took place, although I can confirm that all interviews were freely consented to, and the terms upon which interviews were given have at all times been respected in the composition and submission of this thesis.

51 For details, see Table of Interviews and Fieldwork, p. 11 in this volume.

were, however, a number of Sorbian language publications which I could not access due to the constraints of language; examining these would be a pressing task in any future research. However, this restriction was moderated by the fact that the majority of Sorbian publications are also published in German.

I have chosen to focus mainly on German-language scholarship and literature about the Sorbian situation. This was initially on account of my background as a Germanist, but as time went on and my knowledge of Sorbian improved, the objective importance of German-language literature on the Sorbs became clear. This is for a number of reasons. First, almost all official and legal texts pertaining to the political rights and representation of Sorbs are in German. Second, all Sorbs speak German, but not all Sorbs speak Sorbian. By focusing on Sorbian texts, an important stream of Sorbian experience might be excluded. Third, as has been noted, Sorbs do not constitute a majority population of any town in Lusatia. Immersion in the language is therefore problematic, because spoken Sorbian consists of many different dialects, many of which do not represent the formalised, codified written language of Upper and Lower Sorbian. Indeed it is only in a handful of villages in Saxony that immersion in Sorbian language is truly possible. Given the constraints of time during my research trips, such immersion would have been at the expense of achieving a proper overview of the Sorbian situation generally and across the past quarter-century. I have, however, drawn on my training in linguistics and on existing linguistic scholarship on Sorbian language to understand its structure and social function.⁵² Asking certain philological questions of Sorbian terms has also been key in understanding the importance of some contested names and concepts commonly associated with Sorbian identity (take, for example, the brief discussion of the term *Wend* and its cognate terms given above).

52 Stone, for instance, has devoted much attention to Sorbian language and linguistics. See Stone, G., 'Sorbian (Upper and Lower)' in *The Slavonic Languages*, ed. B. Comrie & G.G. Corbett (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 593-685.

A final and important part of my methodology was to publicise my research amongst Sorbs. My aim in giving these interviews was to establish communication with people and networks in the Sorbian area. I gave two press interviews to the *Lausitzer Rundschau* newspaper.⁵³ The insider/outsider problem was also particularly evident here. Sorbian identity and language is not a popular local news topic, and the presence of a British researcher may have been seen as an opportunity to raise the profile and prestige of Sorbian issues.⁵⁴

1.4 SCHOLARSHIP ON GERMAN UNIFICATION AND THE SORBS

In the section that follows, I will critically review a selection of existing scholarship on the GDR and German unification (1.4.1), existing scholarship on the situation of the Sorbian national minority (1.4.2), and I will explore a number of themes arising from this literature (1.4.3).

1.4.1 REVOLUTION OR NO REVOLUTION? SCHOLARSHIP ON THE GDR AND GERMAN UNIFICATION

Partly on account of the high level of public interest in the events of the unification period, the topics of the GDR and of its demise have produced a wealth of monographs and articles since 1990, ranging from the scholarly to the polemical.⁵⁵ Here I will review a selection of key works which deal with the

53 Klinkmüller M., 'Ein Engländer lernt Sorbisch: In Cottbus eine Woche lang die Schulbank gedrückt', *Lausitzer Rundschau* (5 November 2009); Worlitz U., 'Niedersorbisch wird es schwer haben', *Lausitzer Rundschau* (16 August 2010).

54 The favourable opinion of a researcher from Britain is anecdotally supported by the fact that the British Queen's first Jubilee gift was a Sorbian translation of William Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. A copy was personally presented by the head of the Domowina at the time. See Shakespeare W. (ed. & trans. Warwick A.), *Sonety: Dwě Lubosći Ja Mam* (Bautzen: VEB Domowina-Verlag, 1989).

55 Important texts include: Maier C.S., *Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and the End of East Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Herles W., *Wir sind kein Volk: Eine Polemik* (Munich and Zurich: Piper, 2004); Grós J., *Nach 20 Jahren nachgefragt: Betrachtungen zur nationalen Lage der Sorben* (Bautzen: Lausitzer Druck- und Verlagshaus,

extent to which the events of 1989-90 can be considered a 'revolution'. I will also cover some texts aimed at a general audience in order to assess the dominant narratives concerning the GDR's demise.

Fulbrook presents in some detail those circumstances that she argues led to the GDR's downfall.⁵⁶ She describes the events of 1989-90 as a 'revolution', and claims that 'while every revolution is in a very real sense unique, there are certain recurrent factors'. In the case of the GDR's collapse, Fulbrook first identifies the 'growth of the revolutionary movement' – the involvement of ordinary people in protests and agitation during the period. This can be termed the 'revolution from below' factor. Second is the role of the elite, and its 'claim to power and exertion of effective rule'. This can be termed the 'implosion from above' factor. Third, Fulbrook identifies the international circumstances of the time – in particular the GDR's dependence upon the USSR.⁵⁷ This can be termed the 'collapse from outside' factor. These three concepts – revolution from below, implosion from

2009); Ritter G.A., *Wir sind das Volk! Wir sind ein Volk! Geschichte der deutschen Einigung* (München: C.H. Beck, 2009); Fulbrook M. (ed.), *German History since 1800* (London: Arnold, 1997), pp. 477-584; Eichengreen B., *The European Economy Since 1945: Coordinated Capitalism and Beyond* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 252-334; Hilton C., *After the Berlin Wall: Putting two Germanys back together again* (Stroud: History Press, 2009); Fulbrook M., *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, New edition, 1997); Hüttmann J, Mählert U. & Pasternack P. (eds), *DDR-Geschichte vermitteln: Ansätze und Erfahrungen im Unterricht, Hochschullehre und politischer Bildung* (Berlin: Metropol, 2004); Ash T.G., *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (Random House, 1993); Ash T.G., *We The People: The Revolution of 1989 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague* (London: Granta Books/Penguin, 1990); Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung, 'Economic trends 1990/91: East and West Germany following monetary, economic and social union', Report of the Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung, *Economic Review* 27/7 (1990), pp. 1-16; Horn N., 'The Lawful German Revolution: Privatization and Market Economy in a Re-Unified Germany', *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 39/4 (1991), pp. 725-746; Osmond J., 'The end of the GDR: revolution and voluntary annexation' in Fulbrook M (ed.), *German History since 1800* (London: Arnold, 1997), pp. 454-477; Ross C., *The East German dictatorship: problems and perspectives in the interpretation of the GDR* (London: Arnold, 2002).

56 Fulbrook, *Dictatorship*, pp. 1-17.

57 Fulbrook, *Dictatorship*, p. 243.

above, and collapse from outside – are drawn from a book by Corey Ross (2002), which provides an overview of the historiography of the subject of 1989-90.⁵⁸

A significant early publication was a short monograph by Timothy Garton Ash, historian and commentator who was an eyewitness to events across central and eastern Europe during the collapse of communism in 1989-90.⁵⁹ Despite being one of the first to publish an academic work on these events, Ash immediately broaches the contentious subject of whether the events he had witnessed were a ‘revolution’:

It is [...] a serious question whether what happened in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria or even Czechoslovakia and East Germany, actually qualified for anything but a very loose usage of the term ‘revolution’.⁶⁰

Ash here indicates that the meaning and proper interpretation of the events across Europe was immediately a matter of contestation. Ash concludes, despite the lack of violence in many of the protests, ‘the change of government, no, *the change of life*, in all these other countries was scarcely less profound than in Romania’.⁶¹ Although he queries the vocabulary of ‘revolution’, it is clear that Ash nevertheless regards 1989-90 as a period of radical change: ‘prisoners’, he writes, ‘became prime ministers and prime minister became prisoners’.⁶² Jonathan Osmond, writing in 1997, is also unequivocally in favour of understanding the collapse of the GDR as a ‘revolution’:

The revolution in the GDR – for revolution it surely was – brought immediate joy to many East Germans but it did not succeed in bringing lasting reform to the state.⁶³

58 Ross, *The East German Dictatorship*, p. 127.

59 Ash, *We The People*.

60 Ash, *We The People*, p. 20.

61 Ash, *We The People*, p. 20. Ash asserts that Romania was a country which experienced a revolution. My emphasis.

62 Ash, *We The People*, p. 20.

63 Osmond, ‘The end of the GDR’, p. 454.

Osmond does not, however, elaborate on why it ‘surely was’ a revolution, in spite of his immediately subsequent claim that lasting reform was not achieved. Stefan Berger, writing in 2004, also emphasises how radically life changed for citizens of the GDR after 1990. He argues that people struggled to adapt to

completely changed circumstances. What happened to them was what Hannah Arendt described as ‘loss of world’.⁶⁴

Andreas Rödter notes that the term revolution ‘lacks a generally accepted definition’,⁶⁵ and he attempts to settle on an explicit definition for his own purposes. Like Ash, he also refers to the issue of violence in the same breath as revolution. However, Rödter does not regard it as a necessary part of revolutionary events. For the purposes of this debate he does provide a very clear interpretation of the term:

Revolution as a fundamental change of the existing political and social order, [...] that leads to a change of constitution, political system and societal structures. [...] The decisive factor is [more than violence] the level of political and societal change.⁶⁶

The *extent* of change, then, is a factor common to these slightly different, but broadly consonant, perspectives on the question of understanding 1989-90 as a revolution. Were changes sustained and radical, or short-lived and inconsequential? In which areas were there most changes, and in which were there most continuities? Did ordinary life change, or only the political arrangements of an elite? These questions, although also important to theoretical debates about revolution, are of immediate importance when judging the extent to which such ‘fundamental change’ occurred in the spheres of Sorbian politics, economy, and culture.

64 Berger S., *Germany: Inventing the Nation*. (London: Edward Arnold, 2004), p. 250. My emphasis.

65 Rödter A., *Deutschland einig Vaterland. Die Geschichte der Wiedervereinigung* (Munich, 2009), p. 117. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

66 Rödter, *Deutschland einig Vaterland*, p. 117.

1.4.2 SCHOLARSHIP ON THE SORBIAN NATIONAL MINORITY

Scholarship on the Sorbs is relatively sparse, compared to the larger, internationally significant events of the collapse of the GDR. These range from general surveys of the history of the Sorbs through to linguistic descriptions of Sorbian language. In this section I will explore some of the more prominent German- and English-language publications. The majority of academic work about the Sorbs is published in German, and much of it emanates directly from the Sorbian Research Institute in Bautzen.

Gerald Stone

Two of the most prominent scholars writing in English about the history and language of the Sorbian national minority are Gerald Stone and Peter Barker. Gerald Stone's main work on the Sorbs is *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*. Published in 1972, this was the first book-length work published in English on the Sorbs. In order to understand Stone's scholarship in proper context, it is important to note that at the time his research depended upon access to German officials and documents during the period he was writing. Open criticism of the GDR regime, for example, would run the risk of compromising future access to East Germany. While there may also be a scholarly justification for Stone's terminology and tenor, the political context of his primary research means that his use of terms such as 'liberation' to describe the post-war Soviet occupation of eastern Germany is open to some interpretation.

It is also possible to identify certain narratives in Stone's book. First is that of the endangerment and decline of Sorbian language and culture. In chapter four, Stone discusses 'folkways and folklore'; he writes that '[l]ike the language, many old traditions, including the wearing of national costume, are slowly dying out'. (Several illustrations of these costumes are included in Appendix 1 of this thesis.) He writes that the Sorbs are 'subject not only to the effects of Germanisation but

also to the other modernizing pressures resulting from economic progress'.
Second, the narrative of linguistic and cultural decline at the hands of Germans and the forces of modernity implies another narrative: that of Sorbian passivity. Third, Stone describes Sorbian identity as having a national character: 'Nevertheless,' he writes, 'many specifically Sorbian customs survive and help to maintain the national identity'.⁶⁷ Later on, he adds that

the Sorbs have always been faced with the task of establishing their individuality as a nation, and this has led them to cling steadfastly both to their folklore and to their national institutions, in the knowledge that these are of at least equal importance to the language in establishing the Sorbian national identity.⁶⁸

Sorbian music, which Stone explores in chapter five, is also described in terms of a national or a nationalist narrative. He reports the formation of a 'special music section of the Maćica Serbska' in 1895 to 'co-ordinate the work of Sorbian composers in the interests of the choral movement'. This was, he claims, 'one of many manifestations of the national awakening'.⁶⁹ However, the strength of this as evidence for a national awakening can perhaps be questioned. Choral music is a long-established German tradition, and I wonder whether the events Stone describes could not also be evidence of a move towards German culture. Stone also prioritises the evidence of the Sorbian elite over that of ordinary people; while nationalism was clearly part of the agenda of the Sorbian elite at the time, it is not clear from Stone's account that there was a specifically *national* identity amongst Sorbs in general.⁷⁰

In chapter six, Stone also examines the position at the time he was writing (1972). He praises the efforts of the GDR:

67 Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*, p. 124.

68 Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*, p. 142.

69 Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*, p. 158.

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

In emulation of the Soviet Union's policy towards national minorities, the government of the GDR has made special efforts to ensure equality of rights for its Sorbian citizens.⁷¹

He also draws particular attention to the constitutional protections given to Sorbs and Sorbian language: "These guarantees do not exist merely on paper. [...] Courts of law are authorized to make use of the language in their proceedings".⁷² However, while these guarantees did indeed exist on paper, there is little evidence of Sorbian language being used in this way, and Stone himself does not present any to support his claim.⁷³ This distance between policy and practice is similarly obscured in an article published three decades later, by Karin Reinhardt in 2011.⁷⁴ Freelance journalist Miriam Schönbach also comments,

Then – at least in theory – this right is available to them. In practice, the rights of the Sorbs are ignored, claims the member of the German federal parliament, Maria Michalk (CDU). She is the chair of the Council for Sorbian issues in the state [Freistaat] of Saxony.⁷⁵

Stone also presents what is arguably an excessively uncritical account of the Sorbian war record and Sorbian identity. He writes that the

sudden desire [after 1945] to be considered not German but Sorbian stemmed no doubt from a sense of revulsion at the crimes committed by Germans in the name of Germany.⁷⁶

This supposes an unrealistically clean distinction between 'Sorbs' and 'Germans', and seems to presume antagonism between Sorbian and German identity, rather

71 Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*, p. 161.

72 Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*, p. 162.

73 Barker does, however, report that some court cases took place in the Sorbian language during the 1950s in Hoyerswerda.

74 Reinhardt K., 'Mononational Germany? Multinational Switzerland? A critique of Will Kymlicka's theory of multiculturalism', *Nations and Nationalism* 17/4 (October 2011), pp. 775-793 at p. 782.

75 Schönbach M.: 'Sorbisches vor Gericht – in Görlitz?', *Sorbenland.info* (12 January 2012). Available at <http://sorbenland.info/sorbisch-vor-gericht-in-gorlitz>. Accessed on 30 December 2012.

76 Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*, p. 171.

than the possibility that individuals might be ‘both’ Sorbian and German. Stone also seems to suppose that no Sorb could have been implicated in the National Socialist regime. As the quotations above show, Stone strikes a generally positive tone about the GDR. The extent to which this was a political rather than a scholarly choice is not known.

Peter Barker

Peter Barker has written very extensively on the Sorbs. His book *Slavs in Germany* was published in 2000, and looks at the broad history of the Sorbs, with a particular emphasis on the ‘nationalities policy’ of the GDR.⁷⁷ He also focuses on themes of education, culture, and literature in particular. The nationalities policy refers to the Marxist-Leninist doctrine of respecting (and being seen to respect) national minorities. It originated from the Soviets, and variations of the policy were implemented across eastern bloc countries. This became a matter of policy because nationality was a form of identity which could compete with and divide class solidarity. The GDR, and other communist governments, wanted to discourage separatism through this policy: national identity was to serve the interests of the ‘workers of the world unite’ slogan.

In chapter three Barker argues that the relationship between the Sorbs and the SED in the early years of the GDR was quite positive. The nationalities policy meant that a bilingual education system and the Domowina was promoted, focusing in particular on the education system and the role of the Domowina. In chapters four and five, Barker argues that changes in the education system under the GDR during 1952-1958 were to the detriment of bilingual education. From the late 1950s the use of the Sorbian language in education continued to reduce. At the conclusion of this book, Barker describes the hopes for a better political settlement for the Sorbs after the upheavals of the Second World War, and the fact

77 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*.

that signs were initially positive that treatment of the Sorbs would improve under the GDR:

despite the SED having put in place a bilingual school system and a range of Sorbian cultural institutions in the 1950s, its programme of change on the economic and political front directly undermined the nationalities policy.⁷⁸

Barker describes the ‘repression of Sorbian nationalists’⁷⁹ who sought greater recognition or administrative control, or were considered to be pursuing their own bourgeois interests.⁸⁰ Some fell victim to the GDR’s secret police, but of course the Sorbs were not alone in meeting with oppression at the hands of the Stasi.⁸¹

Barker also explores the Sorbs during Honecker’s rule of the GDR between 1971 and 1989. During this period, Barker explains, all the demands made by Sorbian representatives for change and improvement were ignored or blocked.⁸² Towards the end of the GDR period, the contrast between official policy and what was practised became ever starker. Barker writes that Egon Krenz, who served as Honecker’s deputy before succeeding him in October 1989,

stated that since the beginning of the 1980s the achievements of Sorbian culture had grown in all areas. This was in stark contrast to the reports from the individual Domowina groups which from the beginning of 1988 started to become more critical, especially on the ‘Schönfärberei’ (embellishment) of the situation, both in general and in the execution of the nationalities policy.⁸³

78 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 202.

79 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, pp. 72-73.

80 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 54: ‘[...] even after the change in the leadership of the Domowina, the Stasi complained that the proletarian group on the executive committee, led by Krjenc, was overshadowed by bourgeois, nationalist Sorbs.’

81 See, for example: Dennis M., *The Stasi: Myth and Reality* (London: Pearson, 2003); Childs D., *The Stasi: The East German Intelligence and Security Service* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).

82 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, pp. 109-110.

83 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, pp. 112-113.

Barker concludes that the Domowina was ultimately used by the SED to serve the interests of party ideology:

the end of the SED's monopoly of power [in 1989] meant that the Domowina's role as the communicator of SED ideology and policy to the Sorbian people came to an end. It had been required by the SED to use its role as the purveyor of Sorbian culture as a means to spread the influence of SED ideology among the Sorbs.⁸⁴

He also examines the Sorbs' position during the first few years of post-unification Germany.⁸⁵ Included is a section on 'the continuing destruction of Sorbian villages' post-unification, in which he briefly examines the case of Horno.⁸⁶ I will explain this case study in chapter six of the thesis, and expand upon it in light of the significant developments in Horno during the decade after Barker published *Slavs in Germany*.

Barker remarks both upon the 'chauvinism' of the German national government towards the Sorbian minority, and upon the Sorbian perception of chauvinism.⁸⁷ It is clear that the Sorbs have suffered under a succession of radically different state governments during the past eighty years, which raises the important question for this thesis of whether minority status within any arrangement of a political society is bound to lead to the kind of hegemony evident in the history of the Sorbs. Barker has also published a substantial number of other works on the Sorbs. Not all of these are immediately relevant to the themes of this thesis, but they have been consulted.⁸⁸

84 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 114.

85 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, pp. 133-158.

86 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, pp. 150-152.

87 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, pp. 152, 203.

88 See also: Barker P., 'The Birth of Official Policy towards the Sorbian Minority in the Soviet Zone of Occupation in Germany (1945-1948)' *German History* 14/1 (1996), pp. 38-54. Here Barker discusses British policies towards the Sorbs during 1930s and 1940s. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office were in contact with some Sorbs, but assessed that independence was not likely; Barker P., 'Kirchenpolitik und ethnische Identität: Das Beispiel des sorbischen evangelischen Superintendenten in Sachsen', *Lětopis* 53/1 (2006), pp. 52-65. Here Barker discusses church politics and Sorbian identity between the First World War and the 1970s.

Both Barker and Stone devote significant space to the analysis of Sorbian literature. This is a common research method in Slavic studies in particular, as literature is often an important source of historical evidence in a period where free expression was not always possible in other disciplines. I do not draw on literary works to a great extent in this thesis due to the attention they have already received from Stone and Barker.⁸⁹

Frank Förster

One of the most prolific German/Sorb scholars of the Sorbs was Frank Förster. He published four books and a number of articles on the issue of brown coal mining in the Sorbian area, the first of which was a published version of his doctoral thesis.⁹⁰ At this time Förster was working within the GDR, and he concentrated on

He explores the histories of both Catholics and Protestants in the region, and argues that, because the Catholics were more centralised and took a stronger leading role in Sorbian public life, Upper Sorbian Catholic identity was preserved more successfully than Protestant identities across the Sorbian region; Barker P., 'Das Britische Auswärtige Amt und die Lausitzer Sorben (1942-1947)', *Lětopis* 43/1 (1996), pp. 48-57; Barker P. 'Images of Dominance and Submission in German-Sorbian Culture Relations' in Fischer-Seidel T. & Brown C.C. (eds), *Cultural Negotiations – Sichtweisen des Anderen* (Tübingen & Basel: A Francke Verlag, 1998), pp. 51-67. On p. 52 Barker argues that '[t]he basic pattern of German dominance and Sorbian submission has not been broken' He explores how this hegemonic relationship is in evidence in literature and other writings from earliest Sorb history, focusing particularly on Luther and the Reformation onwards. Luther was not a Sorb sympathiser: on p. 54 Barker writes that his 'essential attitude was one of belief in the superiority of German language and culture, because it brought Christianity to the pagan Slav tribes'. Luther did, however, bring to the Sorbs a translation of the Bible into the vernacular. Barker also notes on p. 65 that '[w]hat has been striking about the history of German-Sorbian cultural relations has [...] been the lack of interculturality'. The possibility of dual German and Sorbian identity has been marginalised both by Germans and Sorbs; Barker P., 'Sorbsche Interessen, die DDR und der Kalte Krieg (1945-1971)', *Lětopis* 56/2 (2009), pp. 29-43. See also Barker P. 'From Wendish-Speaking Germans to Sorbian-Speaking Citizens of the GDR: Contradictions in the Language Policy of the SED' in Jackman G & Roe I.F., *Finding a Voice: Problems of Language in East German Society and Culture*. *German Monitor* 47. (Rodopi Bv Editions, 2000), pp. 39-54.

89 See Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*, pp. 41-89; Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, pp. 159-198.

90 Förster F., *Bergbau-Umsiedler: Erfahrungsberichte aus dem Lausitzer Braunkohlenrevier* (Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 1998); Förster F., *Um Lausitzer Braunkohle 1849-1945* (Bautzen: VEB Domowina-Verlag, 1990); Förster F., *Verschwundene Dörfer: Die*

the development of industry in the late nineteenth century. Förster remains the only scholar, even after unification, to have written about the topic of brown coal mining and the Sorbs.⁹¹ He presents valuable information, but, perhaps unsurprisingly given that he was initially working under the GDR regime, his argument is supported by a fairly strong Marxist narrative, in which class is regarded as the primary mode of analysis. He holds to the official GDR line that the most important distinctions in society are those based on class rather than on any other form of identity, such as ethnicity or nationality. It also focuses on major capitalists themselves, rather than on more objective phenomena or indicators. For instance, Förster's 1990 book *Um Lausitzer Braunkohle* describes the generation of the exploitation of the Lusatian brown coal area as a transition from feudalism to capitalism.⁹² He examines the changes during this period as being brought about by material technological development, industrialisation and mechanisation. The Marxist approach is also evident in Förster's periodisations, which emphasise the Marxist view of materialist history: first, "Child of industrial revolution 1849-1870"; second, "On the path to heavy industry 1871-1907"; and third, "Economic imperialism 1908-1945". By way of evaluating Förster's

Ortsabbrüche des Lausitzer Braunkohlenreviers bis 1993 (Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 2nd edition, 1996); Förster F., *Senftenberger Revier 1890-1914* (Bautzen: VEB Domowina-Verlag, 1968); Förster F., 'Der Braunkohlenbergbau bei Spremberg bis 1880: eine Anregung aus Mukas demographischer Beschreibung der Niederlausitz', *Lětopis* 24/1 (1977), pp. 1-22; Förster F., 'Landsässige Tagebaubeschäftigte im ethnisch gemischten Teil der Oberlausitz: eine Fallstudie 1972' in Hübner P., *Niederlausitzer Industriearbeiter 1935 bis 1970* (Wiley VCH, 1996) pp. 193-229; Förster F., 'Der Niederlausitzer Bergarbeiterstreik von 1907', *Lětopis* 12 (1965), p. 161-206; Förster F., 'Die Herausbildung des Braunkohlen Proletariats in Senftenberger Revier bis 1918', *Lětopis* 19/1 (1972), pp. 1-17; Förster F., 'Der Griff des Braunkohlenkapitals nach Groß Parwitz: industrie-geschichtlicher Beitrag zu e. Dorf Untersuchung im Lausitzer Urstromtal', *Lětopis* 17 (1970), pp. 133-157.

91 Although there are autobiographical and press accounts which deal with the topic, and others which address the history and technology of brown coal mining but do not focus on its impact on the Sorbian minority. See Gromm M., *Horno: Ein Dorf in der Lausitz will leben* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1995); Gromm M., *Horno: Verkohlte Insel des Widerstands* (Horno: Edition Dreieck Horno, 2005); Förderverein Kulturlandschaft Niederlausitz e.V. (ed.), *Bergbau in der Niederlausitz im Überblick* (Cottbus: Selbstverlag, 2005), pp. 26-45. Note: low print-run, self-circulated booklet; Schulz F., *Drei Jahrhunderte Lausitzer Braunkohle bergbau* (Lusatia Press, 2005).

92 Förster, *Um Lausitzer Braunkohle*.

analysis, in chapter three of this thesis I will address some of the economic issues he raises. In chapter six I will also examine the role of business and international capitalism in the case of Horno.

Other significant scholarship

Cora Granata, a contemporary scholar in the USA, has published articles on the specialist topic of Jews and Sorbs under the GDR. She has a forthcoming monograph on this topic.⁹³ Although both Jews and Sorbs were officially privileged minorities under the GDR, she argues that Jews were initially viewed suspiciously. Over the next forty years – and especially during the final decade of the GDR – she puts the case that the Sorbs fell out of favour with the GDR regime as they feared the Sorbs could easily be won over to the cause of any foreign challenge to the GDR (i.e., that they could become a ‘fifth column’).⁹⁴

Wolfgang Oschlies’ *Die Sorben: Slawisches Volk im Osten Deutschlands* (1991) was one of the first books to be written after the collapse of the GDR.⁹⁵ Published by the left-wing foundation *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*, which is associated with the SPD, Oschlies’ book provides a brief history of the Sorbs and then examines the immediate post-war situation of the Sorbs, focusing in particular on the role of the Domowina, which I will address throughout this thesis.

93 Granata C., *Celebration and Suspicion: Jews and Sorbs in the German Democratic Republic* (forthcoming).

94 Granata C., ‘The Cold War Politics of Cultural Minorities: Jews and Sorbs in the German Democratic Republic, 1976-1989’, *German History* 27/1 (January 2009), pp. 60-83; Granata C., ‘Why not all Germans Celebrated the Fall of the Berlin Wall: East German Jews and the Collapse of Communism’, in Granata C. & Koos C. (eds), *The Human Tradition in Modern Europe* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), pp. 199-213; Granata C., ‘“The Ethnic Straight Jacket”: Bilingual Education and Grassroots Agency in the Soviet Occupied Zone and German Democratic Republic, 1945-1964’, *German Studies Review* 29/2 (May 2006), pp. 331-46.

95 Oschlies W., *Die Sorben: Slawisches Volk im Osten Deutschlands* (Bonn: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1991).

Edmund Pech is a historian employed at the Sorbian Institute. He has published widely on twentieth-century Sorbian history, concentrating in particular on the differences between what I call policy and practice, or rhetoric and reality. In one chapter, he argues, uncontroversially, that the policies of the GDR were of a different order to those of the Third Reich. The nationalities policy, did, however, have its flip side: those who did not profess allegiance to the socialist system were often driven out of public life. This clearly applied more broadly than only to the Sorbs. Pech also argues that under the GDR minority policies were insufficient to counteract the negative economic, social, and demographic changes that were taking place. In particular, he identifies the brown coal industry (which I will address in chapter six), and the collectivisation of farming. Here he again emphasises the dissonance between what the government claimed to be happening, and what was really the case.⁹⁶ Pech has also published a volume, co-edited with Dietrich Scholze, entitled *Zwischen Zwang und Beistand*. The title, which means ‘Between Coercion and Support’, again reflects a narrative I identified earlier in the work of Stone: that is, the situation of agency with successive German governments and German society.

The first half of Martin Kasper’s *Die Lausitzer Sorben in der Wende* (2000) consists of a chronicle with commentary, and focuses on the political events from mid-1989 to 3 October 1990, when the unified Germany was officially formed.⁹⁷ The second half contains 350 pages of typed-up reproductions of original documents from the transition period, such as the minutes of meetings of the committees and organisations which existed under the GDR, as well as some of those that were established during the unification process. Some of these sources are presented in German translation from the original Sorbian. As well as press

96 Pech E., ‘Eine Vorzeigeminderheit? Die Sorben in der DDR’ in Pech E. & Scholze D. (eds), *Zwischen Zwang und Beistand* (Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 2003), pp. 102-129.

97 Kasper M., *Die Lausitzer Sorben in der Wende 1989/1990: Ein Abriss mit Dokumenten und einer Chronik* (Bautzen: Domowina Verlag, 2000); see also Kasper M., ‘Sorbische Bestrebungen 1989/90 um die Sicherung nationaler Rechte’ in Pech E. & Scholze D. (eds), *Zwischen Zwang und Beistand* (Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 2003), pp. 224- 240.

statements, the sources presented include official declarations, the results of several Round Table discussions and open letters. This is an extremely rich resource, particularly to assess works which present different interpretations of these events.

The book's commentary – perhaps not surprisingly for a work which explicitly seeks to 'show the social developments of the Lusatian Sorbs and link them to the wider German developments' – focuses much of its attention on the actions of the Sorbs on the ground.⁹⁸ This is very much in keeping with the revolution-from-below strand of historiography mentioned by both Fulbrook and Ross. It is noticeable that throughout Kasper's commentary, he does not mention 'revolution'. Instead, he writes of 'social developments in the GDR in 1989',⁹⁹ and a 'historical break' (*Abriss*), of fundamental societal transformation (*Umwälzung*),¹⁰⁰ as well as using the term 'turning point' (*Wende*). However, Rödder argues that the term *Wende* – although often used in public – is too weak a label for the events of 1989-90. It is also associated with members of the GDR leadership, such as Egon Krenz, who used it purposely to mean 'change' rather than 'revolution'.¹⁰¹

In light of Kasper's choice of terminology it seems that perhaps revolution is not the best term to describe the events that took place in Lusatia. This is further supported by looking at some of the official publications that are produced today for the public by the official Sorbian bodies such as the Foundation for the Sorbian people.¹⁰² What is most interesting about these short pamphlets is not

98 Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 7.

99 Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 10.

100 Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 91.

101 Rödder, *Deutschland einig Vaterland*, p. 116.

102 See this volume, Appendix 1:

Sorbian Self-Representation;

Appendix 2:

Sorbian DVDs. See also Schiemann M. & Scholze D. (eds), *Die Sorben in Deutschland* (Bautzen: Stiftung für das sorbische Volk, 2009), p. 23 (where *Wend* is used); and p. 34 ('Wiederherstellung der Einheit Deutschland')

necessarily the factual information contained but the choices that have been made in producing them. Each pamphlet has a short potted history of the Sorbs, as they are produced for the consumption of non-Sorbs. In each publication there is a strong emphasis on continuity, and the Sorbs are presented as unified, and to some extent the victims of change outside their control. Scholze also reflects this narrative of passivity:

due to economic reasons in the first place, bilingualism became a necessity [...] Sorbian organizations were [...] incorporated in the SED party system which forced them to conform to the proletarian class consciousness alien to the Sorbian identity rooted in the peasant background and origin.¹⁰³

This narrative is also represented in the work of Jurij Grós. He was head of the Domowina from 1964 until shortly after unification. (I will explain the circumstances of his departure from the organization in chapter three.) His book *Staatsangehörigkeit: Deutsch, Nationalität: Sorb (Citizenship: German, Nationality: Sorb, 2003)* is a work in which Grós seems to attempt to establish his legacy. It is not a scholarly work, but rather an autobiography produced many years after the events it documents. However, a section looking at the impact of unification, thirteen years after the event, does raise some interesting points. An anecdotal insight into issues of Sorbian and German identity and language is provided by the fact that Grós's Sorbian family gave him a German name, Georg, at birth. This is unsurprising, given the prevalence of given anti-Sorb sentiment that was prevalent during the 1930s.¹⁰⁴ However he learnt Sorbian from an early age, but it was not until the 1980s that he officially changed his forename to the Sorbian Jurij. The initial desire to choose a German forename was by no means unusual for many Sorbs, however even later on many chose not to change their forename to a Sorbian version.

¹⁰³ Scholze, *The Sorbs in Germany*, p. 8

¹⁰⁴ Grós was born in 1931.

1.5 THEMES AROUND GERMAN UNIFICATION AND THE SORBS

In the previous section, I identified a number of themes and narratives running through existing scholarship on German unification and the Sorbs. In this section, I summarise these, and briefly expand on each one.

1.5.1 NATIONAL IDENTITY

It is clear from the discussion of scholarship in the previous section that Stone, Barker, Grós and others all identify Sorbian ‘nationality’. Yet how does a putative Sorbian national identity interact with German citizenship? Foy & Thiele express this paradox succinctly, introducing an edited volume of publications on the Sorbs:

The Sorbs speak fluent German. They can vote in German elections, have German passports, and are German citizens - but they are not Germans! German Kaisers, Führers, and Secretaries General have tried to stop them from breathing - at times with a chokehold, at times by embracing them.¹⁰⁵

In recent decades there has been wide discussion of nationality and national identity in history, sociology, anthropology, and political theory.¹⁰⁶ This debate was partly prompted by the collapse of communism and the struggles for a renewed national identity which followed in parts of eastern Europe and Russia. This body of scholarship deals in particular with the questions of how far nationalism as a political movement contributed to the formation of collective national identities; and, conversely, to what extent modern nationalist movements reflect prior, pre-modern collective identities.¹⁰⁷ This is often described as the

105 See, for example, Foy T. & Thiele C., ‘The legal status of the Sorbian minority in the Federal Republic of Germany’, *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, 4 (1997), pp. 41-71 at p. 41.

106 See Smith A.D., *National Identity* (University of Nevada Press, 1993).

107 Mandler P., ‘What is “national identity”? Definitions and applications in Modern British historiography’, *Modern Intellectual History* 3/2 (2006), p. 271.

‘modernist’ versus ‘primordialist’ debate. Spencer & Wollman suggest that it is ‘perhaps the most significant axis of debate on nationalism’.¹⁰⁸

One of the best-known theorists of nationalism is Benedict Anderson, who published *Imagined Communities* in 1983.¹⁰⁹ He identifies a division between those who view nationalism as an evil and divisive force of modernism, and those who see it as a potentially benevolent force (amongst whom he counts himself):

In an age when it is so common for progressive, cosmopolitan intellectuals (particularly in Europe?) to insist on the near-pathological character of nationalism, its roots in fear and hatred of the Other [...] it is useful to remind ourselves that nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love.¹¹⁰

Opposing Anderson’s ‘overly benign assessment’, Spencer & Wollman set out ‘to look to a future beyond the nation-state, nationalism and national identity’.¹¹¹

They invoke the ‘banal chauvinism of some tabloid newspapers’, to highlight the exclusivist and potentially malevolent side of nationalism. Furthermore in a demonstration of partiality themselves they question whether Anderson ‘can still be seen as a critic of nationalism’,¹¹² clearly the underlying view is that to be able to criticise something, the critic must *object* to what they critique, and that this is the measure of scholarly detachment.

This negative view of nationalism and national identity, as Anderson suggests, underpins much contemporary scholarship on the subject. Many postmodern historians, for example, call for a post-national, inclusivist form of identity. Nationalist wars, such as the Yugoslav conflict of the late 1990s, and of course the Second World War, are often given as reasons to reject identities based on

108 Spencer P. & Wollman H., *Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (London: Sage Publications, 2002), p. 27.

109 Anderson B., *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2nd edition, 2006).

110 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 141.

111 Spencer & Wollman, *Nationalism*, p. 4.

112 Spencer & Wollman, *Nationalism*, p. 40.

nationality. This argument from war, however, seems to underplay the many other factors which led to those wars, and the possibility that nationality or religion may be used as a cloak for conflicts which are better understood as political, economic, or territorial. The phenomenon of war, after all, is not restricted to nationalist movements.

Three factors often cited as contributing to a national identity are race, ethnicity, and culture. While race has generally become discredited as a basis for nationalist movements, for much of the twentieth century it was a focus of much nationalist discourse in Europe. Indeed, Anderson devotes a chapter in *Imagined Communities* to distinguishing racism from nationalism:

[...] nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies, while racism dreams of eternal contaminations. The dreams of racism actually have their origins in ideologies of *class*, rather than in those of a nation.¹¹³

Again, Spencer & Wollman disagree, finding a clear connection between nationalism and racism (although they are clear that they are distinct phenomena):

when the supposedly civic nation has constructed immigrants as undesirable others, it has almost always done so on a racialized basis. Australians in the UK, Swiss in France, Austrians in Germany have never been seen in the same way as Bangladeshis, Algerians, or Turks.¹¹⁴

Spencer & Wollman's case is not altogether persuasive, since in the cases they give, it could also be the lack of a shared language or culture which makes the difference between those who are accepted and those who are not. Anthony Smith distinguishes 'ethnicity' from 'race'. For Smith, ethnicity refers to cultural and historical situation rather than biological factors. He develops a concept of the 'ethnic community', for which he presents six criteria:

1. a collective proper name
2. a myth of common ancestry
3. shared historical memories

113 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 149.

114 Spencer & Wollman, *Nationalism*, p. 65.

4. one or more differentiating elements of common culture
5. an association with a specific 'homeland'
6. a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population¹¹⁵

There have, of course, been criticisms of understanding ethnicity as an identity which undergirds nations. Weber wrote that 'ethnicity in the sense of a belief in common ancestry is a consequence of political action not a cause of it';¹¹⁶ in other words, the very idea of ethnicity is associated with a nation which has already achieved some kind of political formation. How, then, does an ethnic community come to form a national identity? Smith also lays out what he believes are the five fundamental aspects of national identity:

1. an historic territory or homeland
2. common myths and historical memories
3. a common, mass public culture
4. common legal rights and duties for all members
5. a common economy with territorial mobility for members¹¹⁷

In the chapters that follow, I will consider to what extent Sorbian identity fits Smith's descriptions of an ethnic community and a national identity. The unusual situation of the Sorbs as an officially recognised 'national minority', but not an officially recognised nation, may offer an informative case study for the contested territory of theory on nationalism and national identity. To what extent does the Sorbian narrative of nationality, which (as I will explain in chapter three) has long been favoured by the Sorbian elite, match with the nature of Sorbian identity amongst ordinary people? And, if the question is meaningful, how plausible is a claim of nationality or specifically 'national' identity in the case of the Sorbs?

115 Smith, *National Identity*, pp. 21-22.

116 See Spencer & Wollman, *Nationalism*, p. 69.

117 Smith, *National Identity*, p. 14.

1.5.2 LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT AND DEATH

Another key theme in the scholarship reviewed in 1.4.2 is that of the endangerment and death of language and culture. This is also a theme in contemporary linguistics.¹¹⁸ The language of ‘endangerment’ and ‘death’ implies an assumption that the decline of minority languages is to be regretted. More importantly, in existing scholarship on the Sorbs, this decline is readily associated with political and cultural oppression from successive German governments, and from the German people. In the chapters which follow I consider whether there is a fuller picture of language change than this – in particular, I examine the agency of ordinary Sorbs, and ask why Sorbs are making particular decisions about their language and cultural practices.

Martin Walde’s (Walda) *Wie man seine Sprache hassen lernt* (‘How one learns to hate one’s language’, 2010), which was published in German, caused some controversy when it was published. He argues that the Sorbs have been left, both individually and collectively, with ‘indelible marks’ from the ‘violent Germanisation, the exclusion of Sorbs from public life, the open racism of the Nazi period up to the marginalisation of the present.’¹¹⁹ The book focuses particularly on the historical treatment of the Sorbs and uses psychoanalytic theory to examine what effects this history and importantly its portrayal have had on Sorbs. He takes a broadly negative view of all German-Sorbian relations, both in the past as well as in the present. Furthermore, in keeping with much of the literature produced by the Sorbian elite, he ascribes almost no agency to Sorbs

118 See Mufwene S., ‘Colonisation, Globalisation, and the future of languages in the twenty-first century’, *International Journal on Multicultural Societies* 4/2 (2002), pp. 165-197; Mufwene S., ‘Globalization and Myth of Killer Languages’. Available at <http://humanities.uchicago.edu/faculty/mufwene/goodies.html>. Accessed on 15 December 2005; Mufwene S., ‘Language Evolution: The population genetics way’ in Hauska G. (ed.), *Genes, language and their evolution* (Regensburg: Universitätsverlag Regensburg, 2005); Nettle D. & Romaine S., *Vanishing Voices: The extinction of the world’s languages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); McMahon, A.M.S.: *Understanding Language Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Crystal D.: *Language Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

119 Walde M., *Wie man seine Sprache hassen lernt* (Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 2010), p. 161.

themselves as individuals – whether this be in their use (or non-use) of the Sorbian language, their religious practices, or cultural life. Walde’s narrative is one of coercion by the majority.

As I will explore in this thesis, there is much truth in the idea that Sorbs have been subject to majority coercion by successive German administrations. However, in the chapters which follow, I seek to remain open to the possibility that there is another side to the shift in patterns of Sorbian language use. By portraying only one side of the language story – or indeed of religious practice or cultural life – the complex interplay of German and Sorbian identities may be misunderstood. Moreover, there must be important factors which motivate the choices of young Sorbs in particular, and it is doubtful that all of these factors derive from German hegemony. Interestingly, in one section of the book Walde does address the ‘pseudo-homogeneity’ of the Sorbs, explaining that

minorities are often ascribed a homogenous identity, especially when they are reduced to a relatively small and contiguous territory within a larger state.¹²⁰

He goes on, however, to explain that this homogeneity is projected onto Sorbs from outside Sorbian society, presumably by members of a homogenous ‘German’ society. This irony, as I will explore in chapters two and three, is that he fails to take into account the portrayal of Sorbs produced by Sorbian institutions themselves. These self-representations can be seen in material included in this volume (Appendix 1:

Sorbian Self-Representation to the Public). Similarly, Walde’s narrative is undermined by the fact that Sorbian language and culture are very much alive. A more balanced view requires an inquiry into the agency and choices of Sorbs themselves.

120 Walde, *Wie man seine Sprache hassen lernt*, p. 29.

1.5.3 THE URBAN AND THE RURAL

There is much emphasis in contemporary history, sociology and anthropology on the urban. When studying the Sorbs it is self-evident that changes to the *rural* are also an important part of the modern and post-modern period. In line with this scholarly preoccupation, there is little scholarly literature produced post-unification on the topic of agriculture and rural life in the GDR. Much of the literature produced under the GDR is influenced by Marxist theory, meaning that the rural is examined not so much on its own terms but as an element in the narrative of materialist history.

Most scholarship in this area is written in German. The two most prominent authors on GDR agriculture are Arnd Bauerkämper (2002), who focuses on the early years of the GDR in particular (up to the 1953 uprising);¹²¹ and Jen Schöne, who looks at the collectivisation policies under the GDR.¹²² Additionally, instead of focusing on the wider political impact of GDR policy on the rural economy, Barbara Shier focuses on the history of Merxleben, a single village in the GDR.¹²³ She examines the evidence of everyday life through oral interviews and similar ethnographic techniques – similar research methods to those used during this project.¹²⁴ It is also clear that Schier faced similar issues of ethics and scholarly integrity in conducting and reporting these interviews; she also chooses to anonymise oral testimony and not to publish transcripts. One notable English-

121 Bauerkämper A., 'Das Neubauernbauprogramm im Land Brandenburg. Voraussetzungen, Entwicklung und Auswirkungen 1947-1952', *Jahrbuch für Brandenburgische Landesgeschichte* 45 (1994), pp. 182-202; Bauerkämper A., 'Zwangsmodernisierung und Krisenzyklen. Die Bodenreform und Kollektivierung in Brandenburg 1945-1960/61', *GG* 25 (1999), pp. 556-588; Bauerkämper A., 'Collectivization and Memory: Views of the Past and the Transformation of Rural Society in the GDR from 1952 to the early 1960s', *GSR* 25 (2002), pp. 213-225; Bauerkämper A., *Ländliche Gesellschaft in der kommunistischen Diktatur. Zwangsmodernisierung und Tradition in Brandenburg 1945-1963* (Cologne, 2002).

122 Schöne J., *Frühling auf dem Lande? Die Kollektivierung der DDR-Landwirtschaft* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2010).

123 Schier B., *Alltagsleben im 'Sozialistischen Dorf', Merxleben Und Seine LPG im Spannungsfeld Der SED-Agrarpolitik* (New York, Munich & Berlin: Munich University Press, 2001).

124 See this volume, p. 35.

language work on the rural is Cory Ross's *Constructing Socialism at the Grass Roots* (2000), which documents forty years' worth of GDR history, and focuses on agriculture and industry.

1.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have given a brief introduction to the Sorbs (1.2), explained the methodology and terminology of this thesis (1.3), presented a review of selected scholarship on the themes of German unification and the Sorbs in the context of a core research question about revolution and the extent of change for the Sorbs during and after the GDR period (1.4), and also identified a number of themes arising from this scholarship (1.5). In the next chapter, I present a brief, critical history of the Sorbs.

CHAPTER TWO

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SORBS

Rjana Łužica, sprawna, přečelna, mojich serbskich wótcow kraj, mojich zbóžnych sonow raj, swjate su mi twoje hona!	Rědna Łužyca, spšawna pšijazna mojich serbkich wošcow kraj, mojich glucnych myslow raj, Swěte su mě twoje strony!	Lusatia, fair land, For ever true friend, You're my Sorbian fathers' home All my dreams' heavenly dome, Blessed to me are your meadows! ¹
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The Sorbian national anthem in Upper Sorbian, Lower Sorbian and English

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In order accurately to assess the current Sorbian situation, and to analyse the shifts that occurred in Sorbian politics (examined in chapter three), economics (chapter four) and culture (chapter five) during the period of German unification (1989-90), it is essential first to situate this analysis in the context of the earlier history of the Sorbs. To that end, this chapter sets out a brief outline of Sorbian history from around 900CE, when some of the earliest writings regarding the Sorbs are found, through to the era of the German Democratic Republic.

I will present a critical outline of Sorbian history, divided into five periods: the early period (2.2), the Middle Ages to the early modern period (2.3), the nineteenth century, when many of the modern Sorbian institutions were formed (2.4), the twentieth century, including the Weimar Republic and rise of the National Socialists (2.5), and the post-War period under the GDR (2.6). The finer details of constitutional law and economic development are assessed in the chapters that follow.

1 The Sorbian national anthem. See Scholze D., *The Sorbs in Germany* (Bautzen: Stiftung für das sorbische Volk, 3rd edition, 2000), pp. 3-4.

2.2 THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE SORBS

The Sorbs are the last two remaining tribes from a collection of Slavic tribes which spread westward from the ninth century CE. The term ‘Sorb’ (in fact ‘Surbiorum’)² is first attested in the year 631/32 in writings by Fredegar; the forms *Surbi*, *Sorabi* and *Surabi* are also present.³ However, these terms were not used to refer to the current Sorbian area of settlement.⁴ By the ninth century the so-called ‘Bavarian geographer’ listed the Slavic tribes in the area in greater detail, and it is here that references to the tribes *Lusizer* and *Milzener* first appear. In the Sorbian tradition it is said that the *Milzener*, based around Bautzen, are the ancestors of the Upper Sorbs and the *Lusizer*, based around Cottbus, are the ancestors of the Lower Sorbs, although, of course, due to the paucity of data from the period, the accuracy of these claims is very hard to assess.⁵

The historiography of the period from the seventh to the ninth century is particularly interesting with regard to later attempts to shape a Sorbian national narrative. In an English-language pamphlet published in 2000, Karlheinz Blaschke maintains that the Slavic tribes spread ‘peacefully [...] into this uninhabited area [...] after 600AD.’ Furthermore, he claims that the Sorbian tribes lived in an ‘ancient social order consisting of large families and a kind of military democracy’. This structure, he then goes on to explain, is why ‘the tribes could hardly put up any resistance against the military pressure of the German empire in the west’.⁶ This characterisation of the Sorbs – as peaceable ancients utterly incapable of resisting a larger German foe – is one that frequently appears in explanations of Sorbian history.⁷

2 ‘Surbiorum’ is a Latin genitive plural. The nominative plural is ‘Surbii’. Thanks to Nick Wilshire for drawing my attention to this point.

3 Scholze D., *The Sorbs in Germany* (Bautzen: Stiftung für das sorbische Volk, 3rd edition, 2000) p. 10.

4 Herrmann J., ed., *Die Slawen in Deutschland* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985), p. 12.

5 Herrmann, *Die Slawen in Deutschland*, p. 7.

6 Scholze, *The Sorbs in Germany*, p. 6.

7 Grosse G., *Die Sorben in der Lausitz* (Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 2nd edition, 2003), pp. 15-16; Schiemann M. & Scholze D. (eds), *Die Sorben in Deutschland* (Bautzen: Stiftung für

Such characterisation, however, raises significant questions with regard to the use of the term ‘military’; if the tribes were a form of ‘military democracy’, then why were they incapable of resisting? Furthermore, the appearance around this time of large heavily fortified ‘Slavic burgwalls’, or ‘gords’ as they are known in archaeology,⁸ suggests an early need for extensive defensive capabilities at the very least. The presence of over three thousand of these structures, dating from between the sixth and thirteenth centuries, gives some indication of the significant political and social unrest of the period as well as demonstrating an increasingly organised social system.⁹

These large wooden structures, sometimes encompassing entire settlements, served a variety of purposes. Above all, though, they served as ‘an instrument of power in societal conflicts during the transitional period between a primitive society and a feudal society.’¹⁰ The need for such structures suggests that between the seventh and eleventh centuries there was a much more dynamic social and military environment than the above characterisation implies. Furthermore, there is significant archaeological evidence to demonstrate mixed German and Slav settlements. This is also demonstrated by mixed-language origins of place names in the Sorbian area, as well as family and personal names around this period.¹¹ The use of loan words and borrowing was – in stark contrast to language use today – not solely from German into Sorbian but also *vice versa*. As I noted in chapter one, this history of bi-culturality and dual identity over a period of a thousand years is something which can be glossed over by both German and Sorbian historians.

das sorbische Volk, 2009), p. 4; Stone G., *The Smallest Slavonic Nation: The Sorbs of Lusatia* (London: Athlone Press, 1972), pp. 34-35; Barker P., *Slavs in Germany: The Sorbian Minority and the German State since 1945* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), p. 13.

8 ‘Grožišća’/‘Hrodžišća’ in Lower and Upper Sorbian respectively.

9 Thiemann M., *Sorben Serbja: Ein Kleines Lexikon* (Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 1989), p. 76.

10 Herrmann, *Die Slawen in Deutschland*, p. 187.

11 Herrmann, *Die Slawen in Deutschland*, p. 43.

2.3 THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

From the tenth century onwards, many of the other west Slavic tribes in modern-day eastern Germany began to be assimilated to varying degrees, and under varying degree of force. In addition to this process of Germanisation also ran a process of Christianisation. In the case of the Sorbs, the latter process succeeded to a much greater extent than the former: much of the Sorbian population converted to Catholicism. However, it was not until the period of the Reformation from the early 1500s, with its emphasis on the use of the vernacular for religious texts and liturgies, that Sorbian language began to be codified. It was also during this period that many of the Sorbs converted to Protestantism. As Scholze explains, ‘from about two hundred parishes of Upper Lusatia only thirteen remained Catholic, five of them situated in the Sorbian-speaking area’.¹²

The role of religion in Sorbian affairs remained pivotal throughout the early modern period and also beyond. The language policies of the ruling German classes in relation to the use of Sorbian varied greatly from overt suppression to active support.¹³

from a total of 43 anti-Sorbian proclamations [...] in the period between 1591 and 1818 seven were organised in Upper Lusatia, while 36 were aimed at the Wends in Lower Lusatia!¹⁴

The difference between the treatment of Lower and Upper Sorbs with regard to the pressure to assimilate is also clear.

12 Scholze, *The Sorbs in Germany*, p. 7.

13 See Pastor T., *Die rechtliche Stellung der Sorben in Deutschland* (Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 1997), pp. 16, 31, 32.

14 Mietschke A. [Frido Mětšk], ‘Verordnungen und Denkschriften gegen die sorbische Sprache und Kultur während der Zeit des Spätfeudalismus: Eine Quellensammlung’ in *Schriftenreihe für Lehrer und Erzieher im zweisprachigen Gebiet* (Bautzen: Domowina Verlag VEB, 1969), p. 69. For further information on the role of religion particularly in Lower Lusatia see Norberg M. (ed.), *Sammelband zur sorbischen/wendischen Kultur und Identität* (Potsdam: Universitäts Verlag, 2007), pp. 86-142.

2.4 THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Following Napoleon's defeat, in 1815 Lusatia was officially divided between the states of Prussia and Saxony, which resulted in increased administrative and political divisions between the Upper and Lower Sorbian communities. The Lower Sorbs and parts of Upper Lusatia were absorbed into Prussia, so the administrative division between Upper and Lower Sorbs was not clear-cut. This division is, however, more or less replicated in the modern borders between the federal states of Brandenburg and Saxony, with the exception of some parts of Upper Lusatia, which held a referendum in 1990 and rejoined the state of Saxony.¹⁵ The period from the mid-1800s until the 1930s saw an explosion in the number of Sorbian groups and organisations.¹⁶

Two of the most significant organisations created in this period – both of which remain in existence today – are the *Maćica Serbska* and the *Domowina*. According to Dippmann, *Maćica Serbska* means 'Sorbian Roots';¹⁷ while Peter Herrity explains that

The word *matica* in Serbian means, among other things, 'queen bee'. When applied to the cultural organisation the Matica Srbska, it implied that this organisation would act like a queen bee and breed more workers for the Serbian cultural hive.¹⁸

The *Maćica Serbska* is the oldest Sorbian organisation still in existence and was officially founded in Bautzen on 7 April 1847,¹⁹ almost exactly two years after the

15 Wendisches Museum, '19. Jahrhundert' (3 June 2008). Available at http://www.wendisches-museum.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10&Itemid=15&lang=de. Accessed on 7 December 2012.

16 Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*, pp. 26-30, 158.

17 Dippmann K.J., 'The Legal Position of the Lusatian Sorbs since the Second World War', *The Slavonic and East European Review* 53/130 (January 1975), pp. 62-77.

18 Herrity P., 'The role of the Matica and similar Societies in the Development of the Slavonic Literary Languages', *Slavonic & East European Review* 51/124 (July 1973), pp. 368-386 at p. 368 n. 1

19 *Maćica Serbska/Mašica Serbska*, 'Chronika Maćicy Serbskeje/Chronik der Maćica Serbska' (undated). Available at <http://www.macica.sorben.com/dokumenty/chronika.htm>. Accessed on 7 December 2012.

idea was first mooted by J.A. Smoler on 18 April 1845. From its inception, the organisation sought to increase the research into a variety of areas including language and linguistics, literature, science, music and art, with the aim of publishing books on these topics for both academic and popular audiences. The broader aim of this research was not just to deepen the knowledge of Sorbian as a subject (*Sorabistik*), but also to develop the language and consolidate a Sorbian national consciousness.²⁰ This latter aspect remains a key part of the remit today, as is demonstrated by, for example, the organisation's continuing emphasis on Sorbian 'patriots', selected from this period of history and later.

In 1848, the organisation published the first edition of its in-house journal, the *Časopis Maćicy Serbskeje*. This journal covered a variety of subjects to match the breadth of the organisation's remit. Over one hundred and seventy issues were published between 1848 and 1937, when both the publication and the organisation were banned by the National Socialist party.²¹ The publication of the first edition of the *Časopis Maćicy Serbskeje* was not, however, the only major event of 1848 amongst the Sorbs: the so-called *Maćica* Petition was also presented to the government of Saxony. In keeping with many of the political movements of the day, the petition called for greater freedoms; not, as in much of the rest of Europe, extending to calls for independence or secession, but appealing for measures such as the right to use the Sorbian language as well as German in the educational system, and in the business of local government. The petition was ignored by the Saxon government at the time, however, and these less than revolutionary demands were not acted upon.²²

On 27 June 1880, a specifically Lower Sorbian section of the organisation was formed in Cottbus, named *Mašica Serbska* (note the slightly different spelling to *Maćica Serbska*). It is interesting to note that even at this 'high' moment in Sorbian history, the Lower Sorbian section was founded at the behest not of a

20 Thiemann, *Sorben Serbja*, p. 114

21 Thiemann, *Sorben Serbja*, p. 114

22 Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*, p. 24; Thiemann, *Sorben Serbja*, p. 115

Sorb, but of a local Polish lawyer, one A. Parczewski.²³ The close involvement of Poles in Lower Sorbian organisations and institutions is something which remains strong to this day.²⁴ The cultural and political context in which this specifically Lower Sorbian group found itself was also rather different from that experienced by the Upper Sorbian *Maćica Serbska*: being under Prussian rule, it was subject to a far stronger official policy of Germanisation. For example, this policy resulted in the prohibition of the use of Sorbian language in grammar schools in Cottbus.²⁵ This context also helps to explain the delayed formation of an explicitly Lower Sorbian initiative like *Mašica Serbska*.

A further significant contrast to the Upper Sorbian *Maćica Serbska* was that *Mašica Serbska* was smaller and drew much of its membership from the local rural population, with only twenty-seven per cent coming from the professions, such as doctors, teachers or priests.²⁶ *Maćica Serbska*, on the other hand, was largely composed of members drawn from a small, educated, urban elite. As such, the status and influence of the two sections were significantly unbalanced. When, therefore, a Sorbian House (*Wendisches Haus*) was built between 1897 and 1904 to contain not only the Sorbian Museum, but also the organisation's archive, gallery and library, there was little question that it would be anywhere but in Bautzen.²⁷ While the original building no longer remains, the same organisational structure continues to operate in the Sorbian House in Bautzen today, and represents a dynamic that still very much shapes the current social structures amongst the Sorbs.

23 Thiemann, *Sorben Serbja*, p. 118

24 Gregor Wiczorek, the current editor of the Lower Sorbian newspaper *Nowy Casnik*, is originally from Poland, as is the head of the Lower Sorbian school of language and culture, Maria Elikowska-Winkler.

25 Šurman M., 'Župa Dolna Łužyca z.t.: Domowina-Regionalverband Niederlausitz e.V.' Available at <http://www.domowina.sorben.com/strony/zupadl.htm>. Accessed on 7 December 2012.

26 Thiemann, *Sorben Serbja*, p. 118.

27 *Maćica Serbska/Mašica Serbska*, 'Chronika Maćicy Serbskeje/Chronik der Maćica Serbska' (undated). Available at <http://www.macica.sorben.com/dokumenty/chronika.htm>. Accessed on 7 December 2012.

The context in which the *Maćica Serbska*/*Maśica Serbska* were formed was one of increasing industrialisation and modernisation. The creation of the first railway lines in the region served to link the main Sorbian centres with their neighbouring German-majority cities. Bautzen, despite being a much smaller town today than Cottbus, received its station and railway line in 1846, a little over a year after the founding of *Maćica Serbska* and exactly twenty years before Cottbus. The line connected Bautzen with Dresden, the administrative capital. From Bautzen it continued on to Görlitz.²⁸ The feats of engineering for this line were worthy of comment in the English newspaper *The Economist*, which wrote in 1846:

Few lines have presented such difficulties in the construction as those which exist on this one; they have by necessity, in addition, to forego the usual maximum of gradients, there being inclines of 1-55, 1-65 and 1-90. The works of magnitude are the viaducts of Dennitzthal and of Spresthal, and the bridge over the Roder, and which merit honourable mention.²⁹

The Economist's mention of the *Spresthal*, or *Spreeviadukt*, as it is now known, gives some sense of the challenging local terrain that has helped allow Sorbian culture to flourish in this part of Germany. The difficulty in building on this terrain also indicates the relative isolation of the area; to complete the line, six railway bridges and two viaducts had to be constructed on the line before Bautzen alone. The two viaducts are both over two hundred metres long: the second longer *Spreeviadukt* links Bautzen with the rest of the line.³⁰

So far I have focused on Cottbus and Bautzen, the two major Lusatian towns with a substantial Sorbian population and connection. To consider only these towns, however, would be to misrepresent the nature and spread of Sorbian life in the region. As stated in chapter one, the Sorbs have never constituted a majority

28 Schweers H., *Eisenbahnatlas Deutschland 2007/08* (Aachen: Schweers & Wall, 6th edition, 2007), pp. 60-61.

29 *The Economist*, 'Railways In Germany' (3 January 1846), p. 19. *The Economist Historical Archive*. Available at http://www.store.economist.com/Group-The_historical_archive.aspx. Accessed on 10 December 2012.

30 von Polenz H., *Eisenbahnen im Bautzener Land* (Bautzen: Lausitzer Verlag, 2006), pp. 141 ff.

population within a town in modern times. As Fulbrook notes, the Sorbs are ‘an essentially rural culture and language community.’³¹ This means most Sorbs continue to live in small villages spread out across both Upper and Lower Lusatia, each with its own traditions and customs as well as often its own specific forms of Sorbian. This physically decentralised form is not merely an incidental backdrop to Sorbian culture past and present, but is in fact vital for a proper understanding of the contemporary Sorbian situation.

2.5 THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The second significant Sorbian organisation to be founded was the *Domowina* (which means ‘Homeland’ in Sorbian) on 13 October 1912, in Hoyerswerda – a full forty-one years after the creation of the first unified modern German state, under Otto von Bismarck. The *Domowina* was from the outset a larger organisation than *Maćica Serbska*, and had the broader remit of ‘defending the democratic and national interests of the Sorbs as well as maintaining Sorbian language and culture’.³² This aim was reflected in its structure as an umbrella organisation for other Sorbian groups. However, in keeping with the tradition of polycentrism amongst the Sorbs, not all the groups were happy to be placed under the *Domowina*’s umbrella. Therefore the *Maćica Serbska* remained outside the organisation until a 1949 edict from the Saxon government compelled them to join.³³ Nevertheless there were thirty-one groups which did choose to join, though the vast majority were from Upper Lusatia.³⁴ In addition to the broader remit mentioned above, the *Domowina* defined another aim as that of ‘the elevation and

31 Fulbrook M. (ed.), *German History since 1800* (London: Arnold, 1997), p. 427.

32 ‘Archiw: Dalše wozjewjenja’ (undated). Available at <http://www.domowina.sorben.com/strony/archiw.htm>. Accessed on 31 December 2012.

33 *Maćica Serbska/Mašica Serbska*, ‘Chronika Maćicy Serbskeje/Chronik der Maćica Serbska’ (undated). Available at <http://www.macica.sorben.com/dokumenty/chronika.htm>. Accessed on 7 December 2012.

34 *Domowina – Bund Lausitzer Sorben e.V. Im Zeichen des Lindenblatts. Die Domowina – Bund Lausitzer Sorben e.V. auf dem Weg zu ihrem 100-jährigen Bestehen. 1912-2012* (Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 2006) p. 8.

advancement of the affiliated groups (*Vereine*), particularly in their efforts with regard to the spiritual and economic fortune of the Sorbian (*Wendisch*) people'.³⁵ Even at this early stage, the economic and religious situations were treated as being of equal significance to legal and political reform. The sole criterion for joining the *Domowina* was that the *Verein* was that of 'Christian loyalty to the King and to the Fatherland.'³⁶ In this declaration, it is possible to discern an aspect of conservatism even within an organisation which was orientated towards political change. The *Domowina* at this time seems to have wanted reform, not revolution.

After the rise and fall of the Weimar Republic between 1919 and 1933, there were no significant changes to the situation within Germany of the Sorbian organisations. The pressures of Germanisation, in addition to industrialisation on a large scale, led to further difficulties in the expression of Sorbian language and culture.³⁷ The situation became worse with the rise of the Nazi party to government in 1933. It is from this date that the Nazis sought to limit the use and spread of Sorbian culture and language, principally on account of its Slavic origins. By 1937 the assets and property of *Maćica Serbska* were taken over by the Third Reich and the library and archive were disbanded.

The much larger *Domowina* initially sought to accommodate some of the Nazi concerns that the Sorbs were a potential Slav fifth column within German lands.³⁸ In 1933-4 the *Domowina* added to its organisational aims the 'preservation and advancement of the Sorbian people [*Volkstum*] within the framework of the German state'.³⁹ Furthermore, with the enforced structural change to the *Domowina* by the Nazis from that of an umbrella organisation to that of an individual member-only system, the *Domowina* again modified its rules so that

35 Musiat S., *Sorbische/Wendische Vereine 1716–1937: Ein Handbuch* (Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 2001) p. 335.

36 Musiat, *Sorbische/Wendische Vereine*, p. 335.

37 Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*, pp. 31-33; Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 17.

38 See this volume, 1.4.2 Scholarship on the Sorbian National Minority.

39 Musiat, *Sorbische/Wendische Vereine*, p. 336.

membership was open to ‘every reputable [*ehrbare*] Lusatian *Sorb* [male] and every Lusatian *Sorbin* [female]’.⁴⁰ However, these changes did not satisfy the Nazi regime, and by 1937 the *Domowina* balked at the demand that it be known as the representative of ‘Wendish-speaking Germans’, contrary to the Nazis’ previous description of them as ‘German-speaking Slavs’.⁴¹ The authorities responded to this by banning the *Domowina* on 18 March 1937, and confiscating its property in Bautzen.⁴²

Although the two institutions on which we have focussed so far –the *Maćica Serbska/Mašica Serbska* and the *Domowina* – ceased to exist between 1937 and the conclusion of the Second World War, this period represents one of the most profoundly important episodes in recent Sorbian history, and one whose detrimental impact on Sorbian life and culture can still be witnessed today. For the latter part of the Second World War, Lusatia was on the front line of military operations; troops advanced and retreated over the region several times during the course of the war. The consequences of the close proximity of the fighting on those living in the region – especially those who were Sorbian – has been little researched.⁴³

For many Sorbs the Slavic link with the soldiers of the Russian army functioned as a significantly complicating factor. As Jurij Koch explained in an interview I conducted with him, the Russians were confused by their discovery of a population in Germany which was apparently speaking a Slavic language.⁴⁴

40 Musiat, *Sorbische/Wendische Vereine*, p. 336.

41 Himmer H., ‘Einige Gedanken über die Behandlung der Fremdvölkischen im Osten’ (15 May 1940), in Kühnl R. *Der Deutsche Faschismus in Quellen und Dokumenten* (Cologne: Papyrassa Verlag, 3rd edition, 1978), pp. 328 ff.

42 Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*, p. 35; *Maćica Serbska/Mašica Serbska*, ‘Chronika Maćicy Serbskeje/Chronik der Maćica Serbska’ (undated). Available at <http://www.macica.sorben.com/dokumenty/chronika.htm>. Accessed on 7 December 2012.

43 See Keller I., ‘Einige Auswirkungen der Umsiedlung nach 1945 auf die Sorbische Familie’, *Lětopis* 43/1 (1996), pp. 39-47.

44 Jurij Koch was born in Horka, Upper Lusatia, in 1936. He is a prominent Sorbian poet and novelist.

In the same interview, Koch explained just how close the war came to his small rural village of Horka (only around thirty miles from the eventual border with Poland) in Upper Lusatia. On one occasion towards the end of the war, when Koch was around seven or eight years old, there was intense fighting between the German and Russian forces. The Germans succeeded in pushing back the Soviet/Polish line, and killed several people in and around Horka. The Russians ordered the women and children of the village to dig a mass grave and bury the soldiers' bodies, then cover them with quicklime to speed up the process of decomposition. A few weeks later, after another round of battles, the Germans succeeded in forcing the Russian line back. Upon discovering the mass grave, the Germans made civilian residents dig up the corpses, wash them, and bury them again in separate graves. Koch was forced to help in this task, in spite of his young age.⁴⁵ The events Koch describes are entirely plausible given the events in the region at the time. Between 21 April and 30 April 1945 the battle of Bautzen took place across this area. The documentation of the destruction of a retreating Polish military hospital convoy which took place less than thirty miles away (coincidentally, in a different village called Horka) gives further credence to Koch's story.⁴⁶

Within 48 hours of the official German surrender on 8 May 1945, the *Domowina* once again came into being, this time in Crostwitz rather than Hoyerswerda.⁴⁷ Of course Lusatia was occupied by Soviet troops, and the *Domowina* was in fact the first political organisation to be officially sanctioned by the Soviet authorities.⁴⁸ However, the wider situation in Lusatia at this time was about to have profound implications for Sorbian (as well as German) life. In a very short space of time,

45 Oral testimony to the author in an interview with Jurij Koch (July/August 2010). See in this volume, p. 11.

46 Grzelak C., Stańczyk H., Zwoliński S., *Bez możliwości wyboru: Wojsko Polskie na froncie wschodnim, 1934-1945*, (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Bellona, 1993) p. 71 and p. 204.

47 *Domowina – Bund Lausitzer*, p. 11.

48 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 26.

Lusatia went from being a central region of a Germany that spread hundreds of miles further east, to being a region on the border with Poland.

The process of turning an area of relatively long-term German settlement into a predominantly Polish one was fraught with difficulties. The influx of Germans from the region east of the Oder-Neisse line from 1944 onwards resulted in a significant change in the demographic makeup of society in Lusatia, with the Sorbs becoming an even smaller minority. The evacuees (also *Umsiedler*),⁴⁹ along with almost all of those still alive during ‘zero hour’ (*Stunde Null*), found life to be exceptionally difficult after the cessation of war due to the almost total destruction of infrastructure.⁵⁰

The Sorbian situation was further complicated by the retributions and recriminations between Germans and Poles during this period, as well as in the years that followed. Such animosity was often linked to the nationalist narratives of German and Slav ethnicity: the Sorbs as a Slavic group often found themselves being lumped in with the actions of their fellow Slavic Poles.⁵¹ Given this context it is perhaps to be expected that any public declaration of Sorbian identity or language would not have been advisable for some Sorbs. The Sorbian situation was also changed by the previous twelve years of Nazi propaganda, which inculcated the idea that Slavs were naturally subhuman. The ban on the use of Sorbian language in education and local government surely also diminished the social status of the language, and continued to affect language use even in the post-war period. Finally, it is inconceivable that the antagonism of centuries of

49 The term *Umsiedler* (evacuee/resettler) is one that will resurface later in GDR and post-GDR history to refer to those whose villages are ‘relocated’ due to brown coal mining in the Sorbian area of settlement.

50 Roseman M., ‘Division and Stability: the Federal Republic of Germany, 1949-1989’ in Fulbrook M. (ed.), *German History since 1800* (London: Arnold, 1997), pp. 365-390 at p. 367; Fulbrook M., ‘Ossis and Wessis: the creation of two German societies’ in Fulbrook M. (ed.), *German History since 1800* (London: Arnold, 1997), pp. 411-431.

51 Oral testimony to author during informal interview with elderly German couple, one of whom was expelled from the former German territories in Poland in 1945. See in this volume, p. 11. See also Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 26.

Germanisation, combined with the intense radicalisation into racist politics during the Nazi period, simply melted away after the end of the war; the continuing effects of this period can be seen in events of the next seventy years. It is to this more recent history that I now turn.

2.6 THE POST-WAR PERIOD

After the end of the Second World War the Allies divided up Germany, with a major restructuring of Germany's borders resulting in significant loss of eastern territories and the destruction of Prussia.⁵² This was to result in the Soviet Union receiving an area which while equivalent to about one-fifth of pre-war Germany, amounted to over one-third of the Germany of 1945.⁵³ Berlin was to become the capital of the new East German Republic – but only the eastern half as, even though it was situated deep with the Soviet zone, the city itself was further divided among the Allies and given four-power status (consisting of division into four sectors: British, American, French, and Soviet).⁵⁴ East Germany was declared fully sovereign in 1954, although it continued to be dominated politically and militarily by the USSR until its demise in 1989.⁵⁵

The years between the end of the war and the founding of the GDR were tumultuous, for the German population at large, but also for the Sorbs, some of whom thought that this could be an opportune time to once again call for an independent Sorbian state, as they had during the negotiations for the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. This was the position taken by the 'Lusatian-Sorbian national committee' (Łužisko-serbski narodny wuběrk), who wished either for an independent state or to become part of what was then Czechoslovakia.⁵⁶ However,

52 Berger S., *Germany: Inventing the Nation* (London: Edward Arnold, 2004), p. 169.

53 Krisch H., *The German Democratic Republic* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), p. 5.

54 Broadbent P. & Hake S. (eds), *Berlin: Divided City, 1945-1989* (Oxford: Bergahn, 2010), p. 37.

55 Loth W., *Stalin's Unwanted Child: The Soviet Union, The German Question and the Founding of the GDR* (London: Palgrave, 1998); Berger, *Inventing the Nation*, pp. 204-210

56 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 17; Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*, p. 32.

these options were not universally favoured amongst the Sorbs. The *Domowina* wanted instead to remain within a German state, and co-operated in this endeavour with the SED up to local elections in 1946.

2.6.1 THE CONTEXT OF THE GDR

On 7 October 1949, from the devastation of the Second World War, arose the first and thus-far only socialist state on German soil in the form of the German Democratic Republic. This proclamation came rapidly after the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany on 23 May 1949.⁵⁷ From then on, the East German state played ‘catch-up’ with its western neighbour. The German Democratic Republic was a *creatio ex nihilo*: its existence was to be a break from the past.⁵⁸ It was also never intended to be a permanent solution, merely a pre-cursor to a socialist united Germany.

Nevertheless, due to the Allies’ lack of co-operation, it became clear that by 1949 unification of the two Germanys would take much longer, if it were ever to happen at all. In the early years of the eastern state there were several ‘reforms’ that sought to mould the East in the image of its comrade the USSR. The formation of a Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) made up of the KPD, communists and the SPD, was to be the single largest – and in fact only – ruling party, in what was officially a democratic system. Reforms were also carried out in the field of education, judiciary and the nationalisation of industry.⁵⁹

57 Roseman, ‘Division and Stability’.

58 Joppke C.: *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), p. 39.

59 Fulbrook, ‘Ossis and Wessis’, p. 415.

2.6.2 SORBS AND A NEW EAST GERMAN IDENTITY

The founding principle, myth, or perhaps even *raison d'être* of the new 'socialist state of workers and peasants' was opposition to fascism.⁶⁰ This was one of the single most effective policies of the GDR, and was not without substance: many of the communists had fought bitterly against fascism during the Weimar period, and also during the era of National Socialist rule. Many communists had been interned in places like Buchenwald, and many had fled to live in exile but since returned to assist in the building of this new anti-fascist state.⁶¹ As well as reflecting the political *history* of those forming this new state, anti-fascism also became the cornerstone of the new East German *identity*, and possibly helped East Germans deal with memories of the immediate Nazi past.⁶² There was a widespread feeling that fascism had occurred when capitalism and democracy failed to cope with economic and political crisis: the well-documented instability and fractious nature of the Weimar Republic, coupled with the hyperinflation and Great Depression of the 1920s, in the opinion of many paved the road to fascism. It was also said that, since the FRG professed itself to be the true German successor state, fascism could return at any time to repeat the violence and chaos of the previous twelve years. This anti-fascist agenda, combined with the propagation of fear towards its western neighbour, sat comfortably with an officially anti-capitalist political programme and with the GDR's anti-westernism and pro-Sovietism.

The new policy of pro-Sovietism was certainly a *volte-face* for the people of the new state, who under National Socialist rule had been bombarded with idealisations of the 'racial nation' and of Slavs as *Untermenschen*. The shift to pro-Sovietism was also far from a political fact of merely academic interest: many

60 Krisch, *The German Democratic Republic*, p. 35.

61 Koonz, C., 'Between Memory and Oblivion: Concentration Camps in German Memory' in Gillis J. R. (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 258-280 at p. 262.

62 Berger, *Inventing the Nation*, p. 200; Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 32. The Domowina also joined in calling itself an 'anti-fascist, democratic organisation'.

men now under GDR rule had fought on the eastern front, and were among hundreds of thousands interned in Soviet prisoner of war camps. Therefore, given these recent facts of history, there was surely much popular suspicion of the Soviets. Furthermore, the pro-Soviet policy effectively asked the many German women subjected to rape by Soviet soldiers to put the experience behind them;⁶³ the GDR was ‘forever and irrevocably allied to the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics’, according to Article 6 of the 1974 constitution.⁶⁴ It is no wonder then that the East Germans had no equivalent to the westernisation of the FRG.

Consonant with this pro-Soviet policy, the Sorbs became a privileged minority. Indeed, they were officially recognised as the ‘only national minority in the GDR’.⁶⁵ This privileged status was reflected in their specific inclusion in Article 40 of the GDR’s constitution, which stipulates the preservation of the culture and mother tongue of ‘citizens of the GDR of Sorbian nationality’.⁶⁶ This was the first Sorb-specific law that was written into national law. This contrasts with other minority laws during the Weimar period which did not specify the Sorbs, and with Sorb-specific laws which were codified only at a state (*Land*) level – for example, the 1948 Saxon law.⁶⁷

Although it had been said that the GDR had ‘no history’, the state certainly exhibited many of the prior characteristics of both the National Socialist state and those of the Bismarckian ‘Prussian’ Empire.⁶⁸ One of the most noticeable was that of the love of the *Heimat*, a theme present within German society long before the existence of an identifiable German nation. The concept itself roughly

63 See Messerschmidt J.W., ‘Review symposium. The forgotten victims of World War II: masculinities and rape in Berlin, 1945’, *Violence Against Women* 12 (2006), pp. 706–712; Sander H. & Johr B., *Befreier und Befreite. Krieg, Vergewaltigung, Kinder* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer Verlag, 2005); Kuwert P. & Freyberger H., ‘The unspoken secret: Sexual violence in World War II’, *International Psychogeriatrics* 19/4 (2007), pp. 782–784.

64 Verfassung der DDR (7 October 1974), Article 6.

65 Nowusch H., *Die Gleichberechtigung der Bürger sorbischer Nationalität in der DDR-verwirklichtes Menschenrecht* (Bautzen: VEB Domowina Verlag, 3rd edition, 1978), p. 13

66 Nowusch, *Die Gleichberechtigung*, p. 148.

67 GVBL Land Sachsen (9 April 1948).

68 Joppke, *East German Dissidents*, p. 39.

corresponds to a feeling of connectedness and belonging to a particular area, from an individual village to a Confederation of Nations. Also from the 1870s Republic was the concept of social welfare, a link that could reasonably be drawn from the introduction of a generous pensions provision under Chancellor Bismarck and the exemplary social welfare system of the socialist state. Furthermore, the invocation of an *Erbesfeind* (a 'hereditary enemy'), as well as the invocation of internal enemies, was a German theme deployed extensively by the GDR. Instead of the French and communists, however, the enemies were fascism and those who sought greater freedoms.

From the beginning, the GDR sought to convince its people that if they only supported the state the state would support them. This was to some extent apparent in the way in which the population as a whole were treated with regard to their Nazi past. After a thorough post-war 'de-nazification' by the Soviets, of not just high ranking but also many middle- and lower-level members of the Nazi party, the general populace was given the chance to take part in a retrospective show of support for the communists' fight against Nazism. This process brought closure to the Nazi period, and justified asking no further questions; it sufficed to blame capitalism, rather than Germans. This must however be put in the context of West Germany's treatment of the same events, which were by no means any better; and in fact the continued presence of so many high-ranking former Nazi officials in the FRG, and the popular concept of Germans as the victims of Hitler showed a lack of ability to deal with the past.

A good explanation of the fundamental problems facing this new regime on even just a theoretical level is provided by Joppke:

Leninist regimes are intrinsically geared towards mobilisation and combat. As mobilisation regimes, their aspiration is that of all-out penetration and activation of society in the name of a single overarching goal. As combat regimes they are poised for permanent struggle – an

enemy always has to be defeated. [...] A] regime that struggles rather than governs, confronts rather than represents society.⁶⁹

This goes some way in helping to explain the often contradictory nature of the GDR itself and more specifically of the policies put forward by the SED. The desire to activate society led the all-encompassing party to attempt, to a great extent successfully, to control not just the working lives of its citizens but also their leisure time. This is nowhere more clear than in the Youth Movements of the *Junge Pioniere* (JP) and the *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (FDJ). From the age of six to fourteen it was generally expected that most children would join the JP organisation, which fulfils the role that an organisation such as the Cubs and Scouts might play in Britain, although of course with a Marxist-Leninist flavour.

From the age of fourteen to twenty-five there was the expectation that most young people would then go on to join the FDJ. While it was not compulsory to join the FDJ (unlike the Hitler Youth), not joining would often prevent access to higher education and good jobs. So by 1981 the FDJ had 2.3 million members, representing seventy-five per cent of the fourteen to twenty-five age group eligible for membership. This is a considerable number by any means, but is particularly impressive given that the GDR had only 16.7 million citizens.⁷⁰ These organisations were highly militaristic and possessed a complex command structure; the FDJ even went so far as to have *Ordnungsgruppen*, which were responsible for maintaining law and order within the group, and acting as a paramilitary wing. The official position of the organisation was to act as ‘helper and reserve’ for the SED.⁷¹ Consequently many senior SED figures have emerged from the ranks of the youth organisations: the GDR’s leader from 1971 onwards, Erich Honecker, led the youth movements before going on to lead the SED. The Sorbian youth movement was also amalgamated into the FDJ.

69 Joppke, *East German Dissidents*, pp. 46-50.

70 Krisch, *The German Democratic Republic*, p. 24.

71 Eleonore C., Lewis J. & Pritchard G. (eds), *Power and the People: A Social History of Central European Politics 1945-56* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 33.

A further feature, and one that is perhaps surprising for an avowedly atheist state, was that of the *Jugendweihe*, a secular alternative to Christian confirmation. The ceremony predated the formation of the GDR but was later adopted by the SED as a suitable alternative to a religious ceremony. The ceremony was performed by ninety-five per cent of all fourteen-year-olds in 1983-84.⁷² The aim of the ceremony was again little different from that of confirmation, to welcome and publicly introduce the child into society and in the case of the GDR to make good communists out of them.

The GDR was always, even from the beginning, a project that found little outright support from its population, and in fact in the early years many citizens voted with their feet and left for West Germany. This inability to pass the ‘everyday plebiscite’ that, before the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, contributed to a loss of one-sixth of the population, was a source of constant concern for the ruling elite.⁷³ As Joppke says:

About East Germany he [Mirabeau] might have said that it was not a country that had succumbed to communist rule, but communist rule that sought to create a country just for itself.⁷⁴

This ever-present fear, resulting in almost a mass inferiority complex within the elite, was a large part of why on 13 August 1961 the state constructed the Berlin Wall. The Wall prevented, or more accurately highly restricted, access to and from East Berlin. This was not, however, the reason given to the GDR’s populace to explain why they could no longer see their families or even leave the communist state. The official reason was that the Berlin Wall was to act as an anti-fascist barrier (*‘anti-faschistischer Schutzwall’*) to ‘protect’ East Germans from the corruption of the capitalist west. This kind of paternalism pervaded life

72 Glaser K., ‘Language and Ethnic/National Identity in Europe: The importance of Gaelic and Sorbian to the maintenance of associated cultures and ethno-cultural identities’. Unpublished PhD thesis (Middlesex University, 2002); Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 42.

73 Joppke, *East German Dissidents*, p. 40.

74 Joppke, *East German Dissidents*, p. 39.

under the GDR. For example, although workers were held up as heroes, and as being the very reason for the state's existence, the GDR continually tried to 'educate' these workers by encouraging and subsidising 'higher' cultural events such as classical music concerts and opera houses.

The attitude of the state towards its minorities was also one of contradiction between official policy and practice. Women's ability to rise to the top was severely limited, in spite of the fact that almost ninety per cent of women were employed under the GDR. Margot Honecker was one of the most prominent women in the GDR, serving as Minister for National Education from 1963 to 1989, though her marriage to the East German leader can hardly have harmed her employability. Women were also expected to look after the house and be responsible for caring for the children, although impressive childcare facilities were available. Again, the rhetoric used to explain this situation bore only minimal relation to reality; the emancipation of women in the GDR had a lot more to do with the desperate need for labour to sustain the economy, than it did with feminist ideals and principles.⁷⁵

The very self-proclaimed premises of the state itself often found little reception within the wider community, so for example the official declaration by the SED that the GDR was a *Friedenstaat* (nation/state of peace) was hard to believe after seeing the massive displays, so beloved by Communist regimes, of massive military hardware, especially during major public holidays. The proliferation of uniforms in society – especially in the youth movements – points to a strong sense of militarism and the desire to be ever-ready and vigilant to any threat, real or imagined. Furthermore, for almost half of its existence it continued to seek a unified Germany; a commitment that was then reversed in the mid-seventies under Honecker's policy of *Abgrenzung* (differentiation).⁷⁶ This inconsistent

75 Lemke C., 'Women and Politics in East Germany', *Socialist Review* 15 (1985), p. 123; Kranz S., 'Women's Role in the German Democratic Republic and the State's Policy towards Women', *Journal of International Women's Studies* 7 (November 2005), p. 72.

76 Joppke, *East German Dissidents*, pp. 51-55.

manipulation of history certainly did little to foster strong relationships between the people and the regime.

Initially, much like the Allies in the West who sought to re-educate the Germans about the horrors they had committed, the Communists also tried to convince the East Germans of the error of their ways in Alexander Abusch's film *Der Irrweg einer Nation*. However, as on both sides of the divide, the powers-that-be soon realised that it would be more useful to have the population support their respective state. Instead of ignoring history, the Communists began to cherry pick the parts they felt most appropriate, which were then used in the context of a national history constructed of both a 'red' progressive thread and a reactionary one. This usefully divided the history of a single German nation into a form which could then be appropriated by the east to cast itself as the direct result of the 1848 revolutionary ideals, Marx, the early labour movement, the KPD and finally the GDR. This was in contrast to the ignominious history that leads from Luther, Prussian Junkers, militarism, capitalism and significantly National Socialism to the founding of the FRG.

The stage was now set for good versus evil, selflessness versus selfishness and ultimately East versus West. However, as with so many aspects of the Cold War, it was not to be that simple: from the beginning the GDR had sought to promote the cause of a united German nation led by socialism, continuing this idea even up to the early 1970s. It was only with the modified constitution of 1974 (such modification being something of a 'regular' ritual in the GDR) that allusions to a united Germany began to be dropped. This manifested itself in many ways, not least in that the national anthem was, as a result of its reference to a 'united fatherland', no longer sung. The very name of the state was now no longer said in full and instead an acronym was to suffice. This was all part of a policy of *Abgrenzung* (differentiation) from West Germany pursued by Honecker, who was at the time leader of the GDR – a policy which stood in contrast to the policies of rapprochement and *Ostpolitik* pursued by Willy Brandt, then Chancellor of the

FRG. This Western approach was the cause of concern and viewed with much suspicion by the SED who continued to view the West as an ever-present threat, in line with the general nature of Leninist states.

All of these elements, and several others, demonstrate a profound gap between official policy proclamations and the real-life practices – a disparity which led many GDR citizens to feel that they were living a double-life: a public one, in accordance with state proclamations, and a private one, in which reality took precedence. It is difficult, if not impossible, for those born into a non-communist state to realise what it must have been like to have been told every day that ‘you are happy, you live in a caring anti-fascist utopia that provides everything that you could possibly desire’, while you spend your time standing in line waiting for bread. Or as was the case after the ‘coffee crisis’ of the early 1970s that the new ‘Mischkaffee’ was superior to the previously available product, despite it containing only fifty per cent coffee.⁷⁷ This continual dichotomy between what was seen and experienced and how life was described by the state placed, without a doubt, a significant strain on even the most loyal of communist supporters. With this in mind it would seem likely that any attempt by the SED to construct a feeling of separate East German identity would be tantamount to building a house upon the sand.

The role of the *Domowina* during the GDR period is one which is still controversial amongst the Sorbs. In the early days of the GDR the *Domowina* was designated the sole representative of the Sorbian people and was given significant state support. The price of this state support was that further separatist calls for independence would not be tolerated and that as long as the Sorbs worked within the new political framework they would be free to continue to practise Sorbian cultural traditions as well as use the language in public. All other Sorbian organisations, such as the *Maćica Serbska*, were subsumed into the *Domowina*, which initially increased membership of the organisation. However, as calls for

⁷⁷ Krisch, *The German Democratic Republic*, pp. 90-114.

more Sorbian-friendly policy continued to be rebuffed and the organisation came to be seen as a mouthpiece or puppet of the SED, an increasing number left the organisation. As the sole representative of the Sorbs, the *Domowina* was charged with spreading the SED's propaganda in relation to policies that many Sorbs were not particularly happy with, such as agricultural collectivisation and the expansion of brown coal extraction and use. However, given that the *Domowina* and its members were not elected or representative of Sorbian society as a whole, many of the policies were resisted. This became ever more apparent in the later years of the GDR as environmental protests regarding brown coal mining became increasingly public and outspoken.

The dichotomy between the efforts of the SED and the *Domowina* to extol the virtues for the Sorbian populace of continued communist rule were repeatedly undermined by many of the top-down policy edicts of the Party. As such, while it is true to say that officially the Sorbs were an officially privileged minority in the GDR, there were many other policies that served to undermine their continued use of Sorbian and its role within society. Instances of broader imperatives within public policy trumping specific rules regarding the Sorbs were evident for all to see. For example, during the re-location of villages that were due to be destroyed as a result of brown coal mining, families were offered compensation. A fact that the Party used to silence Sorbian critics, however the amount that they received was minimal and placed in a regulated account which was subject to strict rules concerning how much money could be withdrawn each year. Furthermore the families themselves were given little choice about where they moved to, often finding themselves placed in newly built tower blocks on the outskirts of towns, a practice which resulted in the effective dissolution of several rural communities. This was all the more problematic for those Sorbian speakers who suddenly found themselves living in a solely German-speaking environment. These examples of economic policy trumping national minority policy, and the problematic 'Germanisation' of Sorbs who had been relocated were manifest not just in relation to language, but also other aspects of Sorbian culture such as the use of

traditional costume in everyday life. One Sorbian women recounts how, shortly after being moved to make way for brown coal extraction, her elderly mother stopped wearing the traditional dress that she had worn all her life. When she asked her why, the mother said she was being continually stared at while shopping and had been told to ‘go back to her own country’.⁷⁸

Were the GDR’s attempts to form a national identity a failure? Clearly, many of the citizens of the GDR felt real passion for this new socialist state, and in no group is this more evident than the surprising number of intellectuals who supported the ideals of the state, from both within and without. Moreover, there were the many millions who became actively involved in the running of the state and those who felt it was a far fairer alternative to the FRG. It could be said that it is only following the fall of communism that the real extent of the differences between these two German peoples has begun to become clear. The distinctions have been particularly demonstrated, since the mid-90s, by the rise of ‘*Ostalgie*’ – a public nostalgia for the former way of life.⁷⁹ This nostalgia has been made manifest in many ways, but is particularly apparent in the many popular t-shirts that bear communist logos, such as the old flag, or even the East German *Ampelmännchen*. Films such as *Goodbye, Lenin!* also hint at the desire of many people to remember the advantages of life in the east – although this is, of course, done, as with *Ostalgie* as a whole, with a great deal of irony and humour.⁸⁰ This working through of the past mainly through the use of products and symbols of the former east has resulted in many former GDR citizens harking back to the days of full employment, guaranteed housing and a rent which would never exceed ten per cent of income.⁸¹ In spite of West German unemployment being at a post-unification low, levels in Eastern Germany remain stubbornly high in many parts, with youth unemployment being particularly high.⁸²

78 Förster, *Umsiedler*, p. 32.

79 Fulbrook, ‘Ossis and Wessis’, p. 430.

80 Becker W., *Goodbye, Lenin!* Film (X-Filme Creative Pool, 2003).

81 Krisch, *The German Democratic Republic*, pp. 90-140.

82 ‘Wirtschaftsblunder’, *The Economist* (February 1998).

Having briefly looked at the situation since the fall of the GDR, and in greater depth as to the reasons it failed to produce a truly separate national identity, it is clear that the situation is complex, and will only become properly elucidated by more and detailed study of life during the GDR and, in particular, of the mass of records kept by the highly bureaucratic state apparatus – this is increasingly the case as time goes on and more and more of those with little or no memory of the divide come to the fore. At the moment Germany, as a unified (to some re-unified) whole wrestles with a divided economic picture and a continued *Sehnsucht nach Normalität*.⁸³ The disappointment felt by both sides as to the reality of the all-German solution which has not lived up to the rhetoric of the West German politicians of the time. Particularly noticeable is the continued absence of those ‘*blühende Landschaften*’ that the then Chancellor Kohl promised. These realities perhaps best serve as a warning that, in the words of Shakespeare, all that glisters is not gold.⁸⁴

2.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I presented a brief critical history of the Sorbs, from their beginnings as one of the Slavic tribes in the seventh century CE up to German unification. In the next chapter, I examine in detail the changes to politics and law which followed unification, and how Sorbian representatives both participated in these changes and were subject to federal and state constitutional reforms.

83 Herles W., *Wir sind kein Volk: Eine Polemik* (Munich and Zurich: Piper, 2004), pp. 111-145

84 Shakespeare W., *Merchant of Venice* II, vii (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Act II Scene vii p. 113.

CHAPTER THREE

THE IMPACT OF POLITICS AND LAW ON THE SORBS

Wot polubjenja do daća je dołha noha

[It is one thing to make a promise and another to keep it]¹

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This Sorbian proverb gives some indication of the nature of the political situation in Lusatia since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Even today, twenty years after the fall of the Wall, there are many Sorbs (and Germans for that matter) who feel that promises made during the unification period have yet to be kept. This chapter considers the changes to political and legal frameworks which took place during and after unification, and focuses in particular on how these changes impacted on Sorbian life and Sorbian national identity. I argue that, despite a great deal of initial activity rewriting laws and constitutional clauses after 1990, the impact on Sorbian life and national identity has been minimal.

The crisis of the GDR, in the late 1980s, was also a crisis for representatives of the Sorbs, and served to publicise the many divisions between those representatives. On the one hand, there were those who remained loyal to the GDR and its ideology, while on the other, there were those who expressed

1 A Sorbian proverb in Upper Sorbian. All translations both Sorbian and German are the author's own unless otherwise stated. Printed on a paper shopping bag from Lower Sorbian Lodka in Cottbus. Found in 2009 and printed by the Foundation for the Sorbian people. See this volume, Appendix 3:
Sorbian Shopping Bag with Sorbian Proverbs.

dissatisfaction with the GDR regime, and demanded urgent reform of the political and legal situation. In the course of this chapter I will explain these organisations – both those that existed under the GDR, and those formed more recently – and will examine their role in the political, constitutional and legal debates in question.

First, I will look at broader political debates in which Sorbs were involved (3.2). In particular, I will review the political reorganisation of the Sorbs after unification. I will focus in particular on the Sorbian cultural umbrella organisation of the Domowina² and its extraordinary Congress in March 1991, as it was here that some of the tensions between traditionalists and reformists came to the fore amongst Sorbian representatives. I argue that the division between traditionalists and reformists remains an apt description of the contemporary situation of Sorbian politics, and that the political debate continues to concern many of the legal and constitutional issues around support and protection of the Sorbs. This is further reinforced by a look at the structural debates twenty years on. Here I will examine the recent debates within the Sorbian community, since 2009, as to the future direction and shape of the existing Sorbian organisations, again principally looking at the Domowina and the newly proposed, as of 12 April 2011, ‘Sorbian people’s representation’ (Sorbische Volksvertretung). Here I wish to focus on the three most significant groups: the Domowina; the Sorbian National Assembly; and the Sorbian and Central Round Tables of the GDR.

Second, I shall examine and compare the legal and constitutional frameworks of the GDR with the arrangements after unification, and the effects of these on Sorbian life (3.3). Legal and constitutional provisions provoked particularly widespread debate amongst Sorbs during the unification period. Much of this debate concerned lobbying for certain amendments or provisions, and often made explicit invocations of Sorbian identity, including Sorbian national identity. I will examine calls for a Sorbian-specific minorities law to be included in the new

2 See in this volume, 2.4 The Nineteenth Century, p. 72.

federal constitution of a unified Germany, and will then move on to a discussion of the new constitutional provisions of the newly formed federal states of Saxony and Brandenburg.

3.2 CHANGES IN POLITICS

3.2.1 TRADITIONALISTS AND REFORMERS

Wolfgang Oschlies has described three distinct Sorbian political groupings during the post-unification political debates: orthodox, pragmatists, and liberals.³ The orthodox were those in posts under the old GDR regime. Oschlies argues that their opponents were the liberals, who were close to the dissident movement and were seeking a renewal of the Sorbs' political and organisational structures. The pragmatists, Oschlies claims, were those in between the orthodox and the liberals. They wanted some renewal but also some continuity of organisational practice.⁴

By contrast with Oschlies, I contend here that political debate post-unification is better understood as being dominated by two political groupings: traditionalists and reformers. (By 'political grouping' here I mean a group of individuals holding similar views on significant policies: i.e. sharing a political outlook in the broad sense, rather than necessarily sharing membership of a particular organisation or party.) I argue that it is a better reflection of the voting patterns and debates during the extraordinary Congress of the Domowina to think of Sorbian political debates as led by these two forces of tradition and reform, not least because Oschlies' pragmatists were defined by the confrontation between those defending the GDR's record, and those seeking reform. To support this contention, I will first concentrate on the debate regarding the role of the Domowina.

3 Oschlies W., *Die Sorben: Slawisches Volk im Osten Deutschlands* (Bonn: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1991), pp. 57, 68.

4 Oschlies, *Die Sorben*, p. 72.

3.2.2 TRADITIONALISTS AND REFORMERS IN THE DOMOWINA

The Domowina has throughout the post-unification period remained the most important collective political organisation for the Sorbs,⁵ although it must be remembered that it has only ever included a small proportion of the total Sorbian population and of their diverse opinions: a small number of Sorbs are members of the Domowina.⁶ The Domowina also serves as an insightful case study into how a region with a mixed-ethnic and minority population responded to the collapse of communism.

The traditionalists were characterised by a continuing belief in the socialist system and a desire to retain many of the Sorbian structures built up during the GDR. They were also often less religious than the general Sorbian population. Traditionalists were often Sorbs who had held official positions already in prominent Sorbian bodies, such as the Domowina under the GDR. This is in line with Oschlies' description of the 'orthodox' position amongst Sorbs. By contrast, the reformers were those who generally had stronger connections to the church and religious organisations as well as the '*Bürgerbewegungen*' (Citizens' movement) that had emerged from the transition of 1989. They often called for significant and in some cases radical change in terms of Sorbian institutional structures, which would highlight a break with the cosy relationship built up by the Domowina with parts of the GDR regime.⁷ In Figure 3 below, the integration of the Domowina with the power structure of the GDR is clear.

5 Barker P., *Slavs in Germany: The Sorbian Minority and the German State since 1945* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), p. 129.

6 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 129. There were 14,500 members in 1989, out of a reported (but possibly spurious) population of 100,000; and 7,000 members in 2011, out of a reported population of approximately 60,000. See 'Einladung zur 14. Hauptversammlung der Domowina'. Available at <http://www.sorben.org/einladung-zur-14-hauptversammlung-der-domowina.html>. Accessed on 1 January 2013.

7 Oschlies, *Die Sorben*, p. 69; Kasper M., *Die Lausitzer Sorben in der Wende 1989/1990: Ein Abriss mit Dokumenten und einer Chronik* (Bautzen: Domowina Verlag, 2000), pp. 42-49.

Die Verwirklichung der Nationalitätenpolitik in der Leitungsstruktur der Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Macht³¹

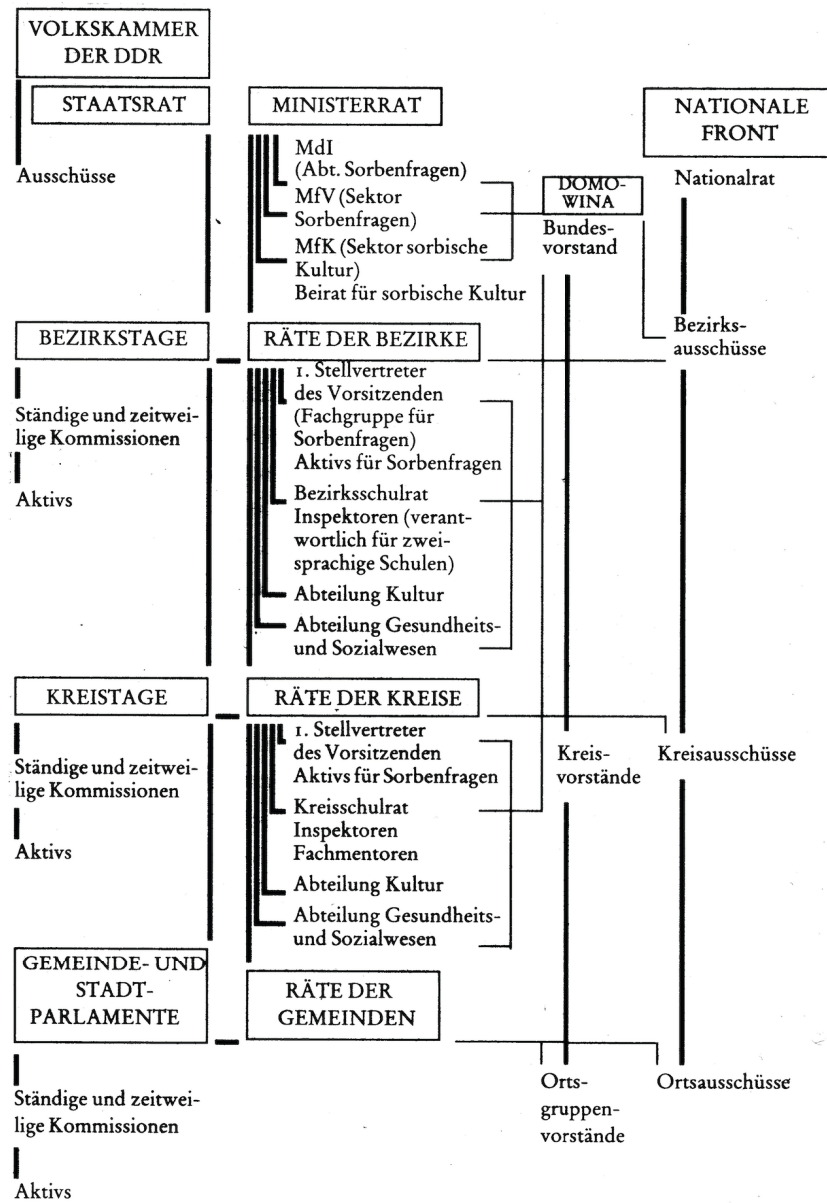


Figure 3: 'The realization of the Nationalities Policies in the leadership structure of the Workers' and Farmers' State'. Thick lines indicate hierarchy of power; thin lines indicate co-ordination between groups. Source: Nowusch H., *Die Gleichberechtigung der Bürger sorbischer Nationalität in der DDR-verwirklichtes Menschenrecht* (Bautzen: VEB Domowina Verlag, 3rd edition, 1988), p. 120.

The traditionalists defended themselves by arguing that the Sorbs had fared well with one organisation acting as the sole intermediary between themselves and those in political power. This view is typified by Jurij Grós, general secretary of the Domowina since 1964.⁸ By contrast, those critical of the Domowina argued that it was too compromised by its proximity to the SED. Because of the prominence provided by the Domowina during the GDR it became one of the main targets for Sorb reformers.

Since 1951 the Domowina has swum in the wake of the SED. [...] The Domowina has, in these historic days of the collapse of communism in central Germany and other eastern European areas, remained silent.⁹

Such criticism ultimately led on 1 November 1989 to the founding of an alternative organisation, the Sorbian National Assembly.¹⁰ The membership consisted of prominent Sorb intellectuals, dissidents and significant representation from the clergy.¹¹ The first public meeting was called to be held on 11 November 1989 in Bautzen.¹² This was only seven days after a peaceful demonstration of over a million people took place in East Berlin, calling for a better GDR and only two days after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Over two hundred Sorbs were present at this initial meeting. As Stani Brězan said,

The situation on this evening was extraordinary. Everyone knew: Something has to happen. Yet almost no-one knew the way.¹³

Jan Malink made the opening speech. A Protestant priest, as well as Speaker and founding member of the Sorbian National Assembly, he called for political reform

8 Grós J., *Staatsangehörigkeit: Deutsch, Nationalität: Sorbe: Über das Leben der Sorben in der DDR* (Schkeuditz: GNN Verlag, 2004).

9 Circle of Lusatian Sorbs in Exile, Open letter (15 November 1989) in Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, pp. 122-123.

10 In Upper Sorbian, Lower Sorbian and German, respectively: *Serbska narodna zhromadźizna*; *Serbska ludowa zgromažina*; and *Sorbische Volksversammlung*. See Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 114.

11 Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 22

12 *Nowa Doba* (4 November 1989)

13 Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 17.

and blamed the socialist agenda for its negative impact on the Sorbs.¹⁴ He placed this new movement's roots in historical context, explaining that this was fully in keeping with the tradition of Sorbian national re-birth in the nineteenth century,¹⁵ as well as representing a contemporary re-awakening of national consciousness amongst smaller peoples. Furthermore, he linked the Sorbian movement to the democratic movements of the time springing up across eastern-bloc countries.¹⁶

At the end of the evening of 11 November 1989, 106 of those present signed a petition to the East German parliament (*Volkskammer*).¹⁷ The letter called for greater account to be taken of Sorbian needs. In particular, it drew attention to the needs of those affected by the destruction of Sorbian villages through brown coal mining, and called for greater public prominence of Sorbian language in schools and in public life. What is striking about this document is that, even at this late stage of the GDR's existence, it does not call for the overthrow or replacement of the GDR regime; it does not even call for the abolition of the Domowina. This demonstrates the conservatism of the Sorbian elites – conservatism which can be identified in many of the events surrounding unification. Indeed, the conservatism of the petition may help to explain why only fifty-three per cent of those present at the meeting chose to sign it.

Furthermore, while the National Assembly was committed to admitting Sorbs of all political and religious persuasions, it still insisted that the aim of these deliberations be a re-awakening of Sorbian national identity.¹⁸ As Kasper says,

14 'Socialist' in this context refers to an adherence to the Marxist-Leninist principles of the SED regime under the GDR. See Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 17.

15 Scholze D. 'Der Transformationsprozess nach 1989 im Spiegel der sorbischen Prosa', *Deutschland Archiv. Zeitschrift für das vereinigte Deutschland* 38/5 (2005), pp. 781–789 at p. 782. Scholze also claims that the Sorbian National Assembly was 'consciously linked to Sorb national movements in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries'.

16 Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 17.

17 Petition by the Sorbian National Assembly of 11 November 1989, *Nowa Doba* (14 November 1989). See Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, pp. 120-121.

18 Malink J., 'Skutkowamje ma dwěmaj polomaj' *Rozhlad* 9 (1991), p. 213.

the formation of the National Assembly was to place the search for new ways to develop the national identity of the Sorbian people on a broad democratic basis.¹⁹

There was little talk here of a combination of German and Sorbian identities, or of Germany citizenship combined with Sorbian nationality. During much of the debate, a clear narrative promoting Sorbian national identity can be detected. This can be seen, for example, in the calls for a united Lusatia and Sorbian political representation in the East German parliament.²⁰

3.2.3 THE DOMOWINA AND THE SORBIAN ROUND TABLE

As a result of differing opinions on the future course of action,²¹ it was decided that a further committee be formed in the style of a round table discussion.²² On 26 November 1989, the Sorbian Round Table was established [first met]. The Round Table brought together representatives from the Domowina and Sorbian National Assembly, as well as clergy from both the Catholic and Protestant churches. The function of this Round Table was to address the concerns of these different organisations and to find a constructive solution. The Sorbian Round Table was a part of a larger series of Round Tables, which were initially commissioned by the Modrow government of the GDR in order to assuage those calling for change.²³ From 3 January 1990, the Sorbian Round Table was represented at the central Round Table by Jan Malink. However, the Sorbian representative was given only observer status.²⁴ The graphic below lays out the structure of the Central Round Table and its relationship to the Council of Ministers (*Ministerrat*).

19 Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 19.

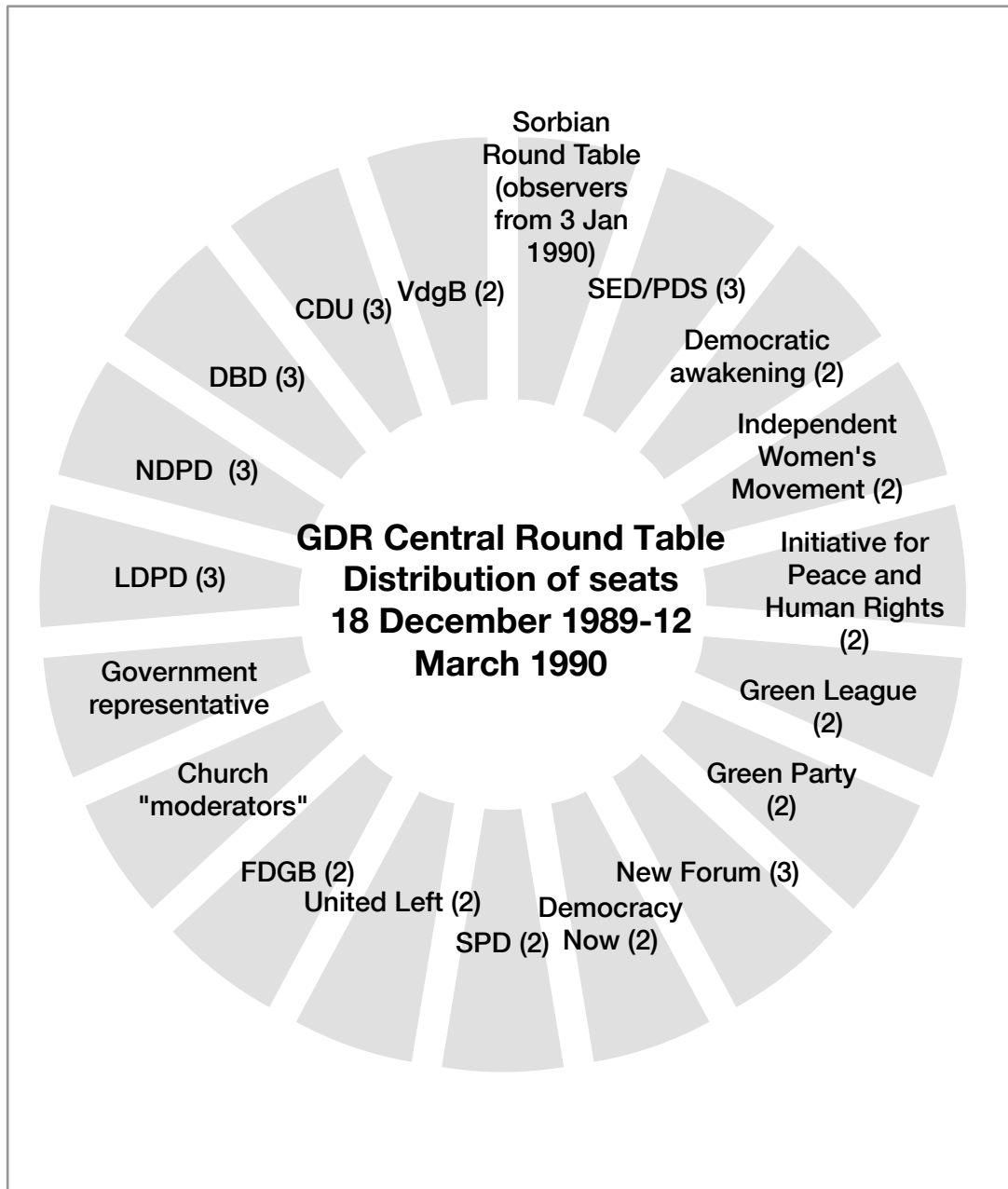
20 ‘Sorbischer Runder Tisch gegen Zuordnung von Teilen des gemischtnationalen Gebietes der Lausitz zum Land Brandenburg’, in Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 249.

21 Grós, *Staatsangehörigkeit*, p. 221.

22 Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, pp. 31-32.

23 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 130 n. 3.

24 Scholze. ‘Der Transformationsprozess nach 1989’, p. 782; Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 122.



From 5 February 1990:
“Government of National Responsibility”, including a further eight ministers without portfolio as representatives of “new” groups on the round table

From 18 November 1989:
Council of Ministers
Chairman (Head of Government): Hans Modrow (SED)
Deputies: Christa Luft (SED); Lothar de Mazière (CDU); Peter Moreth (LDPD)
27 Ministers: 16 SED; 4 LDPD; 3 CDU; 2 DBD; 2 NDPD

Figure 4: Structure of GDR Central Round Table

The Sorbian National Assembly agreed at its first meeting that the Domowina should continue to exist,²⁵ but that it should in future be independent and more democratic.²⁶ The Domowina wrote its own proposals on its future, which the Sorbian National Assembly judged unsatisfactory. The National Assembly called for a working group.²⁷ Two days after this meeting, the entire secretariat of the Domowina's National Executive stepped down in protest at the decision.

Ultimately, the resignation on 28 November 1989 of the Domowina's executive committee helped the Domowina to shift from its democratic centralist structure to a non-political, cultural role. Since this was described by those members of the executive committee who stepped down as a period of 'review' for the whole future of the Domowina as an organisation,²⁸ they were enabled to continue contributions to the political debate, and were relieved of the duties they would have been under if still holding posts in a democratic Domowina. A further advantage of stepping down to 'review' the organisation was that it made the officials appear more democratic. The Domowina could present itself as listening to the voice of the people, while in practice retaining their positions on the executive board of the Domowina. This also made it easier to brush aside calls for new elections for the National Executive.

3.2.4 EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS OF THE DOMOWINA

From 1989 there were prominent public debates regarding the future role and structure of the Domowina, especially in the Sorbian press. For example, on 14 October 1989, the office of Jurij Grós (General Secretary of the Domowina) issued a letter calling on members of the Domowina to take part in the eleventh

25 Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 30.

26 'Sorbische Volksversammlung regt Bildung eines sorbischen Runden Tisches an', *Nowa Doba* (28 November 1989). Reproduced in Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 139.

27 'Sorbische Volksversammlung' in Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 139.

28 'Stellungnahme des Bundesvorstandes der Domowina' *Infobulletin der Domowina* 5 (28 November 1989). Reproduced in Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 145.

National Congress of the Domowina.²⁹ Grós said he was open to dialogue regarding change, but made clear the boundaries of this dialogue:

We assume – the vast majority of the Sorbs are convinced – that socialism alone guarantees complete equality and developmental potential.³⁰

It was this model of ‘dialogue’ – in which certain topics or possibilities are out of bounds and excluded from discussion – which attracted particular criticism from many reformists, including Dyrlich and Malink. It also meant that the offers of dialogue were inadequate to satisfy those who were calling for more radical evaluations of the status quo. For example, an open letter from the Sorbian National Assembly to the Upper Sorbian *Nowa Doba* newspaper dated 26 November 1989 expresses that Assembly’s disappointment at the fact that no representatives of the Domowina had proposed to the State a reform of the structure and systems of Sorbian politics.³¹ Furthermore, the previous day, 25 November 1989, a group of Sorbian students in Leipzig published their demands for reform of the Domowina in the *Nowy Casnik*, a Lower Lusatian Sorbian-language newspaper.

It was in the context of this mounting pressure, both from the Sorbian National Assembly and from the public, that the national executive of the Domowina stepped down on 28 November 1989. A working group was then set up – to be chaired by none other than the General Secretary, Jurij Grós – and charged with preparing for an extraordinary Congress on 17 March 1990. This apparently conciliatory move is tempered by the insistence that the present leadership – and in particular Grós, who had been General Secretary of the Domowina since 28 August 1964 – should retain their roles in any ‘reformed’ Domowina. The public debates carried on over the winter of 1989 with some increasingly shrill calls for

29 This Congress was eventually superseded by the extraordinary Congress.

30 Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 107.

31 ‘Sorbische Volksversammlung regt Bildung eines sorbischen Runden Tisches an’, *Nowa Doba* (28 November 1989). Reproduced in Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 139.

reform as well as a number of calls for calm.³² Even the night before the extraordinary Congress itself, *Nowa Doba* reported widespread confusion regarding it and the proposed reforms. This was in addition to the withdrawal of at least 255 people from the National Executive of the Domowina by that stage.³³

On 17 March 1990, there were a total of 472 delegates present at the extraordinary Congress of the Domowina, as well as 72 non-members from other Sorbian organisations being in attendance as guests.³⁴ A vote was proposed for the election of a new head of the National Executive. Initially Grós put himself forward, with Jan Malink opposing him. It became clear from discussions during the day that Grós's candidature would be highly divisive and would strengthen the hand of those who were calling for the Domowina's complete dissolution.³⁵ At the last minute, Grós withdrew and proposed his former deputy at the Domowina, Bjarnat Cyž (Bernhard Ziesch). The vote, which was not secret,³⁶ resulted in 302 votes for Cyž. The reformist candidate, Malink, received 233 votes. Cyž subsequently appointed Grós as his deputy.³⁷

There were several reports that the leadership vote suffered from confusion and irregularities. I will now look at the events leading up to the vote of the executive committee of the Domowina. Many of the Lower Sorbian delegates, for example, are said not to have fully understood who they were voting for, as they neither spoke nor understood Upper Sorbian, or had very little knowledge of Sorbian at all and relied on the leadership to assist them.³⁸ In addition, it was remarked at the time that in the final vote there were more votes counted than there were delegates

32 See Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, pp. 45-49. See also letters published in *Nowy Doba* (24 February 1990).

33 Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 46.

34 Grós J., *Nach 20 Jahren nachgefragt: Betrachtungen zur nationalen Lage der Sorben* (Bautzen: Lausitzer Druck- und Verlagshaus, 2009), p. 41.

35 Sorbian Left Party. See Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 23.

36 The Leipzig students had proposed a secret ballot as part of their letter of 26 November 1989.

37 Even today Cyž is executive secretary of the Domowina, a role below only the President.

38 Oral testimony to the author. See in this volume, p. 11. See also Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 130; Schöps H. J., 'Mit roter Soße übergossen', *Der Spiegel* 22 (1990).

present. Nevertheless it was decided that ‘Gewaehlt ist gewaehlt!’ (‘A vote is a vote!’)³⁹ This did little to assure the reformists that meaningful reform was possible, leading Malink to voice his concerns. A formal split within the Domowina was barely avoided. It is quite clear also that while much was made of the newly reformed Domowina, very little had changed at the top, and a good deal of ill-feeling continued to exist between the forces of tradition and reform. Many of the same officials led decision-making after German unification as had done before.

Throughout the extraordinary Congress, the topic of Sorbian identity or consciousness was considered by those on both sides of the debate to be of paramount importance. The traditionalists called for continuity in the Domowina’s structure, fearing with its dissolution a complete loss of influence in the new republic,⁴⁰ whereas the reformists using the same terms called for its renewal precisely to ensure continued relevance and influence. There was also some concern amongst those present that these deliberations and controversies (*Auseinandersetzungen*) should remain behind closed doors for fear of presenting a disunited front to the wider German population.⁴¹

3.2.5 THE VICTORY OF TRADITIONALISTS AND ‘PROFESSIONAL’ SORBS

The traditionalists had won out. The Domowina remained the single central organisation responsible for Sorbian affairs. It also demonstrated a rejection of pluralism, by the leading traditionalists and the continued legacy of the GDR and its form of authoritarianism. Jurij Grós exemplifies some of this ideology in his post-facto autobiography:

39 Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 47.

40 Oshlies, *Die Sorben*, p. 68.

41 Jurij Koch as quoted in Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 47.

[...] on the important and fundamental issues, even after thirteen years [the Sorbs] by no means speak with one tongue and one voice. There are conflicts of opinion amongst the clubs and organisations, not only in terms of their approaches but up to and including the question of national identity.⁴²

Clearly since the fall of the Wall and the unprecedented freedoms that ensued a much greater range of Sorbian opinions can now be heard. However, Grós clearly feels these ‘conflicts of opinion’ have come at the price of unity, and therefore also at the price of strength. This authoritarian attitude is not surprising, given Grós’s quarter-century of control of the Domowina, during which period he was responsible for co-ordinating Sorbian cultural activities under the auspices of the GDR regime. Grós also does not acknowledge that in the battle to reform the Domowina after unification, the traditionalists were much more successful in shaping the structure of the organisation, and its role within Sorbian culture more broadly. The victory of the traditionalists over the reformists goes much of the way to explaining the continued difficulty of the Domowina to come to terms with a pluralist politics of a unified Germany. This also reinforces the separation of the Sorbian professional elite⁴³ from ordinary Sorbs.

A further reflection of the victory of traditionalists, which has received little scholarly attention, is the Domowina’s role in presenting a unified and idealised Sorbian identity through its numerous publications. (For documentary evidence of this, see Appendix 1:

Sorbian Self-Representation to the Public.) This contributes to the promotion of a

42 Grós, *Staatsangehörigkeit*, p. 252.

43 ‘Berufssorben’ – or ‘professional Sorbs’ – is a term that finds much resonance amongst many of the Sorbs I have spoken with during my fieldwork. This refers to those Sorbs who are directly employed in Sorbian institutions and/or are responsible for organising the majority of Sorbian public events. The term is also employed in Glaser K., ‘Language and Ethnic/National Identity in Europe: The importance of Gaelic and Sorbian to the maintenance of associated cultures and ethno-cultural identities’. Unpublished PhD thesis (Middlesex University, 2002). By contrast with Glaser, I have chosen the term ‘ordinary’ Sorb to describe those Sorbs who do not work for Sorbian institutions and/or are not actively involved in organising Sorbian events.

unified but conservative Sorbian identity. So a disproportionate amount of the cultural output supported by the Domowina today is of ‘traditional’ Sorbian dancing, costumes and farming traditions, some of which are less than a century old.⁴⁴ Some observers have taken the public unity at face value, choosing instead to ignore stark differences of opinions, and to laud the ‘admirable and long-standing tradition of banding together in an effort to preserve their culture and advance their interests’.⁴⁵

3.3 CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

3.3.1 FEDERAL LAW

In the autumn of 1989, amidst the crisis of the GDR, there was much debate as to what this crisis might mean for the Sorbian minority. Amongst pro-GDR Sorbs, demands for the continued constitutional protection of the Sorbian minority were strong. One of the most important demands, amongst the Sorbian elites, centred on the re-working of several articles based on the GDR’s constitution, which dealt with the Sorbs. The Sorbian Left, for example, proposed on 2 December 1989 that state support should continue, whatever the fate of the GDR.⁴⁶ Their amendments were designed to improve the Sorbs’ situation, which they saw as inadequate. Further to this the Sorbian Round Table proposed on the 26 February 1990 that

The maintenance and further development of Sorbian culture is not guaranteed without state support. [...] Sorbian culture and art are

44 See in this volume, Appendix 1:

Sorbian Self-Representation to the Public, p. 265; Appendix 2:
Sorbian DVDs, p. 283.

45 T. Foy and C. Thiele, ‘The legal status of the Sorbian minority in the Federal Republic of Germany’, *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 4 (1997), p. 42.

46 ‘Eingabe des Bundesvorstandes der Domowina vom 28.11.89 an das Präsidium der Volkskammer und die Regierung’ *Nowa Doba* (2 December 1989) in Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, pp. 141-144.

henceforth to be subsidized at the existing level via a central fund provided by government.⁴⁷

The Sorbian Round Table was initiated by the Sorbian National Assembly and gained observer status at the Central Round Table of the GDR on 3 January 1990. The Central Round Table was an official body set up by the GDR regime to involve non-official organisations in the transition. On 26 November 1989, the Sorbian National Assembly called for three amendments to the GDR's constitution:

Article 1 (SorBVV 89)

The GDR is a socialist state comprising citizens of German and Sorbian nationality. The citizens of the GDR of Sorbian nationality are a people (*Volk*) with their own flag, in the colours blue, red, white and with their national anthem in Sorbian.

Article 18

Sorbian culture is an integral part of the national culture of the GDR.⁴⁸

Article 40

The citizens of the GDR of Sorbian nationality have the right to maintain their mother tongue and Sorbian culture. The practice of these rights will be supported by the State and regulated by means of a 'nationality law'.⁴⁹

At this stage much of the debate amongst Sorbian elite was focused on amending existing legislation. The idea that in little under a year, on 3 October 1990, the GDR would cease to exist at all was not considered. The above proposals (SorBVV 89), were minor adjustments to the 1974 GDR constitution. So, for example, Article 1 (SorBVV 89) would now include equal mention of citizens of German and Sorbian nationality rather than Article 1 (DDR V 74), which states:

47 Sorbian Round Table, 26 February 1990 in Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 259.

48 Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 140.

49 Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 140.

‘The German Democratic Republic is a socialist state consisting of workers and farmers’.⁵⁰

Article 40 (SorbVV 89) is exactly the same as the constitution with only the addition at the end of ‘and regulated by means of a “nationality law”’. Article 18 (DDR V 74) related to cultural events and practices; the proposed amendment sought simply to include mention of Sorbian culture. This early proposal does shed light on the non-radical nature of the Sorbian groups up to that time. Even though the Sorbian National Assembly was set up in part to avoid the perceived socialist sympathies of the Domowina, the Sorbian National Assembly’s initial stance was not all that different.

Nevertheless, it was to change as the atmosphere surrounding the realities of unification became clearer. Several Sorbs initially imagined that the unified Germany would establish a new constitution, which can be seen in several attempts to marry up the two existing constitutions. These attempts were based on Article 146 (GG 49), which was anticipated in the West German Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*) itself. This can also be seen in the fact that the authors of the Basic Law chose not to write a constitution for West Germany, but in anticipation of eventual unification, wrote a Basic Law. As it was, the so-called ‘new federal states’ of the East did not join based on Article 146 of the Federal Republic. This Article called for a new constitution for the whole of Germany, and a corresponding plebiscite. However, the unification treaty (EinigVtr) stated the new federal states should be incorporated according to Article 23.⁵¹ Both the East German and West German parliaments, respectively the *Volkskammer* and *Bundestag*, ratified this, on 20 September 1990. This decision and its speed reflected the haste and desire of many, both people and politicians alike, to unify Germany as quickly as possible.

50 ‘Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik vom 6. April 1968’, *Documentarchiv.de*. Cached version available at <http://web.archive.org/web/20110604191436/http://www.documentarchiv.de/ddr/verfddr.html>. Accessed on 2 January 2013.

51 This Article was also used to integrate the Saarland in 1957.

Given these new circumstances many Sorbs were keen to ensure the continuation of explicit constitutional protection for Sorbs as a national minority in the newly unified Germany. This was all the more important since the FRG's constitution had only an Article to protect *individuals*, under Article 1 (GG49):

No-one is to be disadvantaged or privileged because of gender, parentage, race, language, homeland and origin, beliefs, religious or political views.⁵²

However, in contrast with Article 40 of the GDR constitution, this Article did not provide explicit legal protection for minority *groups*. In law at least, the GDR constitution protected 'citizens of the GDR of Sorbian nationality'.⁵³ The GDR provided a more comprehensive legal framework (although the extent to which this framework was honoured in practice is, of course, a theme of this thesis). While the legal framework may have notionally provided protection, in practice the internal security apparatus of the state (the Stasi) undermined these protections through arbitrary treatment of certain Sorbs and similarly inconvenient Germans.⁵⁴

Although the campaign to amend the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*)⁵⁵ failed, there were several important clauses added to the unification treaty's *Protokoll*. The unification treaty was negotiated between representatives of the GDR and West Germany, eventually becoming official on 3 October 1990. The treaty allowed the GDR to join the FRG via the West German constitutional Article 23a (GG 49). It also regulated the takeover of East Germany's government debt as well as the future shape of the new country. The East German representatives⁵⁶ were

52 Hessisches Kultusministerium, *Verfassung des Landes Hessen und Grundgesetz fuer die Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Wiesbaden: Hessisches Kultusministerium, 2004), p. 149.

53 Nowusch H., *Die Gleichberechtigung der Bürger sorbischer Nationalität in der DDR-verwirklichtes Menschenrecht* (Bautzen: VEB Domowina Verlag, 3rd edition, 1988), p. 148.

54 See in this volume, chapter one, n. 81.

55 West Germany's constitution, which later also became the constitution of the unified Germany.

56 Lothar de Maizière, minister president of the GDR and Guenter Krause, representative for the GDR during unification treaty negotiations.

repeatedly petitioned by the Domowina and several other Sorbian organisations, keen to ensure that some form of legal guarantee for minorities would be included. Sorbian representatives also forged contacts with the other minorities in Germany, notably the Danes and Friesians, all of whom were convinced of the need to gain a ‘minorities Article’ in the Basic Law. The public pressure, as already stated, did not result in a change to the Basic Law, but in an inclusion in the protocol notes. This was seen by some Sorbs, including Jan Malink,⁵⁷ as a success. It meant that enshrined in federal law was a guarantee of state finance and support for the Sorbs, which was not to drop below the level of that provided by the GDR. Nevertheless, more commonly it was seen as being only partially successful, in that it achieved some but not all of the stated aims.

Attached to Article 35 of the treaty notes (protocol), which encompass the issues of culture, education and science as well as sport, is what remains the only legally binding mention of the Sorbs in federal law. The protocol states:

1. Membership of the Sorbian *Volkstum* and to Sorbian culture is voluntary [frei].
2. The protection and development of Sorbian culture and of Sorbian traditions is guaranteed.
3. Members of the Sorbian people and their organisations have the freedom to maintain and protect the Sorbian language in the public realm.
4. The current legal competencies and responsibilities between the federal level and states remain unchanged.⁵⁸

This commitment, as well as a subsequent commitment that State support for the Sorbian minority could not fall below that of the GDR, still disappointed several prominent Sorbs, who called/call for more far reaching and more explicit federal and state specific legislation.⁵⁹

57 Malink J., ‘Zur politischen und kulturellen Geschichte der Sorben’ in Schiemann M. & Scholze D. (eds), *Die Sorben in Deutschland* (Bautzen: Stiftung für das sorbische Volk, 2009), p. 16.

58 See Bundesministerium der Justiz, ‘EinigVtr – nichtamtliches Inhaltsverzeichnis’. Available at <http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/einigvtr/>. Accessed on 1 January 2013.

59 Oral testimony to author during informal interview with Harald Konsak, 10 March 2009. See

3.3.2 STATE LAWS: SAXONY

Following on from the unsuccessful proposals to include a Sorb-specific minorities law in the new republic's federal constitution, efforts continued to create Sorbian laws in the state constitutions of Saxony and Brandenburg, the two newly re-constituted states where the Sorbs now found themselves.⁶⁰ Saxony was and still remains home to the majority of the Sorbs, namely the Upper Sorbs. A new constitution was proposed by a committee of Saxony's state parliament on 22 August 1990. These proposals became known as the 'Gohrischer Proposal' (GorEnt 90).⁶¹ They were brought before parliament for debate by the CDU and FDP parliamentary groups with the support of the SPD.⁶² They were to be the basis for a public debate regarding the new constitution for Saxony. The public, as well as interest groups, were invited to comment on and improve the proposals. Shortly afterwards, on 28 August 1990, the Domowina along with all the major Sorbian organisations responded by putting forward their own proposals.⁶³ Apart from Sorbian organisations, the association of Leipzig university lecturers put forward their own proposal of the entire constitution including Article 7 and 38 (HSL 90)⁶⁴ which were specifically about the Sorbs. This proposal was also placed before the state legislature with the support of the Greens and the Left List/PDS.⁶⁵ In the sections that follow I will discuss a number of proposals, and

in this volume, p. 11.

60 Strong representation was made by the Domowina and prominent Sorbs (for example, Jurij Koch) to those responsible during the negotiations for the unification treaty. On 16 May 1990 the Domowina wrote an open letter to the then prime minister of the GDR, Lothar de Maizière, to highlight the lack of constitutional protection for minorities in the existing FRG Basic Law. It eventuated that the treaty contained no such Article, but a Protokollnotiz was signed which guaranteed state support for Sorbian activities.

61 After the Spa town of Gohrisch in Saxon Switzerland (Saechsische Schweiz).

62 See in this volume, p. 6.

63 Domowina, Sorbian Volksversammlung, Cyrill-Methodius Verein, Sorbian Evangelisch-lutherische Superintendentur, Sorbian Left and Sorbian Artists Union.

64 For the sake of clarity following all articles I have included an abbreviated form of the proposals from which they originate. The two digits refer to the year the proposals were made in. Furthermore I have included my own translations of the articles to aid principally in understanding the somewhat technical nature of the debates.

65 PDS was constituted by former members of the ruling communist party of the GDR.

then examine the final version, which was ratified by Saxony's parliament on 22 May 1992. I will focus only on the sections which specifically concern the Sorbian minority. As the proposals were substantially different from one another, the Article numbers do not necessarily match. Nevertheless, I have retained the original numbering for the sake of clarity, and also include the full text of each Article which related to the Sorbs.

3.3.3 DOMOWINA AND LEIPZIG'S UNIVERSITY LECTURERS' PROPOSALS (HSL 90)

On the 28 August 1990 the Domowina met with other major Sorbian organisations to discuss the amendments they felt were necessary to the Gohrischer proposal. There were four main proposals, affecting principally Articles 5 and 6 (SaxVerf 92). Article 38 (GorEnt 90) was changed, as was the terminology in Articles 23, 26 and 28 (GorEnt 90).

The main proposal was to make clear the distinction between German *Staatsangehörigkeit* and Sorbian *Volkszugehörigkeit*. This is an important distinction as all Sorbs are citizens of the German state; however, many do not see themselves as belonging to the German people (*Volk*). Article 5 (2) (GorEnt 90) originally spoke of 'all Germans are eligible to vote'; the Domowina's proposal suggested replacing this term with 'all citizens of the state of Saxony'.⁶⁶ It also proposed that this should be done consistently throughout the document.⁶⁷ It explained the reasoning behind this change, as such:

We Sorbs understand ourselves to be German citizens, not however as belonging to the German people (*Volk*). We continue to call for the recognition of our national identity.⁶⁸

66 Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 336.

67 This affected articles 23, 26 and 28 (GorEnt 90), where the term 'German' was originally to be found.

68 Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 336.

Further to this they proposed that Article 6 (GorEnt 90), which regulated the relationship between the state and the Sorbs, should be significantly re-worked. They proposed a continuing guarantee of state support, especially in terms of finance. This is with the express aim of allowing the continued cultivation of their ‘language, religion, culture and traditions’.

Article 6 (HSL 90)

1. The state [*Land*] acts in the interests of national minorities who live in the state. It supports and protects their right to maintain and further their national identity, as well as their language, religion, culture and traditions.
2. The Sorbian language and culture enjoys particular support from the state. It supports and maintains the required laws/guidelines. The Sorbs have the right to use their mother tongue in administrative bodies and the courts.
3. The law regulates the obligation to hear the representatives of the Sorbian people [*Volksgruppe*] and guarantees their right to participate in transitional and public bodies.
4. The particular requirements of the Sorbs are to be taken into consideration in state and local plans. The Sorbian people have the right to the protection of their ancestral lands/territory [*Siedlungsgebiet*].

Finally Article 38 (GorEnt 90), which dealt with the electoral system, was amended to include a non-partisan body to represent the interests of the Sorbian people in parliament. All these proposals were, according to the document, agreed upon unanimously, by those present. Nevertheless, considering the nature of some of the intra-Sorbian debates preceding this document and following it, it seems hard to believe that a truly unanimous decision was reached. In fact as we will see later in this chapter, there were often calls amongst the Sorbs to present a united front in public, while disagreements were tolerated in private i.e. amongst Sorbs. This was with the aim of achieving the greatest level of success possible in political and legal discussions. However it does also demonstrate a willingness, which is to some extent still prevalent amongst many Sorbian elite or *Berufssorben* (‘professional Sorbs’), to quash public debate for fear of appearing disunited.

The Leipzig university lecturers' proposal was similar to the Domowina's proposal. However it did make more explicit certain Sorb-specific provisions:

Article 7 (Nationalities)

All nationalities have the right to protection, maintenance and development of their national identity. The realisation of these rights is to be promoted by the state [*Land*].

Article 38 (Sorbian Rights)

1. The Sorbian people have the right to preserve and further the Sorbian language in public life/realm and in schools and in pre-school settings.
2. The Sorbs have the right to use their native tongue/language before the courts and administrative authorities.
3. The conditions required for the care and development of Sorbian culture are to be secured via the state [*Land*].
4. In the Sorbian populated territories [*Siedlungsgebiet*] a minimum quota for Sorbs can be enacted for elections and the public sector.
5. In the Sorbian populated territories [*Siedlungsgebiet*] the Sorbian flag, with the colours blue, red, white, is to be of equal status to the state flag.⁶⁹

In Article 7 (HSL 90) the term 'all nationalities' was used rather than 'Germans' or 'citizens of Germany'. This was in regard to 'the right to protect, maintain and develop their national identities'. The realisation of these rights was also to be supported by the state (*Land*). Immediately it became clear that this proposal, if so enacted, would leave the state liable to support financially any and every nationality to be found within Saxony. Article 38 predominantly dealt with the use of the Sorbian language in public and within the school system. In Article 38 Section 4 (HSL 90) the lecturers proposed a minimum quota for Sorbs in elections and for public office in the Sorbian *Siedlungsgebiet*.

69 'Entwurf sächsischer Hochschullehrer vom 28.8.90 über Rechte der Sorben in der sächsischen Verfassung' in Pastor T., *Die rechtliche Stellung der Sorben in Deutschland* (Bautzen: Domowina Verlag, 1997), p. 253.

3.3.4 THE FINAL PROPOSALS (SAXVERF 92)

The final proposals that came before the state parliament took account of many of the amendments suggested by the Domowina and university lecturers. I will focus on Articles 5 and 6 (SaxVerf 92). These are the two main articles with a specific mention of the Sorbs, and were voted on and enacted by Saxony's parliament in 1992.

Article 5 (SaxVerf 92)

1. The people [*Volk*] of the free state of Saxony are comprised of citizens of German, Sorbian and other ethnicities [*Volkszugehörigkeit*]. The state [*Land*] acknowledges the right to a homeland [*Heimat*].
2. The state guarantees and protects the right of national and ethnic minorities of German nationality [*Staatsangehörigkeit*] to the preservation of their identity as well as the cultivation of their language, religion, culture and heritage/tradition [*Überlieferung*].

Article 6

1. The citizens who live in the state [*Land*] of Sorbian ethnicity [*Volkszugehörigkeit*] are an equal part of the State populace [*Staatsvolk*]. The state guarantees and protects the right to maintain their identity as well as cultivation and development of their ancestral language, culture and tradition in particular via schools, pre-schools and cultural bodies.
2. The particular requirements of the Sorbs are to be taken into consideration in state and local plans. The German-Sorbian character of the Sorbian people's territory [*Siedlungsgebiet*] is to be preserved.
3. Cross-state [*Land*] co-operation of the Sorbs, particularly in Upper and Lower Lusatia is in the purview/interest of the state.⁷⁰

Article 5 (SaxVerf 92) is about the people (*Volk*) present in the state and is concerned predominantly with regulating the state's obligations and duties to minorities. Article 5 (1) acknowledges the presence of citizens of German, Sorbian and other *Volkszugehörigkeit* (ethnicity). This now took into account the Domowina's suggestion, though amended it by including the term *Volkszugehörigkeit*. This is because the original Domowina suggestion of 'citizens

⁷⁰ 'Verfassung des Freistaates Sachsen vom 27. Mai 1992', Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung (Dresden: no publisher given, 2012), p. 15.

of the state of Saxony' could interfere with federal citizenship laws as there are no citizens of the state of Saxony, only of Germany. It also recognises, within this Article, the right to a homeland (*Heimat*). Further modifications came in Sections 2 and 3 (SaxVerf 92). So the final wording of Article 5 (2) (SaxVerf 92) uses the term 'German and ethnic minorities of German citizenship'.⁷¹ Article 5 (3) (SaxVerf 92) also makes explicit the state's general responsibilities to foreign minorities, although this does not specifically mention the Sorbs. This can be seen as a response to the calls of the Saxon university lecturers' proposal to support 'all nationalities'.

Article 6 (SaxVerf 92) deals entirely with the Sorbian people (*Volk*). It makes clear in legal terms the equal rights of the Sorbs to fair treatment from the state government. It establishes the duty of the state to support and protect the right to maintain and further (*Bewahren*) their identity. Although the terminology is a little different, the spirit remains similar: for example, where the Domowina talked of the 'interests of national minorities, who live in the state', the final law talks of 'citizens of Sorbian *Volkszugehörigkeit*'. The final law omits the support for religion and traditions, while maintaining a commitment to protecting the language and culture. It also makes explicit the important role which schools and the education and cultural sectors play in achieving this aim. The explicit acknowledgement of the role of schools was one of the most important suggestions put forward by the Sorbian groups. This was in reaction to the declining uptake of Sorbian language instruction in many of the schools within the Sorbian *Siedlungsgebiet*,⁷² even before the fall of the Wall. This was also part of a more widely spread recognition, that in order for a Sorbian identity to survive in the future Sorbian language use must be increased amongst the up-coming generations.

71 This was put to plebiscite on 27 May 1992.

72 See Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, pp. 55-60; 69-71; 77-80; 107.

Saxony's state constitution and the process of its development were seen by many of those involved as a compromise, but a reasonable one. There were those who called for more concrete commitments⁷³ by the state to guarantee funding and support. The final law also did not provide for a minimum quota of Sorbs in public office nor, at the time, an independent parliamentary advisory committee. Some of these criticisms formed the basis for subsequent calls, particularly by the Domowina, to modify the constitution or enact a Sorb-specific law. A Sorbian law, the law regarding the rights of Sorbs in the free state of Saxony, was later proposed by the Domowina and members of the parliament, and was passed on 31 March 1999.

3.3.5 STATE LAW: BRANDENBURG

Brandenburg is officially home to around 20,000 of the 60,000 Sorbs (many of whom prefer the term *Wend*). This is reflected consistently in the wording of the state constitution, where any mention of *Sorb* is followed by the term *Wend* in brackets.⁷⁴ While the Saxon constitution was enacted first, three months earlier, the co-ordination committee for the formation of the state of Brandenburg proposed Article 23 (Protection and support for the Sorbs/Wends) on 22 April 1990. There was no complete alternative proposed, as was the case with Saxony's constitution. This is perhaps understandable as the Brandenburg Article was based substantially on Saxony's constitution itself.

Article 23a (Protection and support for Sorbs/Wends)

1. The Sorbian people possess the right to protect, maintain and develop their national identity. The state [*Land*] supports the realisation of these rights.
2. To ensure the cultural autonomy of the Sorbian people, the state will work towards the safeguarding of a cross-state cultural autonomy of the Sorbs.
3. Citizens of Sorbian nationality have the right to cultivate and develop

73 Pastor, *Die Rechtliche Stellung*, 253-254.

74 See in this volume, 1.2 Introducing the Sorbs, for a discussion of the Sorb/Wend issue.

their mother tongue and culture.

4. In the Sorbian territories, the Sorbian flag with the colours blue, red, white, is to be included equally.

5. The law will cover further particulars.

The main changes that were enacted subsequently were with regard to terminology and structure. The initial proposal uses the term ‘*Das sorbische Volk*’ rather than citizens of Sorbian *Volkszugehörigkeit*. This suggests some form of collective or group right. However, the same subsection goes on to state that the Sorbian people ‘possess the right to protection, preservation and development [*Entfaltung*] of their national identity.’⁷⁵ Some legal experts have interpreted this to formulate an individual rather than collective right. Various proposals that were discussed including the final version veered between definition of the protection of ‘Sorbian-ness’ as a collective and an individual right. I shall return later in this chapter to the significance of this distinction.

Art 25 Sorbs’[Wends’] Rights

1. The right of the Sorbian people to protect, maintain and cultivate their national identity and their ancestral lands is guaranteed. The state [*Land*], parishes and local authority associations support the realisation of these rights, in particular cultural autonomy and the effective political co-determination of the Sorbian people.

2. The state will work towards the safeguarding of a cross-state cultural autonomy of the Sorbs.

3. The Sorbs have the right to preserve and develop the Sorbian language and culture in public life and its dissemination in schools and day care centres.

4. In the Sorbian area of settlement [*Siedlungsgebiet*] the Sorbian language is to be included on public signage. The Sorbian flag is blue, red, and white.

5. The organisation of Sorbian rights is regulated by a law, which is to ensure that in Sorbian matters, especially with regard to the formulation of legislation, Sorbian representatives can contribute.⁷⁶

75 Kasper, *Die Lausitzer Sorben*, p. 305.

76 ‘Gesetz zur Ausgestaltung der Rechte der Sorben(Wenden) im Land Brandenburg(Sorben[Wenden]-Gesetz - SWG)’ (7 July 1994). Available at http://www.landtag.brandenburg.de/media_fast/4908/Sorbengesetz.pdf. Accessed on 1 January 2013.

Section one goes on to say that the state [*Land*] is responsible for supporting the realisation of these rights. Section two lays out a multi-state responsibility to ensure the cultural autonomy of the Sorbs. The concept of a separate ‘Sorbian nationality’ is clearly a remnant of the terminology of the GDR, whereby a distinction was made between German citizenship (*Staatsangehörigkeit*) and Sorbian nationality. Once again this is a solely individual right, as it refers to a citizen rather than a *Volk*.⁷⁷ Section 4 regulates the use of the Sorbian flag within the Sorbian area of settlement.

The final version of the Sorbian/Wenden Article was approved by plebiscite on 14 June 1992 and passed into law, as Article 25, by the Brandenburg state parliament on 20 August 1992. While there remain strong similarities between Article 23a (BburgVerf 90) and Article 25 (BBurgVerf 92) a few significant changes were put into place. Notably section one now also included the right of the Sorbian people to not only ‘protect, maintain and cultivate their national identity’ but also ‘their ancestral *Siedlungsgebiet* [area of settlement]’. This protection is strengthened by making it not simply the responsibility of the Land, but also of local authorities and associations of local authorities (*Gemeindeverbände*). It also explicitly makes them (the local authorities) responsible for the cultural independence/autonomy (*Eigenständigkeit*) of the Sorbian people as well as for their active political participation (*Mitgestaltung*). While this is similar to Saxony’s Article 6 (2) (SaxVerf 92) it is much more strongly and explicitly formulated as the authorities are responsible for the cultural independence of the Sorbian people, not just preserving a German-Sorbian character.

77 The issue of individual versus collective rights as well as concrete rights versus Staatsziele will be discussed after the detailed investigation of Article 23a (proposal)/Article 25 (BB Verfassung).

3.3.6 CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DEBATE

‘A Serbsce? – und auf Sorbisch?’ is a grassroots initiative from around ten Upper Sorbian young people, who seek to draw attention to the lack of bilingual signage in the official Sorbian area of settlement in Saxony. They have caused considerable debate amongst Sorbs and Germans alike, in part due to the technique employed to raise public awareness of the topic: by placing bright red stickers, with the words ‘A Serbsce? – und auf Sorbisch?’ (‘In Sorbian?’) over signs which are either monolingually German or contain incorrect Sorbian translations or names.

The action began in the summer of 2012, with stickers initially appearing on signs around towns in Upper Lusatia, focused on the county (*Landkreis*) Bautzen. Initially it was unclear who was responsible for the action, leading to a great deal of press/media speculation.⁷⁸ The public debate that followed was consistent with the dichotomy I proposed in 3.2 concerning the early 1990s debate about unification and the role of the Domowina: traditionalists, and reformers. The grassroots desire for reform is indicated by the subversive strategy of the ‘A Serbsce? – und auf Sorbisch?’ group, while traditionalists criticised the action. Benedikt Ziesch (not to be confused with Bjarnat Cyž (Bernhard Ziesch), who continues to occupy a leading managerial position in the Domowina to the present day), issued an open letter in his capacity as Representative for Sorbian Issues to Bautzen Council on 24 July 2012, condemning the ‘A Serbsce? – und auf Sorbisch?’ campaign.⁷⁹

78 Dinger A., ‘Unbekannte bekleben Dutzende Verkehrszeichen’ *Lausitzer Rundschau* (31 May 2012); Oehl F., ‘Den Touristen im Blick haben’ *Sächsische Zeitung* (14 July 2012); ‘List iniciatiwy „A serbsce?“ Benediktej Cyžeje: Chcemy dospolnu dwurěčnosć na taflach!’, *Piwarac Blog*. Available at <http://piwarac.wordpress.com/2012/07/20/list-iniciatiwy-a-serbsce-benediktej-cyzej-chcemy-dospolnu-dwurecnosc-na-taflach>. Accessed on 20 December 2012.

79 Benedikt Ziesch’s German office is ‘Beauftragter für sorbische Angelegenheiten im Landkreis Bautzen’. See Ziesch Benedikt, ‘Pressemitteilung: Zweisprachige Beschilderung im sorbischen Siedlungsgebiet’. Open letter (24 May 2012).

3.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have examined in some detail the political and legal changes and continuities from the GDR period, through to unification, and onwards to the post-unification period. In 3.2 I argued that there was a victory of traditionalists over reformers in the unification process. In 3.3 I both illustrated how the Sorbian elite's idea of Sorbian identity was reinforced in the constitutional and legal reforms of the period, and suggested that the division between traditionalists and reformers persists to the present day. Since the fall of the communist GDR the political and legal frameworks concerning the Sorbian national minority have changed dramatically: they no longer have explicit legal protection under a national constitution, as was the case under the GDR. The Sorbs now live under the two different state constitutions of Saxony and Brandenburg. However, they do continue to receive state support equal to that provided by the GDR, thanks to a protocol in the unification treaty. Politically, the Sorbs are no longer under single party rule, but there remains no Sorbian people's party, though the current *Minister-President* of Saxony is a Sorb, Stanislaw Tillich, and represents the CDU.

In spite of these reforms of politics, constitutions, law, and policy, there is remarkable continuity of practice in all these areas. Despite the many heated debates conducted during the unification period, the ecosystem of Sorbian organisations is easily recognisable, and many of the same individuals remain in official positions of similar influence. While there have been important and positive changes on a policy level, similar problems persist in the ordinary life of Sorbs. I will explore these thoroughly in the chapters which follow.

Despite the substantial resources of the new Republic, there remains a significant gulf between the constitutional protection granted, and the decline of a Sorbian public identity. As I noted above, under the GDR the public expression of Sorbian identity was actively encouraged by the state under the Nationalities Policy. After unification, however, the state retreated from many aspects of public life in east

Germany. Greater diversity of political opinion may also have discouraged Sorbs from publicly manifesting their identity; the rise of the far-right in eastern Germany after unification being only one factor which may have contributed to this phenomenon. Finally, the lack of meaningful reform of the major Sorbian organisations – or of a changing of the guard to match that which took place at a national level – has clearly led to widespread disillusionment, especially amongst younger Sorbs.⁸⁰ This is also reflected in the official Sorbian activities, which remain very similar to those encouraged under the GDR. As is demonstrated by the official response to the subversive ‘A Serbsce? – und auf Sorbisch?’ campaign, there is a striking reluctance to engage in grassroots political debate in public; the Domowina’s priority seems to remain public unity, which is perceived to assist in the petitioning of state and federal government. In the next chapter, I will examine how economic policy under the GDR and under the FRG also affected Sorbs.

80 Evidence gathered through oral testimony. See in this volume, p. 11.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ECONOMY AND THE SORBS

Bóh je stworil lužicu a cert je zaryl brunicu
[The Lord God created Lusatia, but the Devil put the brown coal
underneath]¹

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses how the changes to the economic system during and after unification impacted Sorbian national identity. The central thesis advanced is that the impact of the economic changes arising from unification do not appear (at this stage) to have elicited a specifically Sorbian response – that is to say, there seems to be little distinction between the Sorbian response and the East German response.

The chapter is divided into three chronologically-ordered sections: first, the economic system of the GDR (4.2); second, the economic decisions taken during the processes of unification (4.3); and third, the ‘post-Wall’ period which runs roughly from 1991 to the present day. Each of these periods will be further divided, this time thematically, concentrating on the key economic features in terms of how they relate to Sorbian identity. Both the first section dealing with the GDR and the third section dealing with the post-Wall period will focus on heavy industry and brown coal mining in particular, as well as agricultural reforms and the formation and eventual disbanding of the agricultural collectives (*Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft: LPG*). The post-Wall section

1 Sorbian student song lyric. See Oschlies W., *Die Sorben: Slawisches Volk im Osten Deutschlands* (Bonn: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1991), p. 77.

will additionally deal with the topic of structural unemployment in the region and the consequences of the macro-economic decisions taken, which are the focus of the second section.

4.2 THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM OF THE GDR

4.2.1 ECONOMIC MODEL AND PERFORMANCE OF THE GDR

When reviewing the contemporaneous literature on this topic today, it is striking how economically stable and (to a certain degree) economically successful the GDR was perceived to be – so much so that before its collapse it was noted that ‘the GDR is a world-ranking industrial country, with the highest standard of living in the socialist bloc’.² At the time, the World Bank ranked it as the twelfth-largest economy in the world. Although, of course, these kinds of assessments and the confidence they reflected proved to be misguided, the position was in keeping with what little official information was at that point being made available.³ Even today, economic historians regularly stress the fact that the GDR was one of the world’s best performing centrally-planned economies and that it was highly integrated in the communist bloc.⁴

As would be expected of a command economy, the central objective of these roughly five-year plans was, in economic terms, to replace the existing market forces of supply and demand with a centrally regulated system. Through the complex structures of centralised planning detailed in the 1959-1965 Plan, the *Politbüro* set out the principal economic task – which was defined as (first

2 Jeffries I. & Melzer M. (eds), *The East German Economy* (London and New York: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 1.

3 Nativel C., *Economic Transition, Unemployment and Active Labour Market Policy: lessons and perspectives from the East German Bundesländer* (London: Continuum International, 2004), p. 44.

4 Nativel, *Economic Transition*, p. 44.

drawing level with and then) surpassing the Federal Republic's per capita consumption of consumer goods and foodstuffs by the end of 1961.⁵

Hand in hand with this aim of increasing consumption came a vision of expanded production. The means of expanding this production and carrying out the plan was given to the nationalised companies, or, as they are also known, state owned enterprises (SOE). In keeping with Marxist-Leninist ideology, the means of production were in the custody of the state: almost all companies were managed from state ministries. These organisations were not only communities in and of themselves – often employing over a thousand people – but they also connected to and generated supplementary, work-based institutions and social structures, such as sports and leisure clubs. This system, coupled with the remarkably high employment levels for both men and women (around ninety per cent for women compared to West Germany's fifty-eight per cent) resulted in occupations and the workplace playing a hugely significant role in East German identity.⁶ Due to the size of many of the organisations, often entire villages were employed at a single factory or power plant. This was the case for example with Jänschwalde, a village north east of Cottbus, where a large brown coal-fired power plant was built in the mid-seventies. During the GDR almost the entire village was employed by the plant, although it was also the cause of much debate, especially within the Sorb community.⁷ In chapter six I will return to these issues in a case study of the village of Horno, which I also touch upon elsewhere in this chapter.

5 Dennis M., *German Democratic Republic: Politics, Economics and Society* (London and New York: Pinter, 1988), p. 129.

6 Kolinsky E., *Between Hope and Fear: Everyday life in Post-Unification East Germany*, (Keele: Keele University Press, 1995), p. 21.

7 Oral testimony to the author in formal interview with Harald Konzack (10 March 2009). See in this volume, p. 11.

4.2.2 INDUSTRY, ENERGY, AND BROWN COAL MINING

The GDR placed a significant emphasis on the encouragement of energy-intensive heavy industry, especially the manufacture of iron and steel, an emphasis that functioned to make independent energy production an even more crucial issue than it already was.⁸ The GDR suffered from a lack of high-quality domestic natural resources and, as a result, turned to the one energy source which it could extract plentifully: brown coal.

Brown coal (also known as lignite) is of a much poorer quality than black coal. In fact, it is the poorest quality coal available. Not only does it produce around a third less energy,⁹ but it is also highly polluting, creating volumes of soot, ash and sulphur when burnt.¹⁰ What is more, the extraction process is extremely environmentally destructive. In spite of these disadvantages, and on account of the combination of a clear political and economic imperative for energy production and a lack of resources available for exploitation, brown coal mining soon became a staple mode of power generation. During the second half of the GDR period, brown coal provided almost eighty per cent of the supply of energy to East Germany, both through direct burning in coal-fired power plants, and also as pressed briquettes (*Briketten*) for use in domestic homes.¹¹

The GDR's reliance on brown coal and its need to mine increasing quantities became even more urgent after the major oil shocks of the 1970s. The impact of a rapidly increasing oil price was worsened by the nature of the GDR's economic model. Its low reserves of hard currency made it especially vulnerable to the

8 Hüttl R., 'Ecology of post strip-mining landscapes in Lusatia, Germany' *Environmental Science and Policy* 1 (1998), pp. 129-135 at p. 130.

9 International Energy Agency, 'Coal Information' (2009 edition). Available at http://wds.iea.org/wds/pdf/doc_Coal_2009.pdf. Accessed on 21 December 2012. See p. 5.

10 Oschlies, *Die Sorben*, p. 65.

11 'East German Coal: A Lignite Lifeline', *The Economist* (31 March 1984).

fluctuations of a vital resource, which was priced in dollars. Its allocation from the USSR was also reduced.¹²

Consequently, the GDR became the world's largest producer of brown coal. In 1958, brown coal provided 95.8 per cent of East Germany's primary energy needs,¹³ and even by 1982 it was still 69.8 per cent.¹⁴ In 1985, 312 million tonnes were extracted.¹⁵ No country has since come close to mining brown coal in such quantities. It remained the most important source of energy for the economy throughout the GDR's existence; in 1986, 83.3 per cent of electricity in the GDR was still generated from brown coal.¹⁶ In 1981 the secretary of the operations party organisation (*Betriebsparteiorganisation*) wrote in a preface to a power plant publication that:

It makes us proud to know the enormous importance that our work has for the development of the GDR, for it is the energy which is the very blood of the economy.¹⁷

These words demonstrate the importance placed on the use of brown coal in the GDR. This was made clear early on, both within the framework of the 1951-1955 five-year plan, and as part of the 'coal and energy programme' of 1957, under which Lusatia was designated the 'coal and energy centre of the GDR' due to its large brown coal deposits.¹⁸ Unfortunately for the Lower Sorbs, who populate the

12 Nawrocki J. 'Wenn Braunkohle zu Eis wird...', *Die Zeit* (3 March 1981). Available at <http://www.zeit.de/1981/12/wenn-braunkohle-zu-eis-wird>. Accessed on 24 June 2012. See also Gromm M., *Horno: Ein Dorf in der Lausitz will leben* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1995), p. 20.

13 Knop H., *Die Energiewirtschaft der DDR und die Planung ihrer künftigen Entwicklung* (Berlin: Die Wirtschaft, 1960), p. 61.

14 Kahlert J., *Die Kernenergiepolitik in der DDR* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1988), p. 129.

15 Kahlert, *Die Kernenergiepolitik*, p. 129.

16 Kahlert, *Die Kernenergiepolitik*, p. 130.

17 Schwenzer V., 'Ohne Boxberg gingen in der halben DDR die Lichter aus.' in Becker F. & Tschernokoshewa E., *Skizzen aus der Lausitz: Region und Lebenswelt im Umbruch* (Landesstelle für Berlin-Brandenburgische Volkskunde der Humboldt-Universität (Hrsg.). Bautzen: Böhlau, 1997), pp. 53-81 at p. 57.

18 Pech E., 'Eine Vorzeigeminderheit? Die Sorben in der DDR' in Pech E. & Scholze D. (eds),

rural areas around Cottbus where brown coal deposits are most concentrated, this resource was (and remains) underneath many of their villages.

On 31 August 1955, the Minister for Heavy Industry, Fritz Selbmann, inaugurated the brown coal works *Kombinat 'Schwarze Pumpe'* which was located in the heartlands of Lusatia.¹⁹ *Kombinat* is often translated as 'combine' or 'trust'. Jeffries defines them as a 'horizontal and vertical amalgamation of enterprises [...] exercising unitary management from research right through to sales'. The formation of *Kombinate* was a significant aspect of the GDR's planned economy, and after 1979, there was a particular increase in their activity.²⁰ *Schwarze Pumpe* was one of the first *Kombinate* formed and was designed to help supply the GDR with the cheap and reliable energy source it needed.

Zwischen Zwang und Beistand (Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 2003), pp. 102-129 at p.103; Jeffries & Melzer, *The East German Economy*, p. 14; Dennis, *German Democratic Republic*, p. 139.

19 Fulbrook M., *Anatomy of a Dictatorship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 148.

20 Jeffries & Melzer, *The East German Economy*, p. 30.



Figure 5: Workers at a ceremony inaugurating building works on 31 August 1955 at lignite and coke works, Kombinat 'Schwarze Pumpe', Hoyerswerda, near Cottbus. Source: Fulbrook M., *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, New edition, 1997), p. 148, plate 5

In recognition of the Sorbian constituency of the area, and in keeping with the constitutional measures in place to protect and support Sorbian identity (in particular Article 40 of the GDR constitution), the Sorbian version of its name, *Čorna Pumpa*, was also displayed outside the plant. It is estimated that of the 18,000 workers employed there, around five per cent were Sorbs.²¹ Despite the relatively low turnout from its workforce, the Sorbian connection was repeatedly highlighted by the Central Committee (see Figure 5 above). However, all was not well in the ‘first Workers’ and Peasants’ state on German soil’.²² This particular facility was known to suffer from strained industrial relations for most of the period.

A significant knock-on effect of the founding of many of these industrial complexes in formally rural, predominantly Sorbian areas, including the designation of the *Bezirk* Cottbus as the GDR’s *Energiebezirk* (energy county), was a rapid and large influx of German speakers, not only from other parts of the GDR, but also many ethnic Germans who were expelled from their areas of settlement, such as those who left Silesia and the Sudetenland. The population of Cottbus alone doubled in thirty years: in 1957 the population was around 62,000, but by 1987 stood at around 127,000 (a figure which has fallen to around 100,000 in the post-unification era).²³ Throughout this period of rapid expansion, the number of Sorbs in the area remained more or less constant. The resultant shifts in the region’s identity and the makeup of its inhabitants caused significant levels of social tension.²⁴

21 Oschlies, *Die Sorben*, p. 78.

22 Soldt R., ‘Zum Beispiel Schwarze Pumpe: Arbeiterbrigaden in der DDR’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft: Zeitschrift für historische Sozialwissenschaft*, 24/1 (1998), p. 88.

23 ‘Amt für Statistik Berlin Brandenburg: Landesbetrieb für Datenverarbeitung und Statistik’ (information sheet, Cottbus).

24 Including the rise of the far right. See Minkenberg M., ‘German Unification and the Continuity of Discontinuities: Cultural Change and the Far Right in East and West’, *German Politics* 3/2 (1994), pp. 169-192; see also Edelstein W., ‘The rise of a right-wing culture among German youth: the effects of social transformation, identity construction, and context’, *Developmental Psychology and Social Change* (2005), pp. 314-351.

These effects on society and culture were only one of the issues caused by the rapid expansion of brown coal mining in Lusatia. For example, there were twofold environmental impacts. First, the process of strip mining itself – wherein hundreds of tonnes of top soil is removed to access coal which is sometimes hundreds of metres below – caused widespread and obvious local environmental devastation. Not only did these processes have a substantial impact on the wildlife and landscape of the area; they also required several Sorb villages to be ‘relocated’ – torn down and the inhabitants relocated to other areas. This practice effectively destroyed several communities.²⁵ However, due to the nature of the GDR state, any resistance was muted.²⁶

The usual course of action for the ‘re-settlement’ of villages such as *Klein Lieskow* was to re-house those affected in prefabricated tower blocks (*Plattenbauwohnungen*), often dispersed across nearby towns. Little or no effort was made to preserve local and family connections. Communities were usually allocated to pre-existing flats on a family-by-family basis, which often meant that former neighbours were now in towns many miles apart. I will examine this detail further in the case study of Horno in chapter six.

Furthermore, whilst compensation was offered, provision was far below market value, and often not enough to purchase a house elsewhere.²⁷ This, combined with state control of housing, prevented many of the former residents, some of whom owned substantial properties and land, from finding an equivalent dwelling in the new location. In his collection of oral history, Förster records one Sorb’s account of (re)building his house in a neighbouring village, although he is careful to note that the labour was entirely his responsibility.²⁸

25 Frank Förster’s book *Bergbau Umsiedler* documents his oral history interviews with thirty affected Sorbs and Germans. See Förster F., *Bergbau-Umsiedler: Erfahrungsberichte aus dem Lausitzer Braunkohlenrevier* (Bautzen: Domowina Verlag, 1998).

26 Förster, *Umsiedler*, p. 78.

27 Förster, *Umsiedler*, p. 83.

28 Förster, *Umsiedler*, p. 27.

The lack of assistance, both from the authorities and from the mining company, further served to reinforce a growing sense amongst many Sorbs that the ‘official’ mechanisms, which spoke so proudly of support, merely papered over the cracks of disrespect and neglect.²⁹ Moreover, the (often notional) official support that was offered led to a strong sense amongst those not directly affected by the expansion of mining sites that these *Umsiedler* (literally, ‘relocators’) were being privileged by the state. However, this was not the experience of those who were directly affected. As a result, many Sorbs felt more isolated, caught between what they saw as the empty rhetoric of the state and/or mining company on the one hand, and on the other, unaffected Germans who resented the disproportionate support these *Umsiedler* were understood to be receiving:

Those that lived there [in this village], also fell victim to the general gossip. They would come up to me: ‘Yeah, you’re building now, couldn’t you just give us a few of those [*Lastzüge*] stones? You get everything, as you have to leave because of the mining’.³⁰

The relocater quoted above goes on to mention how his reluctance to share his allocated building materials with his new neighbours was perceived as selfishness, with there being little to no recognition that he had only been allocated a specific amount of material which had to suffice for the reconstruction of his home.

While it is possible to argue that Sorbs were more affected by the distance between policy and practice during the GDR, it is important to note that there were also Germans living in these villages who also had to relocate and who suffered many of the same problems. It is therefore difficult to say how much of this negativity was a result of anti-Sorb sentiment, and how much was derived from a more general resentment of the *Umsiedler*.

In the last years of the GDR, debate grew amongst the Sorb community concerning the continuing expansion of brown coal mining and heavy industry in

29 Oral testimony to the author. See in this volume, p. 11.

30 Förster, *Umsiedler*, p. 27.

Lusatia. The discussion focused in particular on environmental impact. This more environmentally orientated viewpoint was expressed most publicly by Jurij Koch, an Upper Sorbian writer and prominent figure in the Sorbian community, and a figure known in German society more widely. Towards the end of the 1980s he began writing critically of the environmental consequences of economic development, especially focusing on the impact on Sorbian identity. In 1987 he spoke of

[s]hifted mountains and hills, misplaced rivers, filled in trenches of the glacial valley, lost villages, eroded peripheries of the town, unclean air from the dust and sulphur dioxide.³¹

In June 1989, Koch persuaded the committee of the *Deutsche Schriftstellerverband* (DSV) to produce a resolution criticising the ways and means of the continuing expansion of brown coalfields in Lusatia. He even went so far as to broadcast the text on Cologne's *Deutschlandfunk*. While these comments are now not particularly shocking or controversial, the public nature of their expression was something to which both the leaders of the regime and the people living under it were unaccustomed at the time. Koch was not alone, however; other figures were outspoken on the issue, such as Werner Meškank, who, at the time, produced the Upper and Lower Sorbian radio programme and is reported by Oschlies to have had a 'word to say about the ecological destruction of Lusatia.'³²

Nevertheless, it is hard to find suitable documentary evidence to demonstrate the strength of this kind of opposition to state policy in the pre-unification era. While copious evidence of private, local debates amongst family members and friends has been obtained via oral testimony, written evidence is scarce, which reflects the tight control the state exerted on all public matters, especially those as

31 Oschlies, *Die Sorben*, p. 65.

32 Oschlies, *Die Sorben*, p. 65.

controversial as this.³³ It would be misleading, however, to suggest that all Sorbs were against the regime on this issue and opposed to brown coal mining. There were (and still are) many Sorbs whose livelihoods depended on their position at the coalfields, power plants or *Brikett*-pressing factories.

As part of the resistance to both GDR economic plans regarding brown coal and those of the new state, there exist an interesting array of German terms used by various parties involved, both before and after unification, to describe the destruction of these villages to make way for expanding brown coalfields. First, *Ortsabweichung* suggests a place (*Ort*) deviating or diverging from its pre-existing boundaries. This is the most euphemistic of all the terms and was, predictably, most commonly used by those most in favour of expanding existing brown coal field sites. Second, *Umsiedlung*, means ‘resettlement’ or ‘relocation’, and is in usage perhaps the most neutral term – although it does evoke many of the forced resettlements which took place during and after the Second World War. Third, *Abaggerung*, is more controversial, and refers to the destruction of a place using mechanical diggers (*Bagger*, or JCB). This term was often used by those opposed to further expansion of the brown coalfields, or opposed to their existence entirely. In a similar vein, others opponents of expansion used the more general term *Devastierung*, which simply means ‘destruction’. I will examine the destruction of Horno in detail in chapter six.

4.2.3 LPGs, OR COLLECTIVISED FARMS

Another key feature of the GDR’s command economy, and especially of its rural economic policy, were the ‘LPGs’, or collectivised farms. These were of particular importance to Sorbian identity, since Sorbian life is understood as being rural in character. Sorbian society was also presented as rural in official GDR

33 Oral testimony to the author in interviews with Jurij Koch (July/August 2009), D.M. (26 July-13 August 2010), and P.D. (August 2010). See in this volume, p. 11.

depictions.³⁴ The process of collectivisation did not run altogether smoothly; many farmers and smallholders held out against the reform. There were also those within the Sorbian community who advocated a single Sorbian LPG. This idea came to nothing – although there were some LPGs which included both Sorbian and German farmers and used Sorbian in their signage. I will examine this opposition more closely in the case study of Horno, in chapter six.

The rationale behind the founding of these LPGs was not only to re-designate formally privately owned farm land to state-owned land, but also to modernise agriculture and improve productivity by introducing modern equipment and techniques. For example, the housing of cattle in large, purpose-built stalls of over 100 animals made it possible for the LPGs to place larger orders of feed and fertilizer. Replacing traditional cattle stalls with more modern methods also created a significant number of jobs. Horno, for example, eventually operated a three-shift system.³⁵

While farmland was fully collectivised, many were permitted as late as 1974 to retain a private smallholding for crops and a small number of livestock. However, after 1974, it was decreed that these plots would also come under the control of the LPG.³⁶ The introduction of new, larger farm machinery also resulted in the destruction of many established orchards and fruit trees. This was to permit machinery to move between fields more easily, and was yet another unwelcome change for many.³⁷

Nevertheless, there were also advantages to this system, in that for the first time many farmers and smallholders now had a regular income, fixed hours and even the possibility of a yearly holiday. The GDR regime made sure that these

34 Wendisches Viertel Cottbus, built in 1984; Visit by the author to Plakate Exhibition, Sorbian Museum, Bautzen (July 2009). See in this volume, p. 11.

35 Schmitz, *Horno/Rogow*, p. 46.

36 Schmitz, *Horno/Rogow*, p. 47.

37 Schmitz, *Horno/Rogow*, p. 48.

advantages were well-known.³⁸ The LPG, in common with many of the large employers in the GDR, also organised day trips, *Brigade* (team) holidays, and an end-of year fete.³⁹ These events were organised in order to strengthen workers' sense of community and collective identity; indeed, there is some oral evidence that there is significant nostalgia for these community-based activities.⁴⁰ This form of collective identity was to undergo important changes after unification.

When it comes to assessing the impact on Sorbian identity – both of the brown coal mines and of the LPGs – there is little evidence to suggest that a significant distinction exists between the experience of Sorbs and their East German colleagues. Part of the reason for this lack of evidence is that, during the GDR period, it was maintained that there were 100,000 Sorbs and any evidence to the contrary was suppressed.⁴¹ Furthermore, this means that there were not accurate statistics available on the relative economic distribution of Sorbs in comparison to Germans. This restricts the conclusions that can be reached concerning the impact of the socialist economic system on Sorbian life and identity.

4.3 UNIFICATION: A CHANGING ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

The economic structure of the GDR came under unprecedented scrutiny during the process of unification, and some of the decisions taken at that time have profoundly affected the lives of many East Germans. However, it would again appear that, at least in terms of economic impact, there is little evidence of a Sorbian response that can be clearly differentiated from the broader East German response. There was a great deal of debate at the time, particularly between economists and politicians, as to the appropriate speed and necessity of the reforms required to modify East Germany's economy from a highly planned and

38 Schullert, S., *Klein Buckow: Ortschronik*, (Welzow: VEB BKW, 1984) p. 32.

39 Schmitz, Horno/Rogow, p. 48.

40 Oral testimony to the author in an interview with P.S. (August 2009). See in this volume, p. 11.

41 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 21

centralized system to one more in tune with West Germany's *soziale Marktwirtschaft*.⁴² The notion of a social market economy, in contrast with a purely liberal market economy, became, as Berger notes, 'one of the corner-stones of West German identity in the post-war world'.⁴³ The wholesale adoption of this fundamental part of West German identity by the East, has been seen by some as one of the most profound causes of social tension between the East and West.⁴⁴

A further problem lay in the fact that at the time there was no real precedent for the wholesale absorption of such a large socialist economic area into the economy of a highly integrated globalised western economy. The intra-German working party, a committee of economic experts from the GDR and the DIW (*Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung*), was set up to look at the potential problems and possible solutions of integrating the two Germanies. It met several times in late 1989 and 1990, and its deliberations were published in April 1990.⁴⁵

One of the most interesting aspects of these published minutes is the way that they read as a collection of ideas of a sort almost exactly opposite to what later took place. Again, a dissonance between policy and practice can be identified. The committee recommended, for example, avoiding rapid unification, both political and economic, due to long-term problems they felt such a course would create – predictions concerning not only the economic effects, but more significantly the social consequences, which in hindsight seem to have been startlingly accurate.⁴⁶

I will now examine two aspects of the report in particular that have had the greatest impact on identity since unification: first, the matter of comparable prices, pay structures and wages; and second, the effect of unification on brown

42 Fulbrook M., (ed.), *German History since 1800* (London: Arnold, 1997) p. 428

43 Berger S., *Germany: Inventing the Nation* (London: Arnold, 2004) p. 185

44 Grós, J., *Staatsangehörigkeit: Deutsch, Nationalität: Sorbe* (Schkeuditz: GNN Verlag, 2004), p. 78

45 Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung, 'Economic trends 1990/91: East and West Germany following monetary, economic and social union', Report of the Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung, *Economic Review* 27/7 (1990), pp. 1-16

46 Deutsches Institut, 'Economic Trends', p. 1

coal mining and the LPGs. Additionally, I will discuss the new problem of high unemployment in the east, and its impact on Sorbian national identity.

The first part of the report includes two important points. First, that political unification should not take place before economic reforms are enacted, and second, that the two Germanies should continue to have separate currencies. It warns of the widespread misconception that rapid political unification would solve the economic issues, of which the most problematic was significant income differentials:

The GDR is already on the verge of entering a vicious circle of migration, paralysis of economic, intellectual/cultural and social life, then renewed migration, which will not only destroy its future chances of closing the gap in economic terms, but will also place a considerable burden on the Federal Republic.⁴⁷

This warning is consonant with one of the most important features of (particularly modern) Sorbian identity: a profound concern with assimilation into a wider German-only community, sometimes referred to as Germanisation.⁴⁸ This has, in recent times, not so much taken the form of Germans migrating to Lusatia, but of young Sorbs leaving the region and in a sense being absorbed into the majority culture with little to no obvious evidence of their Sorbian identity surviving the transition.⁴⁹ This is often coupled with a sense of concern about such people losing a ‘unique’ part of their identity and cultural heritage – a theme which is articulated in a wide variety of Sorbian sources.⁵⁰ This chimes with the narrative, identified in section 1.5 above, of the passive ‘loss’ of culture and language, over against the active choices of young Sorbs to live differently and elsewhere.

47 Deutsches Institut, ‘Economic Trends’, p. 4

48 See this volume, 1.4.2 Scholarship on the Sorbian National Minority, p. 48

49 Oral testimony to the author in interview with P.D. (August 2010), D.S. (26 July-13 August 2010), S.B. (16 March 2009). See in this volume, p. 11

50 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, pp. 159-185; Koschmal W., “Globalisierung” als kulturelles Phänomen (am Beispiel der Sorben), *Frost* 11 (2003), pp. 75-98; Čornakec J., ‘Die Kastanie’ in *Einstieg: Geschichten neuer Autoren* (Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1987), pp. 141-155

The DIW's warning of the consequences is certainly borne out by what many Sorbian commentators themselves have since highlighted as problems for their community.⁵¹ Again, it remains to be seen just how different these economic effects are for Sorbs as opposed to East Germans. But as the DIW brought together the cultural and social aspects of the ostensibly economic decision that were taken, it seems reasonable to suggest that the cultural impact of such decisions has been felt more acutely in a minority population such as the Sorbs. I will return to this point in section 4.4, when I consider the post-unification economic situation.

Returning to the topic of prices highlights one of the fundamental differences between a socialist command economy and a market economy. The former eschews money (in the sense of monetary value) in favour of 'economic levers',⁵² so 'costs, prices, profits and wages functioned as direct levers, the bonus and performance funds as indirect levers'.⁵³ What is common to all the levers is that they are set from the centre and based primarily on political considerations and the 'Plan'. The idea behind this is that if an economy is planned the booms and busts so integral to the market economy could be 'planned' out and eliminated. However, as Weber has said, 'there can be no talk of a rational "planned economy" as long as there is no efficient calculation system for rationally setting up a "plan"'.⁵⁴ This was then noted as one of the most important reforms needed under the term 'decontrolling prices' – essentially allowing private enterprise to raise or lower prices according to cost, profit and so on.⁵⁵ In conjunction they called for the subsidies that had been used to ensure the low cost of basic

51 Oral testimony to the author in interview with Harald Konzack (10 March 2009) and Jurij Koch (July/August 2009). See in this volume, p. 11

52 'Ökonomische Hebel' in German. For further details see Jeffries & Melzer, *The East German Economy*, p. 30

53 Dennis, *German Democratic Republic*, p. 130

54 Weber M. in Müller B., *Disenchantment with Market Economics: East Germans and Western Capitalism* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007) p. 23

55 Deutsches Institut, 'Economic trends', p. 6

foodstuffs to be used for social compensation, especially to enable pensioners to cope with the expected rise in living expenses.

The lack of produce availability before the fall of the Wall resulted in many people (particularly in rural areas) using locally-available seasonal wild produce, such as mushroom, cranberries and strawberries. A common complaint since then, however, has been that the presence of supermarkets filled with imported and often out-of-season fresh produce has caused much of the former local knowledge of where they can be found to be lost – as well as any need or desire to pick it.⁵⁶ But it must be remembered that this refrain is by no means unique to the Sorbs or even to Germany, but can be heard over much of Europe, as those with work are encouraged to think of themselves as time-poor consumers.

Nevertheless there are certain rites, rituals and festivities which rely on a knowledge and understanding of the local flora and fauna; as habits and lifestyles change it is feared by more culturally conservative Sorbian commentators that these will be lost, resulting in a loss of cultural diversity. Here again the argument could be made that, as this is an essentially rural minority community, once those links between locality and identity are broken, many aspects of cultural transmission become lost without a state and its apparatus to reinforce them. Nonetheless, more progressive Sorbs prominent in the cultural sphere have called for a greater realisation of the changing modern nature of Sorbian and German identity and even of Sorbian/German identity.

The second major point of reform was the call to change the highly flattened pay structure, whereby all but the highest ranking *Politbüro* officials were paid roughly similar amounts. It was proposed that remuneration become proportionate to demand, as was the case in West Germany. This proposal, however, met with strong opposition from East German trade unions, and many citizens felt that,

56 Oral testimony to the author in interview with P.S. (August 2009). See in this volume, p. 11

since they worked just as hard and productively as any westerner, they ought to be entitled to the same wage for a comparable job.

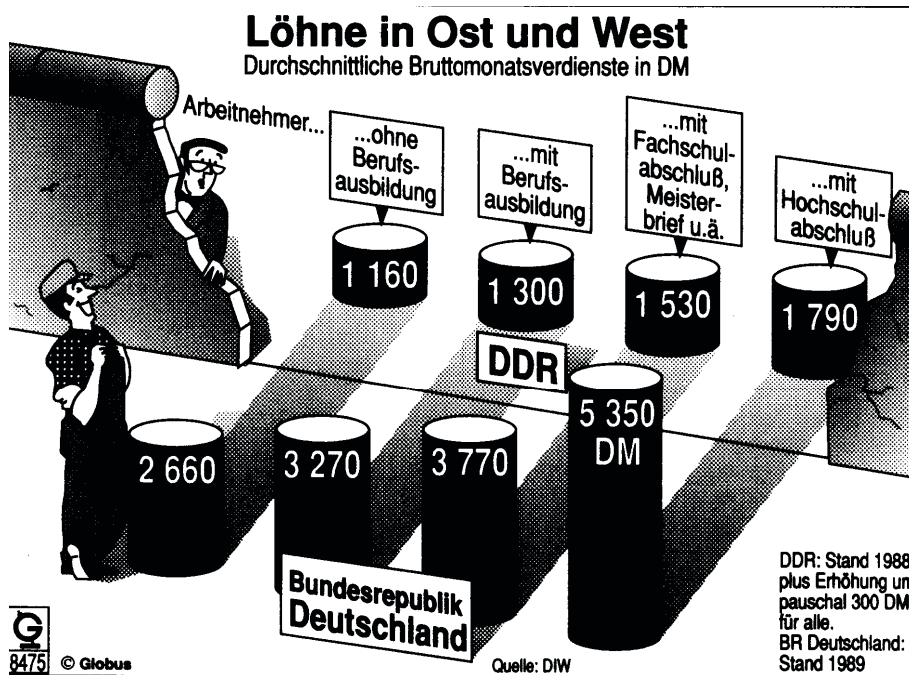


Figure 6: 'Wages in East and West: Average gross monthly wages in Deutschmarks'. Source: Maier G., *Wende in der DDR* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1991), p. 94.

A further political consideration, and one that was certainly on the minds of senior politicians of the time, was the concern or fear that once the internal border and the Wall were removed there would be nothing to stop East German workers flooding into West Germany. The reasoning behind this was that East German workers would move to the West, enticed by considerably greater pay than would be available in the East; and that correspondingly they would be content to undercut the unionized industry-wide pay rates agreed by West Germans, so that this logic culminated in a 'race to the bottom'. This would have the effect of significant social unrest and resentment on both sides, and would be likely to bring politically undesirable consequences. The fear of many Sorbs of the time was to be borne out as young and well-educated Sorbs left, disrupting traditional family and community structures vital to the continuation of Sorbian traditions.

A neat *political* solution would therefore have been to pay East German workers, where possible in a de-centralised economy, the corresponding West German rates; this could then be presented to the wider population of both states as being in their own interests. East Germans' work, and by extension East Germans themselves, were as valuable as West German workers – and West Germans would not have to worry about eager East Germans undercutting their jobs. The report warns of the cost of 'continuous large-scale migration in the form of lost production in the GDR and the additional social tensions'. In addition the economists argued that

if [...] the level of wages in the territory of the GDR were brought up to the level of wages in the federal republic in a short space of time [...] a large proportion of industry in the GDR would no longer be able to compete with West German firms and the international economy. There would be widespread closures and redundancies.⁵⁷

This purely political solution was implemented to an extent in the initial phase after unification, and several studies have shown that the rate of wage growth did increase much more rapidly in the East than in the West for the period 1991 to 1995, but has risen much more slowly since then. This (as the report warned) has further entrenched high unemployment levels and has led to a significant pressure towards depopulation of rural areas in East Germany (as well as East Germany as a whole).⁵⁸

It is important to note that structural unemployment in the so-called '*neue Bundesländer*' is almost double that of the West, even twenty years on from unification. The discussion regarding unemployment and its aftermath will be considered in greater detail in the next section, which deals with the post-unification period. It is important to note that while the secrecy surrounding many of the facts and figures in relation to the Sorbs is no longer a factor, since there is now a free press and research organisations, the new democratic federal

57 Deutsches Institut, 'Economic trends', p. 10

58 Smolney W., *Wage differentials between East and West Germany* (Mannheim, 2004), p. 10

government of a united Germany was, and still is, prevented from officially gathering data regarding ethnicity.⁵⁹ This means that it is difficult to link economic changes with consequences which impacted the Sorbs specifically.

4.4 POST-UNIFICATION

Further to the discussion in 4.2 regarding brown coal strip mining during the GDR, I will now return to the topic to consider how policy and practice changed after unification. After the collapse of the regime, legal frameworks concerning mining, the environment, and finance were to change radically.

4.4.1 DIVESTMENT/PRIVATISATION

After the fall of the Wall, and as part of the process of divestment of state-owned enterprises and land began (a process also known as privatisation) it became clear that not all the existing brown coalfields and *Brikett*-pressing factories would be able to survive in a capitalist, demand-driven economy. This problem was particularly acute, given that other sources of energy could now be accessed more easily and cheaply. Of the seventeen brown coal mines operating under the GDR in Lusatia, only five were deemed ‘to possess long-term prospects under market-based conditions’.⁶⁰ The five mines were Cottbus-Nord, Jänschwalde, Nochten, Reichwalde and Welzow-Süd.

The reasoning behind the decision was the close proximity of these particular mines to power plants which therefore provided a guaranteed long-term constant demand for brown coal. Jänschwalde power station was now to be supplied by brown coal from the local Jänschwalde mine as well as Cottbus-Nord. Welzow-Süd would now supply coal to the local *Schwarze Pumpe* power station as well as

59 For further discussion of this point, see in this volume: 1.2.2 Ethnicity, Language and Linguistics; and 1.2.3 Constitution of the Sorbian Population, pp. 25 ff.

60 Förster, *Umsiedler*, p. 15.

the only *Brikett* factory deemed economically viable. Boxberg power station was to be supplied by the two remaining coal mines Nochten and Reichwalde.

Boxberg, unlike the other four, is in Saxony rather than Brandenburg.

The ownership of all mining and power-generating operations in Lusatia, in accordance with the law passed on the 17 June 1990 by the *Volkskammer*, was to be given to the newly-formed *Treuhandanstalt*.⁶¹ The *Treuhandanstalt* was then given the task of privatising the brown coal mines and power plants, and in order to do this the former *VEB Braunkohlenkombinat Senftenberg* and associated operations were consolidated into the *Lausitzer Braunkohle AG* (LAUBAG).

The remaining sites were then transferred to what was to become known as the LMBV (*Lausitzer und Mitteldeutsche Bergbau-Verwaltungsgesellschaft mbH*) for the purpose of winding up operations of those sites deemed economically unviable and restoring or repairing sites for alternative uses. The closure of all the brown coal sites under its aegis was completed on the 17 December 1999 with the closure of the Meuro site. However the maintenance, particularly in regard to so-called ‘wasserwirtschaftliches Gebiet’ (aquacultural area), will involve considerable time and money for years to come as the after-effects on local water tables and waterways become ever clearer. This also has consequences for the many planned artificial lakes designed to attract tourists and to create new sources of employment.

In 2003 the wholly Swedish government-owned company *Vattenfall* bought LAUBAG AG.⁶² This was after a decision by the *Bundeskartellamt* and the European Commission, which felt after investigating the local retail domestic energy markets that there was too little competition, which resulted in excessively high domestic energy prices for consumers.⁶³

61 Förderverein Kulturlandschaft Niederlausitz e.V. (ed.), *Bergbau in der Niederlausitz im Überblick* (Cottbus: Selbstverlag, 2005), p. 43. Note: low print-run, self-circulated booklet.

62 Förderverein, *Bergbau in der Niederlausitz*, p. 45.

63 Förderverein, *Bergbau in der Niederlausitz*, p. 44.

In fact Prof. Dähnert, who is charged by Vattenfall with carrying out current and future re-locations due to the expansion of some of the existing coalfields, has described Vattenfall as ‘one of the few beacons of light in the local job market of this region’.⁶⁴ He also goes on to mention the significant improvements made in terms of environmental stewardship since unification, with all power stations now fitted with modern ‘scrubbers’ to remove significant proportions of the sulphur, ash and pollution that used to be pumped into the local atmosphere. This has led to a noticeable change in the local environment as well as in the physical health of many local inhabitants – although one local in Jänschwalde noted that since the demolition of the 300 metre-high chimney stack from Jänschwalde power station, the local climate has become worse, due to the smaller amounts of pollution now being pumped out of the much smaller cooling towers and not reaching such high altitudes to be blown away. However, this must be read in the context of significant improvements in the regional environment. I will examine the case of Vattenfall further in chapter six, where I will also report on an interview I conducted with Prof. Dähnert.

4.4.2 THE ENERGIEWENDE?

The context of coal mining and electricity generation in Lower Lusatia has always been dependent on rules and the political machinations of the rulers in Berlin. This is as true for the GDR as it is for the unified FRG. In fact twenty years after the political *Wende* or turning point of unification, the term ‘*Energiewende*’ is used by both the media and the federal government to describe and explain the changes that are being planned, and need to be made, to the structure of Germany’s energy generation. This collection of policies relies as much on political possibilities and calculations as it does on dry statistics of energy and electricity output per hour. In order to more fully understand the situation as it

64 Oral testimony to the author in formal interview with Prof. Dähnert (28 July 2009). See in this volume, p. 11.

currently stands in post-unification Lower Lusatia, it is necessary to be aware of the policies and debates nationally within Germany which are the driving force behind such actions.

The stated principle aim of the *Energiewende* is that by 2050 Germany's energy needs ought to be met 'overwhelmingly from renewable energy'.⁶⁵ This aim is to be met through a broad range of renewable technology as well as an overall increase in energy efficiency and reduction across the board. However the German government (via the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety) sees this *Wende* not simply in terms of energy production and economics but

it is also a fundamental ethical and cultural decision and offers the unique opportunity to show the world how competitiveness can be reconciled with sustainable development in a leading industrial nation.⁶⁶

It is clear from these words that even the federal government views the topic of electricity generation in much deeper terms than merely economics. Before we move on to examine how this rhetoric seems to play on the ground (and among the Sorbs in particular), I will sketch out the remainder of the *Energiewende* concept as well as highlighting some of the areas where there are continuities and discontinuities with the energy structure of the GDR.

As we saw above, the aim of the *Energiewende*, which the German government translates into English as 'the transformation of our energy system',⁶⁷ is to significantly increase renewable energy usage. The German government focuses

65 Bundeministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und Reaktorsicherheit, 'Kurzinformatio Energiewende' (October 2011). Available at <http://www.bmu.de/energiewende/kurzinfo/doc/47889.php>. Accessed on 20 December 2012.

66 Bundeministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und Reaktorsicherheit, 'General information: transformation of our energy system' (October 2011). Available at <http://www.bmu.de/en/topics/climate-energy/transformation-of-the-energy-system/general-information/>. Accessed on 20 December 2012.

67 Bundeministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und Reaktorsicherheit, 'General information'

on three types of renewable energy production: solar energy (usually photovoltaic); wind energy both onshore and offshore; and biogas. In order to encourage the spread of these renewable forms of electricity generation, German governments have in recent years set a benchmark price which guarantees a set fee per kilowatt-hour of electricity produced which is above that of the market rate for electricity, i.e. a so-called ‘feed-in tariff’. This producer premium was available not only to large-scale renewable projects but also to private citizens, such as those who installed photovoltaic panels on their homes.

The subsidies were also not limited to electricity generation itself but also included the production of the materials necessary to create the solar panels and wind turbines themselves. In fact, the solar panel production subsidies were so successful in the first years of the twenty-first century, Germany was second only to China in production of solar panels. One of the major production centres was based around the East German city of Dresden. This development brought with it much political coverage which focussed on a formerly economically-depressed region booming again due to manufacturing – and not just any manufacturing industry but the industry of the future, and one that had been supported and picked at an early stage by the government. In the early stages of this scheme concerns were raised, despite these subsidies, that Germany is, in European terms, neither particularly sunny for much of the year nor particularly windy.

Nonetheless, Germany has managed to install more solar energy generation capacity than any other nation on earth, as well as generating more electricity from solar power, as a percentage of its market, than anyone else. In fact, the scheme has even become a victim of its own success: the amount of government subsidy flowing towards the renewable feed in tariffs grew significantly beyond forecasts and expectations and hit the political realities of the economic crisis of 2008-09. As the economic gloom descended the newly elected Black-yellow (CDU/FDP) coalition of Angela Merkel sought to balance the federal budget and deemed that one way to do this would be to reduce/cut the feed-in tariffs which up

until this point had been guaranteed by government to cover a particular period. The political furore generated by the proposed reduction resulted in a less swingeing cut in the tariff. There were accusations from the German Green party that the conservative liberal coalition was placing short term fiscal needs over a greater commitment to the environment as well as to Germany's international obligations – accusations rebuffed by the government as it demonstrated its fiscal commitment to further expansion of renewable energy production.

Interrupting the national debate concerning the technicalities of the feed-in tariff rates came the unforeseen international events of 2011, when a Pacific earthquake, tsunami, and the subsequent Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan. The debate suddenly shifted to the nature of the energy mix within Germany; being the worst nuclear power disaster since Chernobyl, the story of Fukushima fed directly into a long-standing national debate in Germany regarding an '*Atomausstieg*' (an exit from nuclear power generation). The CDU/FDP coalition had only months earlier, in 2010, agreed to extend the life of seventeen of Germany's ageing nuclear reactors, even though it had been official government policy since 2000 to phase out nuclear power within Germany.

Events thousands of miles away from Germany directly impacted domestic energy policy. How, then, did the *Energiewende* affect Lusatia in recent years? As an economically depressed region, Lusatia and the respective state governments of Upper and Lower Lusatia, Saxony and Brandenburg all sought to benefit from the surge in demand for renewable energy capacity. According to their governments, the eastern states of Germany were ideally suited to such endeavours, as they had low population density and large areas of cheap land available, as well as a waiting pool of affordable and unemployed labour. The installation of wind turbines and solar panels did indeed begin to increase across much of the region, which has produced welcome employment for local people.

Some communities, such as Lieberose in Brandenburg, enthusiastically took on the call for more solar panels and in October 2009 opened the world's third largest

solar panel array consisting of 900,000 individual panels generating 70.8 megawatts, as long as the sun shines. In the Brandenburg town of Senftenberg, a former brown coal open cast mine was converted into a 'solar park'. When all the panels are fully installed, this will be the world's largest solar array, with a maximum output of 148 megawatts. Phase one was completed on 24 September 2011, and opened by the *Minister-Präsident* of Brandenburg, Mathias Platzeck. The project is built on the site of the former brown coal mine, Meuro, which was one of the mines closed after unification having been deemed economically unviable. The mayor of Senftenberg, Andreas Fredrich, is reported as saying that 'thanks to the large number of former mining sites and existing power grids, our region is the ideal place to host large photovoltaic systems'.⁶⁸

In the light of these developments, and the political fanfare announcing the installation and subsidy of renewable energy sources, it might seem logical to expect the decline of the heavily polluting and environmentally destructive practice of brown coal mining. However, the reverse seems to be true at present. Since the withdrawal of nuclear facilities from Germany's energy grid, (which was justified on environmental as well as safety grounds), the use of brown coal has increased. Despite the large increases in renewable energy generation capacity over the last ten years, brown coal continues to be the largest single source of electricity generation in Germany, just as it was during the GDR, although it now constitutes just under one-third of total energy generation, by comparison with the peak under the GDR of ninety per cent.

In 2007 the then CDU minister president of Saxony, Georg Milbradt,⁶⁹ spoke during the opening of a new power station of

68 'Großer Solarpark bei Senftenberg am Netz', *Photovoltaik - Solar News: Neuigkeiten aus der Solarbranche* (9 October 2011). Available at <http://www.solaranlagen-portal.de/news/groser-solarpark-bei-senftenberg-am-netz/>. Accessed on 2 January 2013.

69 Note that his successor, Stanislaw Tillich (CDU), is an Upper Sorb.

a good day for Lusatia, for the workers here, for energy security and brown coal in general. It is and remains our most important energy source: safe and good value [preiswert].⁷⁰

The speech given by Milbradt in 2007 was given in Boxberg, where a party official had in 1981 proclaimed the importance of the brown coal industry to the East German economy. Despite the intervening twenty-six years, the role of brown coal has not changed significantly. Furthermore, the industry's capacity to create jobs remains one of the strongest arguments for the continuation of brown coal extraction in Lusatia. Michael Gromm, one of the last residents of the old village of Horno, wrote:

Those who were against the destruction of villages, [they (the brown coal energy company) said], were also against brown coal production in general, and those who were against brown coal production were for the obliteration of jobs!⁷¹

Although it is worth noting that while Gromm considered himself a resident, he in fact only bought a piece of land in the middle of the village at a later stage after court proceedings were undertaken and never owned any property in the village.⁷² Nevertheless Gromm does give some illustration of the political pressure which many residents felt as a result of energy policy, both under the GDR and after unification.⁷³ By 2011 Lusatia produced 59.8 million tonnes of brown coal out of a German total of 176.5 million tonnes.⁷⁴

70 Milbradt quoted in Grós J., *Nach 20 Jahren nachgefragt: Betrachtungen zur nationalen Lage der Sorben* (Bautzen: Lausitzer Druck- und Verlagshaus, 2009), p. 193.

71 Gromm M., *Horno: Ein Dorf in der Lausitz will leben* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1995), pp. 23-24

72 Gromm is in fact originally British and claims Sorbian ancestry via family links to the Polish side of the Sorbian area. Once the court case was lost and the village was relocated he has not been in contact with the villagers of Horno.

73 Oral testimony to the author in interview with P.S. (8 March 2009). See this volume, p. 11. See also Förster F., *Bergbau-Umsiedler: Erfahrungsberichte aus dem Lausitzer Braunkohlenrevier* (Bautzen: Domowina Verlag, 1998).

74 Figures from DEBRIV Bundesverband Braunkohle.

4.4.3 THE PRIVATISATION OF LPGs

The LPGs, or agricultural collectives, also went through radical changes after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Many were sold off to existing private agricultural firms. Although this has led to increasingly large and much more productive farming, employing new methods, seeds, fertilisers and pesticides, the employment of labourers has decreased almost as drastically as in the coalfields. This has placed further pressure on those who remain in the area to find suitable alternative employment.

The effects of these economic shifts can be seen in the demographic trends of the last twenty years. Where West Germany saw a large reduction between 1950 and 1980 in the number of people living in communities of less than two thousand (from twenty-nine per cent to just six per cent), over the same period of time the GDR saw a fall of only five percentage points from the same baseline figure: i.e., in East Germany twenty-three per cent of people were still living in small rural communities by 1980. This lack of rural depopulation is now hitting an already economically impoverished area, as previous opportunities for employment are removed.

This is also likely to have a significant impact on the Sorbian cultural community, which as Fulbrook says is ‘an essentially rural culture and language community’.⁷⁵ While there is a lack of statistical economic data relating to the Sorbs, it seems to me that it is plausible that such a minority population based mainly in rural areas would suffer disproportionately from these post-unification demographic and economic trends. It has, however, also been suggested by Prof. Frank Heiland that ‘rural regions with good infrastructure and nearby economic centres will benefit’.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, developing suitable and sustainable privately

75 Fulbrook, *German History since 1800*, p. 427

76 Heiland F., quoted in O’Brien K.J., ‘Last Out, Please Turn Off the Lights’, *New York Times* (28 May 2004). Available at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9907E1DF103EF93BA15756C0A9629C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all>. Accessed on 1 September 2008.

owned, operated and diversified economic centres remains a huge challenge for local, regional and national government in this part of Germany. The prospects of such a future seem, given the current economic and fiscal situation, some way off; furthermore, the political debate regarding future employment options is threadbare, as it relies heavily on plans to turn many of the disused coalfields into the world's largest collection of artificial lakes. This, it is said, will draw significant numbers of tourists and provide local employment opportunities for local citizens, but there are many on all sides of the political spectrum and many prominent Sorbs who are sceptical of such plans. For many Sorbs and Germans remain unconvinced of the safety of such plans, given the large amount of acid and heavy metals that leech into the waters, and subsequently has to be removed or neutralised.⁷⁷

4.4.4 EMPLOYMENT, UNDEREMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

So far in this section I have examined the extensive structural changes to the energy and agricultural sectors in the post-unification period. Closely related to these changes is the issue of employment and unemployment, which I consider now. The issue of unemployment in East Germany, and particularly in Lusatia, is of great importance when assessing the impact of unification on Sorbian identity, as well as the shift away from a centrally planned socialist economy to a social market model (*soziale Marktwirtschaft*). It is difficult to elicit a Sorb response which speaks specifically to these economic issues, in part because there are no official statistics which take into account Sorbian identity, for reasons discussed in earlier chapters. Therefore I have had to rely on a mixture of official statistics for all of those residents in the area in addition to anecdotal evidence to inform my

77 Neumeister H., Krüger H. & Schneider B., 'Problems associated with the artificial flooding of flood plain forests in an industrial region in Germany', *Global Ecology and Biogeography Letters* 6/3-4 (1997), pp. 197-209; also oral testimony to the author in informal interview with R.S. (2 August 2010). See this volume, p. 11.

conclusions. This is of course not ideal and is certainly an area which urgently requires further detailed Sorb-specific study.

It is hard to view the topic of unemployment and the impact it has had in Eastern Germany without taking into account just how the GDR's economy, and much of its propaganda, relied on the topic to show how the socialist system worked more successfully than the capitalist system.⁷⁸ As full employment was a constitutionally supported guarantee under the GDR,⁷⁹ structural unemployment in the western capitalist sense did not officially exist.⁸⁰ This idea would have been attractive to many in the early days of the GDR, particularly those who had personal memories of the desolate economic situation and the subsequent rise of fascism. Indeed, the GDR frequently reinforced this association.⁸¹

After unification, there was the widespread expectation, especially among East German workers, that their products would be in demand and therefore that their jobs were secure.⁸² However, this was not to be the case: as the aforementioned economic experts had warned, overly rapid unification could cause significant long-term unemployment especially in the highly price-sensitive and importantly wage-sensitive sectors of industry and manufacturing. The Lusatian region was already somewhat economically depressed, having suffered from forty years' worth of economically unsound and unpopular agricultural collectivisation and strip mining policies.

While the unified Germany has in recent years made inroads into reducing the levels of unemployment, it is still persistently higher in the east than in the west. For example, in Saxony the *Arbeitsamtskreis* Bautzen had in February 2003 the highest unemployment figure of twenty-five per cent, whilst the neighbouring

78 Ross C., *The East German Dictatorship: problems and perspectives in the interpretation of the GDR* (London: Arnold, 2002), p. 36.

79 Verfassung der DDR (1968), Article 12.1.

80 Fulbrook, *German History since 1800*, p. 421.

81 Ross, *The East German Dictatorship*, pp. 15-35.

82 Müller, B., *Disenchantment with market Economics: East Germans and Western Capitalism* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007) p. 185.

Kreis, Dresden, had Saxony's and east Germany's lowest rate of 16.6 per cent. *Kreis* Bautzen is home to the majority of Sorbs. It is noteworthy also that these are *overall* unemployment figures; rates of youth unemployment are frequently more than double these headline figures.⁸³ This fact alone might not have such portent if it were not for its combination with important demographic changes: the trend of a falling east German population continues to the present day, over forty years since it began. I will continue discussion of the issue of migration in the next chapter (5.7).

4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I first examined the economic structure of the GDR, focusing in particular on brown coal mining, industrialisation, and the collectivisation of agriculture. Second, I discussed the economic decisions taken during the 1989-90 unification period itself. Third, I discussed the consequences of these decision on Sorbian life post-unification.

In conclusion, it must be said that there is little evidence to support the idea of a specifically Sorbian impact or response to the economic circumstances of unification, or the economic changes triggered by them. Indeed, what evidence there is suggests that Sorbs experienced many of the same difficulties in the midst of changing industrial, agricultural and economic policy as their fellow east Germans. What is clear is that, while many of the economic impacts of unification have had no special impact on the Sorbian minority, the effects on culture and identity are more substantial, because of the very nature of minority life in a modern western state. In the next chapter I will examine the impact of German unification on Sorbian culture in some depth.

83 Grundig B., 'Die Entwicklung des Arbeitsmarkts in Sachsen', 'Dresden berichtet' *Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung eV*, 2 (2003), pp. 1-5, at p. 3.

CHAPTER FIVE

CULTURE AND THE SORBS

Wann gibt es endlich die Wende für die Wenden?¹
[When will there finally be a revolution for the Sorbs?]

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines whether Sorbian culture changed after unification in 1989-90, and, if so, to what extent the changes should be attributed to the process of unification itself. In line with my general theme, I will argue that the impact of unification on the Sorbs and Sorbian culture has actually been far less substantial than the rhetoric that commonly surrounds the ‘turning-point’ (*Wende*) of 1989/90 would suggest. This is not, however, to say that nothing has changed since that time, particularly in the realms of culture and cultural production, but simply to assert that when subjected to close and critical scrutiny, the common notion of abrupt, all-encompassing, quasi-revolutionary change shrinks in the light of the fact that the structures in place in the central Sorbian cultural institutions and outworkings of the culture they oversee are strikingly similar today to how they were in the GDR.

This continuity, I argue, has resulted in several of the internal and external criticisms raised during the process of unification remaining largely unaddressed. Moreover, and perhaps most significantly (in a cultural context), as a result of the unique provisions of the federal law explored in the previous chapter, the

1 [user ‘Sima’], comment left on 27 March 2010, Review of Walde M., *Wie man seine Sprache hassen lernt*, *Nowy Casnik*. Available at <http://www.nowycasnik.de/artikle/216>. Accessed on 30 August 2013.

fundamental (financial) means of Sorbian cultural production has continued to be provided by the state, as it was during the GDR. This funding structure has caused and continues to cause profound tensions both within Sorbian politics and beyond.

In order to demonstrate the continuities between contemporary Sorbian culture and that of the GDR era, this chapter will analyse in detail the main cultural institutions that function to regulate Sorbian cultural identity (5.2) and examine the nature of the central modes of expression within Sorbian culture – the media (5.3), religion (5.4), education (5.5), folk culture (5.6), youth culture (5.7), and museums (5.8). With reference to these overarching structures and various expressions, I will conclude that where changes in post-communist Sorbian culture are apparent, they are often not primarily expressions of (internal) changes directly related to unification, but are rather the product of broader cultural shifts which are evident not just in Germany as a whole but across much of Europe. Key causes include the increased influence of new forms of technology and wider contemporary trends on cultural expression.

5.2 SORBIAN CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

As I have already shown, the majority of ‘official’ Sorbian activities are mediated through the major Sorbian organisations and institutions. When it comes to the practice of Sorbian culture, two institutions in particular, dominate the horizon – the Domowina (which I have discussed extensively in previous chapters), and the Foundation for the Sorbian People (*Stiftung für das sorbische Volk*). Rather like the Domowina, The Foundation for the Sorbian People (hereafter Foundation) is tasked with ‘preserving and developing the Sorbian language and culture as an expression of the Sorbian people’s identity’.² In practice, however, it is essentially a funding body which collates and disperses federal and state funding to a variety of culturally-oriented organisations, including the Domowina.

2 Rechtlinien der Stiftung für das sorbische Volk. ‘Zweck, Rechtsgrundlage: 1.1’. Available at <http://stiftung.sorben.com/usf/richtlinie.pdf>. Accessed on 30 August 2013.

The Foundation was established on 19 October 1991, in a small village church in Lohsa (situated between Bautzen and Hoyerswerda, in Saxony), as a direct consequence of the commitment made by the new all-German government in protocol note (14) attached to Article 35 of the Unification treaty.³ Present were representatives from the state governments of Saxony and Brandenburg, as well as federal government ministers, in particular a junior minister, little-known at the time, Dr Angela Merkel.⁴ She expressed the importance that the German federal government placed on the protection and support of minorities, particularly ‘because the Sorbs have, in contrast to the Danish minority, no national mother-state (*Mutterstaat*)’.⁵ Merkel also stated that:

the recognition of minorities is an essential part of the democratic legitimacy of the federal government. This is clearly and self-evidently particularly true in the case of national minorities.⁶

This sentiment reflects a rhetoric that has persisted, with the federal government regularly appealing to the treatment of the Sorbs, and the Foundation in particular, as evidence of its democratic credentials and emphasis on culture dissemination. For example, in a speech given on 25 November 2006, Prof. Dr Hermann Schäfer, a representative of the federal government, stated that:

The federal government supports the Foundation for the Sorbian People not only because it is obliged to, but also because the Sorbian minority enriches culture in Germany.⁷

The Foundation has also been praised outside of Germany. Perhaps most notably by the Council of Europe’s ‘Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention

3 Many of the initial discussions emphasised the importance of this new foundation as a model for the newly democratising Eastern-bloc countries, many of which had significant German minorities.

4 Merkel was not originally invited but was in fact standing in for the Federal Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble, who was unable to attend due to illness.

5 Grós J., *Nach 20 Jahren nachgefragt*, p. 171.

6 Grós J., *Nach 20 Jahren nachgefragt*, p. 171.

7 Foundation for the Sorbian People, *Jahresbericht 2004-2006* (Bautzen: Laustitzer Druck- und Verlagshaus), p. 25.

for the Protection of National Minorities' (hereafter Advisory Committee) which highlighted the Foundation, in both its second and third reports, as a potential model for other national minorities in Germany:

The Advisory Committee considers that this institution makes a highly positive contribution in that it provides a fine example of good co-operation between the Federal authorities and the *Länder* for the benefit of national minorities (see also the comments under Article 5). Seen in this light, it could provide a worthwhile model for other minorities who do not as yet have such a body.⁸

The Foundation consists of a parliamentary advisory committee, a director and a council (*Stiftungsrat*). The parliamentary advisory committee consists of six members: two members of the federal parliament, two members of Saxony's state legislature and two from Brandenburg's state parliament. The director is appointed and monitored by the council (*Stiftungsrat*). The current director, Marko Suchy, was appointed in 1992 and had his seven year term renewed in July 2006. The council has fifteen members:⁹ six representatives of the Sorbian people (four from Saxony and two from Brandenburg – which are often also members of the Domowina), two federal representatives, two representatives of the state of Saxony, two of state of Brandenburg, two representatives appointed from the ranks of local and municipal council representatives in Saxony, and one representative from the equivalent bodies in Brandenburg.¹⁰

As such, the majority of representatives of the Foundation officially represent German governmental structures or bodies. Significantly, examining the representative structure of the council, in 2002, the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee noted that amongst the fifteen members only six were in fact Sorbs.

8 Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities Opinion on Germany, adopted on 1 March 2002. Article 15, §65.

9 This structure is post-1998: between 1991 and 1998 there were nine Sorbs from the Domowina and twelve representatives from federal, state and local government. See Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 141.

10 Saxony's Landkreistag und Sächsischer Städte- und Gemeindetag.

The Advisory Committee notes nonetheless that only 6 of the 15 members of the Foundation's governing board are representatives of the Sorbian minority – the others belong to the majority. The Sorbian members therefore represent less than half of the board and have no right of veto, even on fundamental issues. The Advisory Committee considers that the authorities could examine ways of strengthening the representation of the Sorbian minority in the functioning of the Foundation and in other fora.¹¹

As a result, the Council of Europe echoed the criticisms of some Sorbs, that even within their own Foundation they are a minority.¹² Six months after the Advisory Committee's report, on 3 September 2002, the Federal Government responded. The content of the response was highly revealing, and the general tone of the attitude it expressed towards the Advisory Committee's criticisms, telling.

The specific proposal to increase the number of Sorbs in the Foundation was dismissed on three counts: first, that the Inter-State Treaty regarding the formation of the Foundation regulated and fixed its structure, and as such 'changes could only be made regarding the composition of the Foundation's Governing Board if this Inter-State Agreement was amended.' Second, that 'all the members of the Foundation's Governing Board jointly pursue the same objectives' as stated in the Inter-State Treaty – and therefore, as it was deemed that all representatives did share the same aims, change was not required. Third, the federal response appealed to the legal right, inculcated in the Sorb Law of Saxony and Brandenburg, to freely declare your affiliation to Sorbian identity, and in such a way that deserves to be quoted in full.

[...] the 'representatives of the Sorbian people' are not also obliged to acknowledge that they belong to this ethnic group. They represent the Sorbian people. Nor does [...] Article 7 [of the inter-state treaty] rule out

11 Council of Europe, 'Comments of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany on the Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the Report on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in the Federal Republic of Germany', September 2002, Article 15, Number 89.

12 Grós J., *Nach 20 Jahren nachgefragt: Betrachtungen zur nationalen Lage der Sorben* (Bautzen: Lausitzer Druck- und Verlagshaus, 2009), p. 172.

the possibility that representatives [of the Foundation] [...], may represent the interests of the Sorbian people.¹³

As we can see, the German government appears to be content to have Sorbs and Sorbian interests represented, both in the Foundation and more generally, by Germans. There seems little thought given here, in the Federal Government's response, to the notion that the Sorbs should be in charge of (or even have a majority stake in) running an organisation dedicated to their own culture and identity. Earlier in the response to the committee, the government dismissed the idea of a Sorbian veto in the council (*Stiftungsrat*) stating that there would

be no point [...] given that the parties providing funds to the Foundation (Federal Government, Brandenburg, Saxony) would have to claim a veto right in all financial matters.¹⁴

The clear message being, therefore, that the Germans are also in firm control of the Foundation's finances. These examples of the exercising of federal authority explicitly undermine the sentiment expressed by Merkel, at the establishment of the Foundation in 1991, that 'the Foundation will also be a guarantor that, unhindered by state paternalism (*staatliche Bevormundung*), it will have the possibility to serves its own national needs.'¹⁵

The Foundation receives funding directly from the federal government in addition to the state governments of Saxony and Brandenburg, with federal government contributing fifty per cent of its overall budget. Of what remains, Saxony pays sixty-six per cent, while Brandenburg contributes the remaining thirty-three per cent, with these ratios reflecting the official distribution of Sorbs across the region. In the early 1990s, funding totalled around €20 million – for example in 1992 it was €20,963.700.¹⁶ Since then it has been federal government policy to

13 Council of Europe, 'Comments of the Government'.

14 Council of Europe, 'Comments of the Government'.

15 Grós, *Nach 20 Jahren nachgefragt*, p. 171.

16 Šimanowa & Schiemann M. (eds), *Jahresbericht 2007–2009* (Bautzen: Foundation for the Sorbian People, 2004).

reduce its contribution in line with the new federal settlement of the republic that, amongst other areas, education and culture should come under the purview of the states (*Länder*).¹⁷ However, despite the fact that it was envisioned that the federal contribution would be reduced by one million Euros per year, that has not been the case. In 2009, total funding stood at around €17 million per year,¹⁸ and is actually set to increase by €1m from 2013.¹⁹

The Foundation's main role in maintaining and developing Sorbian culture and identity is to disperse these funds to Sorbian institutions (so-called institutional support) and to individual projects associated with the promulgation of Sorbian language or culture. Over 90% of the funds goes to the institutions.²⁰

This institutional funding is dispersed, according to set ratios, as follows:²¹

The Sorbian National Ensemble	27%
Domowina-Publishing*	16%

17 This is represented in article 70 of the Basic Law, which ascribes all functions and responsibilities to the state (Land) level which are not already proscribed to the federal level by the constitution (Basic Law). For the full text, see: Bundesministerium der Justiz, 'Art. 70'. Available at http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/gg/art_70.html. Accessed on 1 January 2013.

18 Šimanowa & Schiemann, *Jahresbericht 2007-2009*, p. 23.

19 'Tillich stellt Sorben mehr Geld in Aussicht', *Sächsische Zeitung* (14 October 2012). Available at <http://www.sz-online.de/sachsen/tillich-stellt-sorben-mehr-geld-in-aussicht-1520809.html>. Accessed on 20 December 2012; see also 'Tillich stellt Sorben mehr Geld in Aussicht', *Bild Zeitung* (14 October 2012). Available at <http://www.bild.de/regional/leipzig/leipzig-regional/tillich-stellt-sorben-mehr-geld-in-aussicht-26697888.bild.html>. Accessed on 20 December 2012; 'Zuschüsse für Sorbenstiftung könnten 2013 steigen', *RBB Nachrichten* (14 October 2012). Available at http://www.rbb-online.de/nachrichten/politik/2012_10/Zuschuesse_fuer_Sorbenstiftung_koennten_2013_steigen_.html. Accessed on 20 December 2012; Klein M. 'Zuschuss für Sorben aufgestockt', *Das Parlament* 44-45 (29 October 2012). Available at <http://www.das-parlament.de/2012/44-45/WirtschaftFinanzen/41250845.html>. Accessed 20 December 2012; 'Sorbenstiftung soll erstmals seit 20 Jahren mehr Geld bekommen', *Märkische Oberzeitung* (14 October 2012). Available at <http://www.moz.de/artikel-ansicht/dg/0/1/1041540>. Accessed on 20 December 2012.

20 Foundation for the Sorbian People, *Jahresbericht 2001* (Bautzen: Laustizer Druck- und Verlagshaus, 2001); Foundation for the Sorbian People, *Jahresbericht 2008* (Bautzen: Laustizer Druck- und Verlagshaus, 2008).

21 Foundation for the Sorbian People, *Jahresbericht 1992-2006* (Bautzen: Laustizer Druck- und Verlagshaus, 2006).

Foundation administration	11%
Sorbian Institute	10%
WITAJ-language program	9%
German-Sorbian Folk Theatre	8%
Domowina	7%
Sorbian Museum, Bautzen	2%
Wendish Museum, Cottbus	1%
School for Lower Sorbian language and culture	1%
investments	1%

* includes newspaper publication

The remaining seven per cent is allocated to individual projects that are in line with the Foundation's legal mandate. In 2006, for example, this included €2,600 to the Society for the Promotion of Sorbian Folk Culture for a competition entitled 'The Nicest Sorbian Easter Egg 2006'.²²

The debate regarding funding of the Foundation has dogged the body since its (post-unification) inception. There are two main sides to this debate: the Federal Government, which wants to reduce its spending commitments in line with the division of responsibilities between the federal and state government in the new Republic;²³ and those who feel that the State should continue to provide substantial financial support for Sorbian cultural activities, and the language in particular. The public debate has at times been quite colourful with the loudest complaints coming from those who are most involved in receiving public funds, particularly *Berufssorben*. These activists have often invoked the analogy of an endangered species with the added call to remember Germany's 'not-too-distant past'.²⁴ As I have mentioned in previous chapters, *Berufssorben* tend to stress a Sorbian national identity, which is then often evoked to argue for maintaining or increasing levels of state funding.

22 Foundation for the Sorbian People, *Jahresbericht 2004-2006*, p. 63.

23 'Merkel: Bildung ist Ländersache', *Der Tagesspiegel* (19 March 2006). Available at <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/merkel-bildung-ist-laendersache/694470.html>. Accessed on 22 December 2011.

24 Grós, *Nach 20 Jahren nachgefragt*, pp. 179-191.

This relationship between positive interpretations of Sorbian nationalism, the argument for state sponsorship and (mostly implicit) invocations of a problematised notion of Germany's relationship to minorities was well illustrated when the structural funding debate flared up again in the summer of 2011. Following a proposal by the board of directors of the Foundation to reduce the level of financial support to the various institutions²⁵ – for example a reduction of twenty-six per cent to the funding offered to the Sorbian Institute was proposed, with the newly freed monies being redistributed to support more individual and grass-roots projects – the Institute's response was swift. The Institute pointedly appealed to 'work accomplished by the Institute's colleagues for the strengthening of the identity of the Sorbian people and for the preservation and care of the Sorbian language.'²⁶ Also in line with the standard *Berufssorben* desire to foster a national identity, the letter reminds the reader that '[T]he Sorbian Institute administers the Sorbian Central Library, which serves as the national library for our people'.²⁷

Significantly, the open letter was published in German and English, but not in Sorbian – the primary aim clearly being to raise awareness of the Institute's situation in the German public consciousness as well as increase awareness internationally. How much of any of these planned reductions eventually end up being enacted, however, will depend heavily on the internal political wrangling between the Foundation, the Domowina and the affected Sorbian bodies.

25 'Beschlussprotokoll der 55. Sitzung des Stiftungsrates am 30. Juni 2011 in Bautzen', *Serbski Institut* (7 July 2011). Available at http://www.serbski-institut.de/dnl_view.php?lg=de&file=mat%2Fdnlarchiv%2Fstiftungsbeschluss_2011-06_97.pdf&file_titel=Stiftungsbeschluss%20vom%2030.%206.%202011&mp=&session_id=38b72adf812485f7ccc7c0ade6c67d56. Accessed on 21 November 2011.

26 Colleagues of the Sorbian Institute, 'Open Letter from the Colleagues of the Sorbian Institute'. Available at http://www.serbski-institut.de/mat/dnlarchiv/openletter_113.pdf. Accessed 21 November 2011.

27 Colleagues of the Sorbian Institute, 'Open Letter'.

5.3 SORBIAN MEDIA

Mass media often plays a key role in the maintenance and propagation of collective identities. This is particularly pronounced in instances where minority identities are concerned, especially if a separate language is involved – a notion that was crystallised in Singer’s claim, in 1973, that ‘mass media [...] possesses a transformative function for minority group identities.’²⁸ This is even more the case in the contemporary world where printed materials and audio/visual broadcasts are cheaper and easier to produce and access, and where the internet has made possible the rapid transmission of digital information in myriad forms.

It is perhaps surprising, therefore, that the key structures of the Sorbian language media have not undergone any significant change since the GDR. In the majority of cases, the same newspapers and journals remain in publication – though in the case of the Upper Sorbian newspaper it has changed its name from *Nowa doba* to *Serbske Nowiny* (its original pre-war title). This shift was primarily designed to distance it from a former editorial stance,²⁹ but has also functioned to reaffirm an independent Sorbian identity, no longer (editorially) controlled by Germans.

The print media consist of the daily Upper Sorbian newspaper, *Serbske Nowiny*, which also produces a monthly section written in German; a weekly Lower Sorbian newspaper, *Nowy Casnik*, which has a German language page every week; and a cultural journal,³⁰ *Rozhlad*, which predominantly contains articles in Upper Sorbian but occasionally also carries some in Lower Sorbian. The Sorbian Institute’s academic journal, *Lětopis*, is published every six months in a variety of languages – most often Upper Sorbian, but also fairly regularly German and occasionally English. Since 2009, each article is accompanied by an abstract written in English. The main religious publication is the *Katolski posoł*, a short

28 Singer B.D., ‘Mass Society, Mass Media and the Transformation of Minority Identity’, *The British Journal of Sociology* 24/2 (June 1973), p. 141.

29 During the GDR the publication was compelled to toe the party line, after unification the new Editor-in-chief Benedict Dyrlich wished to distance the publication from those views.

30 On 1 January 2012, *Nowy Casnik* received only its first redesign since before the Wall fell.

Catholic magazine which is produced weekly, and which is, with a readership of around 2,200, the most widely read Sorbian language publication.³¹ There is also a much less widely read monthly Protestant publication, *Pomhaj Bóh*.

All the above publications are funded by the state; the majority are funded via the block grant given to the Domowina publishing house by the Foundation. This includes *Serbske Nowiny*, *Nowy Casnik* and *Rozhlad*. For this reason, these publications do not carry advertisements. *Lětopis* also receives its funding from the Foundation however this is taken from the block grant that is given to the Sorbian Institute. Finally the *Katolski posoł* is funded via the Cyrill Methodius Verein, which in turn receives its funding from the Foundation. In 2006 it received €83,000. *Pomhaj Bóh* is produced by the Sorbian Protestant Union which also receives its funding from the Foundation. In 2006 this amounted to €17,300.³²

Sorbian radio programming, which began during the GDR period, continues in much the same form in the post-unification era, though it has split into Upper and Lower Sorbian stations, the former being based in Bautzen and the latter remaining in Cottbus. A significant post-unification innovation has been the increased Sorbian presence on television, though it is still by no means overwhelming amounting to one half-hour broadcast per month in Upper Sorbian on MDR and a similar programme broadcast each month in Lower Sorbian by RBB. Both programmes are available subtitled in German and employ a basic magazine format to showcase short 5-10 minute local/current affairs or personal interest stories deemed of relevance.

Of course, the most significant technical innovation in the field of media since unification has been the development of the internet. This allows far broader access both to traditional forms of media online, such as news websites and Portable Document Format (PDF) versions of the newspapers, as well as the

31 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 106.

32 *Jahresbericht 2004-2006*, p. 67.

emergence of new user-generated content, for example Wikipedia in Upper and Lower Sorbian. However, neither the advent of the internet nor the (arguably equally important) abolition of the political censorship that was widespread during the GDR, seems to have resulted in any meaningful shifts in media consumption: readership numbers for *Nowy Casnik* have remained around the 1,000 mark for decades and *Serbske Nowiny* at around 2,000 with little evidence that the content produced is being consumed electronically to any substantial amount. The readership figures are also distorted by the fact that many copies are automatically distributed to all the Sorbian institutions, though research conducted by *Nowy Casnik* itself, revealed that each copy of *Nowy Casnik* is passed on or read by four other people.³³

While, since unification, the State no longer plays a role in censoring Sorbian media, it does continue to be involved in the provision of financial support, which is mostly delivered via the Foundation. In 1994/5 the Domowina-*Verlag* received €4.11 million, with the *Serbske Nowiny*, the daily Upper Sorbian newspaper, alone receiving six million DM (c. €2.5 million).³⁴ As of 2006, print media were funded out of the block grant given to the Domowina-*Verlag* for all of its activities, which amounted to €2.62 million. The reduction of state funding was projected to continue over the coming decade, however when faced with widespread criticism – which culminated in a Sorbian demonstration in Berlin in 2008³⁵ – the federal government backed down and paused the reduction, agreeing that funding will remain at 2009 levels until at least 2013.³⁶ Despite a static (and also ageing) readership, the continued subsidy has insulated Sorbian-language print media from many of the effects of the greater commercial pressures of the

33 Oral testimony to author during formal interview with Gregor Wiczorek (Editor of *Nowy Casnik*), 18 August 2009. See in this volume, p. 11.

34 *Jahresbericht 1992-1994*.

35 ‘Hunderte Sorben demonstrieren in Berlin fuer finanzielle Hilfe’. Available at <http://kulturportal.maerkischeallgemeine.de/cms/beitrag/11219618/5776127/Hunderte-Sorben-demonstrieren-in-Berlin-fuer-finanzielle-Hilfe.html>. Accessed on 22 December 2011.

36 Šimanowa & Schiemann, *Jahresbericht 2007-2009*, pp. 21-22.

post-unification era, such as a vast increase of variety, scope and attractiveness of German-language media.

It is important to remember that several of the issues that face the Sorbian-language media are by no means unique to the Sorbs, or even other minorities, but appear in fact to represent the outworking of general trends taking place across the media sector, such as the general decline of print media in the face of new media competition.³⁷ There is also something of a generational divide in terms of media provision and consumption. For example, there is a wide variety of CDs available of Sorbian music in styles ranging from traditional folk music to classical to pop and even rap music.³⁸ Many such albums are the result of individual project financing from the Foundation – for example in 2004 the Foundation provided five music projects with funds totalling €58,200.51 for recording, production and distribution.³⁹ However, there is as yet still no Sorbian music or other audio commercially available in .mp3 format, this is in spite of both the significant cost savings that a digital distribution model would offer and the profound potential benefits in terms of broadening access.

In other areas, inroads into the digital age are being made. In 2009, the Sorbian Institute launched a fully searchable online catalogue. A year later, the Domowina-Verlag published a German-language book entitled *Wie man seine Sprache hassen lernt* which, as well as being available in print form, became the first of their publications to be made available as an e-book in .pdf form.

37 See ‘Special Report: The News Industry: Bulletins from the Future’, *The Economist* (7 July 2011). Available at <http://www.economist.com/node/18904136>. Accessed on 22 December 2011.

38 The majority of Sorbian music takes the form of traditional folk music. This is reflected in the large number of CDs and manuscripts which document the songs. Jan Smoler was one of the first to do this in his book *Folk songs of the Sorbs in Upper and Lower Lusatia*, which was published in 1841-1843. The Sorbian National Ensemble maintains this tradition with musical performances of Upper and Lower Sorbian folk music. More modern Sorbian music can be found on the CD anthology *Sorbspirit*, produced in 2001 by the Foundation, which features bands that are strongly influenced by German acts such as Rammstein and the Fantastic Four.

39 *Jahresbericht 2004-2006*, p. 81.

Wikipedia is also available in both Upper and Lower Sorbian, comprising respectively seven thousand and five thousand articles. A Sorbian version of Mozilla's popular open source web browser Firefox can also be downloaded.

Interestingly, both the Wikipedia project and the version of Firefox are grass-roots initiatives, and have received no government funding. They also mark a generational divide in the use and dissemination of the Sorbian language and culture. The following sentiment expressed by the programmer of a recently released mobile phone application that provides a German–Sorbian dictionary is quite typical of the approach of many younger Sorbs involved in new media creation: 'For me programming is part of my job; I wrote the apps in my spare time'.⁴⁰ These projects serve as counter-examples both to the idea that young people are not interested in Sorbian culture, and to the notion that all cultural activities must be government-financed. Despite the fact that the several technological trends have led to a de-centralisation of cultural production, this second notion regarding the necessity of central funding remains particularly ingrained in the structures and working practices of the official Sorbian cultural institutions and funding bodies, even with regard to the discussion of the role of new technologies. This mindset is evident in an interview given by the current chairman of the Council of the Foundation for the Sorbian people, Helene Theurich:

Technology today is fast paced and expensive. We must provide a broader range of Sorbian language opportunities for children and young people, so that they can communicate on the net or watch films in Sorbian on the computer.⁴¹

40 See quotation from Wito Boehmak in 'Wenn das Handy Sorbisch spricht', *Sorbenland.info* (17 November 2011). Available at <http://sorbenland.info/wenn-das-handy-sorbisch-spricht-2>. Accessed on 1 January 2013.

41 Theurich H., 'Sorben befürchtet Verlust von Traditionen', *Lausitzer Rundschau* (19 October 2011). Available at <http://www.lr-online.de/nachrichten/brandenburg/Sorben-befuerchten-Verlust-von-Traditionen;art25,3536272>. Accessed on 22 December 2011.

Several criticisms of this statement might be offered. First, while it is of course true (in fact, a truism) to say that technology is fast paced, it is equally the case that important digital media like .mp3 audio and e-books have been widely available and widely used since at least the mid-1990s. Furthermore, while reinforcing the idea that technology is expensive is a useful point to make if one's aim is to increase your organisation's funding, in practice there is much evidence to suggest that financial investment is not the missing element. There are countless videos and audio files in Sorbian on websites such as YouTube, many of which have been recorded and uploaded by individuals and groups with no access to particularly expensive equipment. The fact that the institutional approach is at odds with the reality of the situations that it seeks to address lends further weight to the argument that a significant division exists between those in charge of Sorbian structures (aka *Berufssorben*) and ordinary Sorbs, as well as between different generations of Sorbs.

The notion put forward by representatives such as Theurich, that children and young people are somehow not communicating in Sorbian via the internet due to a lack of institutional and financial support suggests a (perhaps wilful) ignorance of everyday practice and experience. Sorbs have been sending emails and text messages (SMS) in Sorbian for as long as Germans have, and without the need for special structures or guidelines. Many of the technical obstacles inherent with the orthography of Sorbian have been addressed by using either Polish or Czech keyboard layouts. In fact in the latest version of Microsoft Windows it is possible to select a purpose made Sorbian keyboard layout. Again, these techniques and innovations are not the result of central funding.⁴²

A further example of the unreconstructed nature of the post-unification Sorbian organisations can be found in the recommendation to create a Sorbian digital network which was accepted at the fourteenth general meeting of the Domowina.

42 Schönbach M., 'Wenn das Handy Sorbisch spricht', *Sorbenland.info* (17 November 2011). Available at <http://sorbenland.info/wenn-das-handy-sorbisch-spricht-2>. Accessed on 22 December 2012.

This idea links directly with many of the ways in which the Domowina sought to be the sole conduit of Sorbian culture during the GDR in presenting a unified, and ultimately ossified, public profile of the Sorbs. It also serves to underline the divide previously mentioned between those in charge of such organisations and the general Sorbian populace, not to mention a limited understanding of the nature of modern digital networks. For that reason I shall quote the policy extensively:

The Domowina supports the creation of a Sorbian digital network, and commits itself to the creation and management of a unified Sorbian network, which should contain all Sorbian and Sorbian-related institutions, local authorities, clubs, businesses, schools, church organisations, families as well as individuals [...].⁴³

The two most evocative words here are *unified* and *all*, terms which were often repeated within the GDR and still by those who led the Domowina during that time. Grós wrote in his 2009 book⁴⁴ that in order to preserve the Sorbian culture and language ‘all personal interests must be subordinate to the national[...]’ and through ‘the strengthening of the authority, role and unity of the Domowina’ this will be achieved.⁴⁵ With the clear strength that this opinion holds within organisations such as the Domowina it is perhaps no surprise that there was no great ‘turning point’ at the time of unification.

One of the most prominent public facets of Sorbian culture, the media, has remained recognisably similar to that of the GDR period, at least in structure and funding if not always in content. In the context of rapid technological change over the past twenty years, official media institutions have remained persistent and recognisable, while individual user-generated content in Sorbian has rapidly grown and changed. The fact that many of these changes took place as a result of new technology, rather than internal reforms, is testament to the power that many

43 Walde M., in Domowina, *14. hłowna zhromadźizna Hauptversammlung, 28. März 2009, Chrósćicy/Crostwitz* (Crostwitz: Domowina – Bund Lausitzer Sorben e.V., 2009).

44 Grós, *Nach 20 Jahren nachgefragt*, pp. 233-235.

45 Grós, *Nach 20 Jahren nachgefragt*, p. 233.

of the traditionalist Sorbs, (a term defined and discussed in the previous chapter on politics and law) have maintained since unification.

5.4 RELIGION IN SORBIAN LIFE

In the previous section I discussed how the structure of the official Sorbian media has not changed significantly since the fall of the Wall. If there was little institutional change in the media, could the same be true of religion after 1989? In this section I shall argue that that is indeed the case: the religious landscape of the Sorbs since unification is broadly as it was under the GDR, with the exception of some changes in the Catholic church. I shall first give a brief outline of the origins of today's religious landscape, before moving on to discuss the importance of Catholicism in preserving and maintaining a strong sense of Sorbian-ness.

In the history of the Sorbian nation, priests and teachers were the chief influence on the promotion and development of the language and culture.⁴⁶

Sorbian as a language, both Upper and Lower, benefited greatly from the desire, which was common during the Reformation, to preach and publish religious materials in the native tongue of the congregation,⁴⁷ so that already by 1548 the first Lower Sorbian version of the New Testament was produced⁴⁸ and in 1574 the first printed book was published. Again this was a religious text: a hymn book.⁴⁹ The first Upper Sorbian Bible, however was not produced until much later in 1728.⁵⁰

46 Schiemann M. (ed.), *The Sorbs of Germany* (Bautzen: Stiftung für das sorbische Volk, 3rd edition, 2000), p. 17.

47 Meškank W., *Die Sorben in der Niederlausitz* (Domowina; Bund Lausitzer Sorben e.V., Regionalverband Niederlausitz, date not indicated; ca. 1992/3).

48 Schiemann M. & Scholze D. (eds), *Die Sorben in Deutschland* (Bautzen: Stiftung für das sorbische Volk, 2009), p. 14.

49 Schiemann, *The Sorbs*, p. 24.

50 Schiemann, *Die Sorben*, p. 14.

As Barker notes ‘as a result of the Reformation about ninety per cent of the Sorbian population became Protestant.’⁵¹ The remaining Catholic Sorbs were, and continue to be, concentrated in the area between the towns of Bautzen, Kamenz and Hoyerswerda. The area remains distinct for the preservation and use of Sorbian in everyday life. Much of this can be attributed to the use of Sorbian in Catholic Church activities, as Barker states ‘the use of Sorbian in church services has continued unbroken, except for brief periods during the Nazi period.’⁵² Here we can see that throughout the twentieth century, despite successive regimes’ desire to promote their own alternatives to the Church, it has played and continues to play a very significant role in Catholic Sorbs’ lives.

The Catholic Sorbian area is entirely within the present borders of the state (*Land*) of Saxony. In 1991, according to a source quoted by Barker, there were estimated to be 15,000 Catholic Sorbs. As of 2009 the estimated number is said to be 12,000.⁵³ The Sorbian language and even traditional dress is so strong in this area that it is now considered to be the ‘Sorbian heartland’ (*Kerngebiet*) In fact in many of the over 85 villages in the Catholic parishes there are signs and orders of service in Sorbian only.⁵⁴

During the GDR there was belief that religion was, in the words of Josef Stalin, a ‘barrier to progress’ – a belief based on Marx’s view of religion as ‘the opiate of the masses’ – and that Christian doctrine ‘meant nothing more than cowardly submission’.⁵⁵ Nevertheless the GDR co-opted secular ceremonies in an attempt to replace the Christian ceremonies of Confirmation (*Jugendweihe*), Marriage and Funerals. But the GDR, especially in comparison with other Communist countries in the Eastern Bloc, did not attempt a wholesale abolition of religion, and both the Catholic and Protestant Churches remained amongst the few autonomous

51 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 21.

52 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 22.

53 Schiemann, *Die Sorben*, p. 54.

54 Experience of author, April 2009 and June-September 2010. See in this volume, p. 11.

55 Marx K. & Engels F., *On Religion* (Dover Publications, 2008), p. 83.

organisations in the GDR.⁵⁶ The attempts by the GDR to replace religion amongst the populace, including the Sorbs, met with little success in the case of Catholic Sorbs. As Walde notes:

To the Catholic Sorbs, religion has remained a cornerstone of their ethnic identity. Even the forced Atheism of the GDR following the Second World War changed this only marginally.⁵⁷

Since the fall of the Wall, the role of religion amongst the Catholic Sorbs has retained its importance. This is shown by the essentially stable number of Catholic Sorbs, as well as by the continued observance of important Catholic Sorbian religious rituals. However, there have been changes since 1990 in terms of how much control the Catholic church has over its parishioners. Throughout the twentieth century, the Catholic church retained a tight grip on the lives of Catholic Sorbs. As Barker explains, the church

took note of who went to church, and whether Sorbs went to Sorbian or German services. It also put pressure on parents to send their children to Sorbian schools and campaigned against mixed marriages.⁵⁸

However since unification the ability of the Catholic church to maintain its control over the lives of Catholic Sorbs has diminished. This shift can be traced back directly to the changes which have taken place since the collapse of the GDR.⁵⁹ This is without doubt one of the single biggest changes to the role of the Catholic church in Sorbian life since the nineteenth century. In spite of this, the Catholic

56 See Burgess J., *The East German Church and the End of Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 137.

57 Walde M., *Wie man seine Sprache hassen lernt* (Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 2010), p. 93.

58 Barker P., 'Dislocation and reorientation in the Sorbian community (1945-2008)', in *Dislocation and Reorientation: Exile, Division, and the End of Communism in German Culture and Politics*, ed. Goodbody A., Dochartaigh P.O. & Tate D. *German Monitor*, 71 (2009), pp. 179-220.

59 For more details see Walde M., 'Das katholische Milieu im Umbruch. Untersuchungen am Beispiel der Lausitz und des Eichsfelds', *Lëtopis*, 47/2 (2000), pp. 95-119. For a detailed discussion of the Catholic church and the Sorbs prior to 1990, see Kowalczyk T., *Die katholische Kirche und die Sorben 1919-1990* (Bautzen, Domowina Verlag, 1999).

church retains a significant role within a section of Sorbian society. The clearest manifestation of this can be found in the religious festivals which take place throughout the year.

The most prominent public religious ceremony for the Catholic Sorbs is the annual 'Easter Ride'. Sorbian men dressed in frock coats and top-hats ride on heavily decorated horses from their local Catholic church to a neighbouring Catholic Church. The ceremony is performed on Easter Sunday. They ride several times around their own church, as they are blessed by the priest, they then head off to a neighbouring village, singing hymns and prayers in Sorbian. Once they arrive they are given food and drink and afterwards ride around the village church before returning back to their home church. The purpose of the ride is to announce the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is a centuries old tradition; for example the procession from Wittichenau to Rabitz has been performed each year since 1541 without interruption.⁶⁰

This tradition did continue throughout the life of the GDR although there was the problem of a scarcity of horses, which was, according to Stone, the result of 'increased mechanization'.⁶¹ In 1963 620 riders took part; five years later, in 1968 this had fallen to 559,⁶² but by 1989 the numbers had increased to 1,149.⁶³ This GDR trend has continued so that by 2009 there were 1,676 participants.⁶⁴ The event itself has become a major tourist attraction for the region; in 2009, for example, there were 35,000 spectators who came to watch the nine processions.⁶⁵ Stanislaw Tillich, the current minister president of Saxony, who is also a Catholic

60 Schiemann, *Die Sorben*, p. 10.

61 Stone G., *The Smallest Slavonic Nation: The Sorbs of Lusatia* (London: Athlone Press, 1972), p. 128.

62 Both figures quoted in Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*, p. 128; and Schiemann, *Die Sorben*.

63 Thiemann M., *Sorben Serbja: Ein Kleines Lexikon* (Bautzen: Domowina Verlag, 1989), p. 131.

64 Schiemann, *Die Sorben*, p. 57.

65 'Beiträge auf sorben.org zum Thema Osterreiten', *Sorben.org*. Available at <http://www.sorben.org/themen/veranstaltungen/osterreiten/index.html>. Accessed on 10 July 2011.

Sorb, last took part in the Easter Ride as a rider in 2008, although since becoming minister president he has not taken part.

The situation of the Catholic Sorbs is in marked contrast to the fate of Protestant Sorbs. In 1885 in both Upper and Lower Lusatia there were 160,000 Sorbs, ninety per cent of whom were Protestant.⁶⁶ Whereas today numbers have fallen in the last few decades to less than a half dozen parishioners.⁶⁷ Even as late as the 1960s most bi-lingual Protestant parishes in Upper Lusatia still had a Sorbian-speaking preacher.⁶⁸ In Lower Lusatia, there were already no Sorbian speaking preachers in the Protestant Churches. The Lower Sorbian Pastor Herbert Nowak did try to move to a Sorbian speaking parish, but this was blocked by the bishop of Cottbus during the 1950s.⁶⁹

The sustained decline in the number of Protestant Sorbs can be attributed to several factors, the two most significant being the continuing historical process of Germanisation in Lower Lusatia and the broader trend of secularisation since the end of the Second World War in the GDR. Nevertheless it must also be noted that these Protestant Sorbs have not simply disappeared. Many now attend either German language services or choose not to practise any more. The situation is very much tied up with the fate of Sorbian as a language in the area. At this point it is important to note that the practice of religion amongst the Sorbs, both Catholic and Protestant, varies considerably with age. The younger generations – especially those brought up within a unified Germany – often have much looser links with the Church. Although this is less true of those in the Catholic area, the ability of the Church to put pressure on young Catholic Sorbs to only marry other Catholic Sorbs has nevertheless declined. The fall in church attendance is also not a uniquely Sorbian phenomenon; it is to be found across much of the Western world. In the case of the Sorbs, though, it does diminish one of the few public

66 See Schiemann, *Die Sorben*, p. 58.

67 Schiemann, *Die Sorben*, p. 58.

68 Schiemann, *Die Sorben*, p. 59.

69 Barker P., 'Dislocation', p. 188.

arenas where Sorbian is openly spoken, and will undoubtedly have effects on the profile and prevalence of the language in future.

The impact on religion of unification has been quite limited for most Sorbs, although, as I have noted, some changes are underway in Catholic circles. The situation at present seems to have followed broader trends that arose during the GDR, such as the secularisation of society on the one hand, and on the other, the general preservation of a Sorbian way of life in the Catholic areas. Despite the changes that have taken place amongst Catholic Sorbs, the situation is by no means radically different after unification. It would seem, therefore, that the fall of the Wall in 1989 cannot be pinpointed as *the* significant turning point or revolution in the practice, or not, of religion amongst the Sorbs. Neither media nor religion have seen significant changes due to the *Wende*. Does the Sorbian system of education show greater changes?

5.5 SORBIAN IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The history of the education system is a much more complex story institutionally, than that of religion as there have been far more systematic changes over the past twenty years. First I shall give a brief overview of the educational landscape during the GDR. Second I will examine the changes that have occurred in relation to Sorbian language education since unification. I shall argue that once again despite some very prominent reforms there remains a strong degree of similarity between the position of Sorbian in the education system between the GDR and unified Germany. I shall also document the long standing attitudes of both Germans and Sorbs to Sorbian language education in the region.

5.5.1 EDUCATION IN THE GDR

In this section I shall give a brief overview of the education system in the GDR in relation to Sorbian language provision. More in-depth analyses can be found in

Barker's *Slavs in Germany* and in Pech's *Sorbenpolitik*.⁷⁰ Here I will briefly examine the Sorbian education system of the GDR and compare it to the system found after unification.

Immediately after 1945 there was a lack of qualified and politically suitable Sorbian language teachers. In 1946 in Saxony seventy per cent of the teaching force had been dismissed.⁷¹ This was a direct result of an extensive policy of denazification in the Soviet controlled zone. On the 1 October 1945 there were only eight Sorbian teachers available.⁷² However as a result of calls by the Domowina to return Sorbian teachers who had been sent to other areas due to the Nazis' anti-Slav policies, by the end of 1945 the number of teachers in the region increased to 41.

Through the GDR the Sorbian school system took the form of A schools and B schools and/or A groups and B groups within the same school. The A schools used Sorbian as the language of all lessons, with the exception, in the early days, of German lessons. The A school and A classes were designed for native Sorbian speakers, that is to say those who spoke Sorbian at home. The B Schools and B classes were aimed at non-native speakers, that is those who in most cases spoke German at home. The number of lessons even in A schools which were taught in German only increased over the course of the GDR beginning with more technical subjects such as maths and science. One reason given for this change was that due to the rural nature of the Sorbian language many of the more modern and technical terms were non-existent. They then had to be created either by using the German term itself, suitably modified to conform to Sorbian grammar or they were taken from neighbouring Slavic tongues such as Polish or Czech. Another factor in the change, as mentioned in a recent paper by Cora Granata,⁷³ was the

70 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 43; Pech E., *Die Sorbenpolitik der DDR 1949-1970* (Bautzen: Anspruch und Wirklichkeit, 1999).

71 Pech, *Sorbenpolitik*, pp. 94-95; see Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 43.

72 Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 43.

73 Granata C., "The Ethnic Straight Jacket": Bilingual Education and Grassroots Agency in the Soviet Occupied Zone and German Democratic Republic, 1945-1964', *German Studies*

concern of parents that teaching Sorbian would prevent the child from adequately learning German, thus potentially putting them at a disadvantage in the future job market. This concern was voiced not only by German parents whose children were required to learn Sorbian but perhaps surprisingly also by parents who spoke Sorbian at home.⁷⁴ This concern and the reforms that were initiated to alleviate it will be discussed in the following section on the education system in the post-Wall period. The concern around the acquisition of Sorbian and its potentially detrimental effects has remained constant amongst Sorbs and non-Sorbs alike since the 1950s. I will now look at the reforms of the 1990s and pick up this thread after documenting the new structure.

5.5.2 EDUCATION SINCE UNIFICATION

In this section I shall first document some of the most salient changes in the broader structure of the education system after unification and how these affected the teaching of Sorbian and the Sorbs more generally. I will then move on to discuss in more detail the innovations that occurred, particularly that of the WITAJ pre-school projects and the introduction of the 2plus concept. I will also include some of the arguments, both positive and negative, that have been given concerning the success of these strategies over a decade after they were introduced. It is this second section in which I will make significant use of the primary research conducted in the region in the form of interviews and visits to schools, as well as materials published by both local authorities and the registered voluntary association the Sorbian School Association (SSV e.V.)

Any discussion on the teaching of Sorbian in the education system since unification has to take into account the new political boundaries that were created. This means that the former *Bezirk* (district) of Cottbus became part of the modern state (*Land*) of Brandenburg and the former *Bezirk* (district) of Dresden became

Review 29/2 (May 2006), pp. 331-46 at p. 334.

74 Granata, “The Ethnic Straight Jacket”, p. 340.

part of the modern free state (*Land*) of Saxony. This change also meant, in keeping with the new federal political settlement, that education became the responsibility of the local *Land* government rather than the federal state. In effect this removed a layer of national education bureaucracy, which had previously centrally directed all educational decisions. This posed some unique problems for those attempting to ensure co-ordination between two new different school systems and two forms of Sorbian. I will return to this particular point in more detail later. First I shall look at the developments in the education system, in particular the reasoning behind the reforms and some of the continuing challenges faced by the system.

After the fall of the Wall and as part of the Sorbian National Assembly's (*Sorbische Volksversammlung*) desire for genuine reform the issue of restructuring the education system arose early on. The assembly was always particularly keen to ensure a real and significant reform of the system away from the ideologically driven form it had taken under the GDR. The assembly chose to set up a working group to look into the matter in more detail under the guidance of Theresia Schön and the current head of the Sorbian School Union (*Sorbische Schulverein*), Ludmila Budar.⁷⁵ It must also be borne in mind that the deliberations which had taken place in the respective education ministries of Brandenburg and Saxony had impacted on the scope and realities of some the proposed reforms. Despite the research and calls for reforms the education system for Sorbian remained divided into A and B schools as per the GDR until 2001. The most significant reform did not begin until 1997 with the WITAJ project, which will be explained in detail in the following sections. I shall now move on to look at the reforms in early years and primary education, secondary school and the tertiary sector.

75 Budarjowa L., Witaj & 2plus: *Eine Herausforderung für die Zukunft* (Bautzen: Sorbischer Schulverein e.V., 2009), p. 28.

5.5.3 EARLY YEARS EDUCATION AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Early years and primary education changed significantly in 1997 with the introduction of the WITAJ system.⁷⁶ This system is based on DIWAN, a scheme pioneered in Brittany in Northern France in the 1970s, whereby Breton as a minority language was used as the main language of instruction at both nursery and primary level. The WITAJ system was first initiated in a suburb of Cottbus, Sielow, at a kindergarten on 1 March 1998.⁷⁷ Since then there are, as of 2010 in Saxony, 7 nurseries and 8 primary schools which are fully immersive, that is almost all instruction is in Sorbian.⁷⁸ In Brandenburg, where the demand is lower the nurseries and schools that do provide instruction in Sorbian have set groups of children who have bilingual education. This is more akin to the A-class system of the GDR. In Brandenburg, as of 2010, there are two immersive nurseries and six schools, which provide bilingual classes in a range of subjects. There are also 14 nurseries and schools (8 in Saxony and 6 in Brandenburg), where there is a WITAJ group so some instruction is in Sorbian but the majority is still in German. In all cases part of the WITAJ principle is that each language is person/instructor specific (*personenbezogene Sprache*) so that Mrs X will always speak Sorbian and Ms Y will always speak German.⁷⁹ Though of course this brief outline is the ideal which has been set and of course there are certain situations where this is not always followed.⁸⁰ A particular problem today, as it was in the GDR, is the lack of suitably qualified Sorbian speakers.⁸¹ I discuss this issue in greater detail in the tertiary section below, in relation to the teacher training facilities that exist now.

76 'Witaj' means 'welcome' in Sorbian.

77 Budarjowa, 'Eine Herausforderung', p. 30.

78 'Sorbisches Kindertagesstätten und Schulnetz', poster (WITAJ-Sprachzentrum). Available at http://www.witaj-sprachzentrum.de/files/Plakat_wustajenca_ne_A4.pdf. Accessed on 22 December 2011.

79 Budarjowa, 'Eine Herausforderung', p. 30.

80 Budarjowa, 'Eine Herausforderung', p. 34.

81 Budarjowa, 'Eine Herausforderung', p. 32.

But what were the motivations for implementing the WITAJ system? Since the Second World War there have long been complaints that not enough children were learning Sorbian to ensure its survival. So after unification faced with this same problem, it was decided by the working group for education, that a key element in fostering the growth in the use of Sorbian was to increase the number of young people able to speak the language.⁸² The Domowina has also repeatedly called in its general meeting (*Hauptversammlung*) for the increased use of Sorbian in the public realm, most recently in 2009.⁸³ At this point though there is some disagreement as to who exactly the WITAJ project is aimed at, which the late director responsible for WITAJ, Ralph Schäfer⁸⁴ made clear in an interview in July 2010 that ‘WITAJ was never aimed at Sorbian-speaking children, as they would learn Sorbian at home, the idea was to get Germans learning Sorbian and Sorbian culture.’⁸⁵ This is however not always been clear, as can be seen in the speech given by Jan Nuk, the former head of the Domowina, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the WITAJ project in 2009. Nuk discusses the importance of ‘creating the most important foundation for our identity’ and ‘I am optimistic that together we will overcome the increasing tendency towards assimilation’.⁸⁶ In these quotes he is referring to Sorbian identity and the assimilation of Sorbs into German culture, this is at odds with Schäfer’s aim for WITAJ. The belief that WITAJ is for Sorbian children only, and as a way to build a national identity can be seen in Grós’s criticism of the project in his autobiography ‘Again and again the question is raised of, on the one hand, the acquisition of the language [...] and on the other hand the development of the national consciousness and the national identity.’⁸⁷

82 Budarjowa, ‘Eine Herausforderung’, p. 28.

83 Grós, *Nach 20 Jahren nachgefragt*, p. 130.

84 Oral testimony to author during formal interview with Raphael Schäfer (31 August 2010). At the time of the interview Schäfer was in the process of handing over to the new WITAJ head, Beate Brëzan. Schäfer died on 12 July 2011, aged 60. See in this volume, p. 11.

85 Oral testimony to author during formal interview with Raphael Schäfer (31 August 2010).

86 Budarjowa, ‘Eine Herausforderung’, pp. 12-13.

87 Grós, *Nach 20 Jahren nachgefragt*, p. 132.

After thirteen years of immersive Sorbian language education there has been no marked rise in the number of pupils opting for Sorbian language education after unification.⁸⁸ It is also a sign of how concerned many of the Sorbs are about the declining number of speakers that even a roughly stable pupil population is seen as a significant advancement.⁸⁹ There are many possible reasons for the situation at present. Just as during the GDR, where many German parents did not wish their children to be taught in Sorbian, the level of apathy and hostility towards this Slavic language remains strong amongst many in the region.⁹⁰ The prestige of Sorbian itself has an important role to play particularly for parents and children when choosing which subjects to study. The prestige of Sorbian is extremely low even amongst some Sorbs.⁹¹ This factor plays an even greater role in adolescents choosing subjects at secondary school.⁹² The social standing of the language has also failed to change since unification. In the next section I shall return to the topic of prestige after documenting the recent situation for Sorbian language teaching in Saxony and Brandenburg.

5.5.4 SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The two states of Brandenburg and Saxony took divergent paths after unification when it came to their education systems. In Brandenburg the SPD-led government chose to keep comprehensive schools. This was however significantly remodelled in 2005.⁹³ The Christian-Democrat (CDU) run state of Saxony chose to abolish

88 Budarjowa, 'Eine Herausforderung', p. 40.

89 Budarjowa, 'Eine Herausforderung', p. 33.

90 Granata, "The Ethnic Straight Jacket", p. 342.

91 Norberg M., *Sprachwechselprozeß in der Niederlausitz* (Uppsala: Gotab, 1996), p. 156; Hose S., 'Von Heimat und Sprache' in Elikowska-Winkler M., *15 Jahre Erwachsenenweiterbildung im Sorbischen (Wendischen)* (Cottbus, 2008), pp. 64, 66; Šatava L., *Sprachverhalten und ethnische Identität* (Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 2005), p. 15; 'Herr J.' in Karg D. & Schopper F. (eds), *Horno: zur Kulturgeschichte eines Niederlausitzer Dorfes* (Wünsdorf: Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, 2006), p. 395.

92 Norberg, *Sprachwechselprozeß*, p. 156.

93 Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport (MBS), 'Oberschule' (Land Brandenburg, 21 July 2011). Available at <http://www.mbs.brandenburg.de/sixcms/detail.php/>

the comprehensive style schools set up during the GDR (*Polytechnische Oberschulen*) and replace them with grammar schools (*Gymnasien*) and middle schools (*Mittelschulen*). This bipartite division was, and remains, in contrast to much of west Germany, where there is a tripartite division in secondary schooling between grammar schools, *Realschulen* and *Hauptschulen*.⁹⁴ Saxony kept the number of years of education at twelve, rather than the more common thirteen found in the west German system. The grammar school is more academically focused than the middle schools and is designed for those students who intend to study at university. The middle schools are less academically orientated and focus much more on practical and technical skills for those who wish to take on apprenticeships and more practical vocations.

In Saxony there is one Sorbian Grammar school, in Bautzen. Formerly, between 1947 and 1992, this was the Sorbian *Oberschule*. While it was a former A-school and Sorbian is still used as the main teaching language for some students, the majority of the pupils at the school are German, some with only limited knowledge of Sorbian. This means while signs around the school are in Sorbian, German is the language most commonly heard and used both inside the classroom and out. This is also true to a lesser extent in the staffroom. The standard greeting is, however almost always in Upper Sorbian (*dobre ranje* or *dobry džen*), at least between pupils and adults if not between non-Sorbian pupils themselves.

The other two grammar schools in Saxony where Sorbian is taught are both in Hoyerswerda. In both, Sorbian is offered as a foreign language rather than as a general teaching language. In Brandenburg there is only one grammar school, in Cottbus. This offers Sorbian as a teaching language in several subjects as well as Sorbian as a foreign language and is the only school in Brandenburg to offer Sorbian after sixteen years of age. The only other secondary school to provide Sorbian as a foreign language is the *Theodor Fontane Oberschule* in Burg.

lbm1.c.192146.de. Accessed on 22 December 2011.

94 *Realschulen* schools are akin to secondary technical schools in the former British system, and *Hauptschulen* are akin to secondary moderns.

Oberschulen in Brandenburg are equivalent to Saxony's middle school and follow on from educational reforms in the state in 2005. The result was that all former *Realschulen* and *Gesamtschulen* (comprehensive schools) are now *Oberschulen*.

As of 2011, there are six middle schools in Saxony which teach Sorbian. The schools in Bautzen, Räckelwitz, Ralbitz und in Radibor all have Sorbian as a language of instruction covering several other subjects. In the middle schools in Schleife and Wittichenau Sorbian is offered as a separate subject. In the past decade two rural Sorbian middle schools have been closed down despite virulent opposition from those living in the region. Both are in fact in the Sorbian Catholic heartland where language use is still most widespread. The first was closed in 2003 in Crostwitz and the second in Panschwitz-Kukau in 2006/7. The latter is in fact home to the current Sorbian Minister President of Saxony, Stanslaw Tillich, who came to power a year later on 28 May 2008. The main reason given for the closure of these schools is the falling birth rate in the region and Sorbian classes are still required in practice to have the same minimum number of students as German classes, although the Saxon School Law (2004) did allow in justified cases for a deviation from the minimum numbers.

The Middle school in Bautzen shares its building with the Grammar school and the Sorbian Primary school. The Primary school is located on the ground floor, the Middle school on the first floor and the Grammar school on the second floor. The school has around 950 students though again the majority are not native speakers of Sorbian.⁹⁵ The school, along with the Grammar school and the Sorbian Primary school, received funding in 2009, of around €3.3million⁹⁶ to substantially renovate the school building and construct a new *Internat*: a dormitory for rural villagers, which allows them to attend the school without unreasonable commuting and allows access to a Grammar school and Sorbian

95 Oral testimony to author during informal interview with Sorbian Mittelschule Schulleiterin, Bautzen (20 August 2009) See in this volume, p. 11.

96 Staatsministerium für Kultus. Available at <http://www.bildung.sachsen.de/schule/166.htm>. Accessed on 18 August 2011.

language education. The school is extremely popular with local parents due to its high local reputation as a ‘good’ school. This means many German parents are happy for their child to learn Sorbian if it means they can get into a good school. The fact that it is a Sorbian school is for many less important than the fact that it is a good school with excellent modern facilities.⁹⁷

5.5.5 TERTIARY EDUCATION

Sorbian as a subject of study at university level is available at the Institute for Sorbian Studies (*Sorabistik*) at the University of Leipzig. It was founded, in line with many of the current Sorbian institutions/structures during the 1950s. The institute itself focuses mainly on the linguistic study of Sorbian, but also works on Sorbian literary studies (*Literaturwissenschaft*) and trains teachers in Sorbian. The institute provides a complete bachelors and masters degree in Sorbian studies as well as offering a ‘minor’ course akin to the US model and also offers individual course units.⁹⁸

Since 2002 Brandenburg has contributed fifty per cent of the costs of employing a specialist in Lower Sorbian to train teachers for Sorbian schools in Lower Lusatia (Brandenburg).⁹⁹ However considering the number of schools in Brandenburg alone the fact that in 2009 only one teacher qualified in Lower Sorbian for teaching in grammar schools, demonstrates the difficulties faced in recruiting suitably qualified staff in the region. This criticism has been raised many times over the past 60 years and was one of the main concerns after the Second World War. While the external cultural and economic factors are hugely different today

97 Oral testimony to author during informal interview with S.D. (26 July 2009). See in this volume, p. 11.

98 ‘Institut za sorabistiku/Institut für Sorabistik.’ *Universität Leipzig*. Available at <http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~sorb/>. Accessed on 20 August 2011.

99 ‘Grundständiges Lehramtsstudium für das Fach Sorbischwendisch an der Universitaet Leipzig’. Available at <http://www.fdp-fraktion-brandenburg.de.101nm.hosting.eu/menschen/abgeordnete/jens-lipsdorf/488-grundstaendiges-lehramtsstudium-fuer-das-fach-sorbischwendisch-an-der-universitaet-leipzig.html>. Accessed on 22 December 2011.

than they were in the late 1940s it remains the case that some of the well identified problems are still not being resolved. The debate has continued so that even in the German language press concerns have been voiced.¹⁰⁰ Saxony decided that the situation was serious enough that Sorbian language teachers are guaranteed a teaching position on graduation.¹⁰¹

Thus far we have seen how both the media and religion have remained with GDR structures left intact or following trends that pre-date the fall of the Wall.

Education has out of these three topics changed the most in terms of structure and practice though importantly the majority of the most significant innovations, such as the WITAJ Project, were enacted almost a decade or more after the fall of the Wall. Furthermore, keeping with the example of WITAJ, the model used for bilingual education in the region is that of the 1970s French Breton DIWAN.

5.6 SORBIAN FOLK CULTURE

In this section I will look at the most prominent public feature of Sorbian life, that of traditional folk culture. That this particular aspect of Sorbian life continues to be so prominent has caused a significant degree of disquiet amongst those who see far too many echoes of the GDR's culture and minority policies, which placed traditional folk elements at the forefront of its desire to be seen as caring and compassionate. As early as 1974, a report in the West German news magazine *Spiegel* quotes a Sorb complaining of their depiction as 'continuously folk-costume wearing, Easter egg painting marginal group'.¹⁰² This complaint has often been repeated and cropped up in several of my interviews, especially with

100 'Politiker fordern verstärkte Sorbisch-Ausbildung: Mehr Sprachkurse für Kindergärtnerinnen und Lehrer'. *Lausitzer Rundschau* (16 October 2010). Available at <http://www.lr-online.de/nachrichten/sachsen/Politiker-fordern-verstaerkte-Sorbisch-Ausbildung;art1047,3070236>. Accessed on 22 December 2011.

101 Nagel M., 'Masterstudiengang Sorbisch in Leipzig: In Brandenburg und Sachsen werden die Lehrkräfte für die sorbische Minderheit knapp', *Deutschlandfunk Radio* (17 September 2008). Available at <http://www.dradio.de/dlf/sendungen/campus/848248/>. Accessed on 24 December 2011.

102 'Blume in der Sonne', *Der Spiegel* 43 (1974).

younger Sorbs.¹⁰³ In keeping with this complaint I will only briefly document the traditional Sorbian folk traditions as there is already a substantial body of scholarly work on various aspects of these traditions.¹⁰⁴

In addition to documenting the traditional folk aspects of Sorbian culture I will also look at Sorbian youth culture. This is an area which shows the greatest break with cultural life under the GDR. Nevertheless the innovations to be found amongst younger Sorbs are not always entirely novel as I will document. The final sub-section deals with a small selection of the Sorbian museums in the region. I compare their goals, and how they go about achieving them.

It is the cultural aspects of Sorbian life which has seen some of the greatest changes since unification. However that does not mean that some of the problems associated with the cultural policies of the GDR have entirely abated. This aspect of cultural change will be woven in to each of the subsequent sub-sections, as outlined below.

I shall first turn to traditional Sorbian folk festivities, which have generally changed little since unification. They are however worthy of mention here as they form one of the key points in a much wider intra-Sorbian debate regarding the image that Germans and outsiders have of the minority. There are those who feel that the emphasis on traditional Sorbian folk traditions with the concomitant folk costumes presents an old fashioned and backward image of the Sorbs, as mentioned previously. This view is often associated with a desire for a more nuanced and modern image to be presented.¹⁰⁵ The traditional folk culture element of the Sorbs was promoted heavily by the communists during the GDR for political reasons. This is the source of some Sorbs' desire to distance themselves from this image. Now the motivation is much more likely to be part of the

103 Oral testimony to author during informal interviews with S.B. (16 March 2009), Year 13s (26 August 2010), and P.D. (August 2010). See in this volume, p. 11.

104 For an English overview, see Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*.

105 This notion is especially prevalent in the works of Kito Lorenc and Jurij Koch.

concerted push to increase the number of tourists visiting the region.¹⁰⁶ In the jargon of marketing consultants it is part of Lusatia's USP (Unique Selling Point).

However there are other Sorbs who feel that it is a very important part of their Sorbian identity to ensure that these traditions remain alive. An example of this was documented by an unknown source during the fourteenth general meeting of the Domowina on the 28 March 2009:

National patriotism isn't on the tip of everyone's tongue. [...] However we Sorbs need, even today, such people, Sorb patriots in the widest sense of the word. [...] I want all Sorbs to stand tall and in the sense of Martin Luther say: 'I am Sorb, here I stand, I can do nothing else'.¹⁰⁷

This call to a stronger sense of national identity is often linked with the increased use of Sorbian in public. In fact one of the main resolutions from the fourteenth meeting called for an increase in the work done by Domowina members to increase public awareness of their situation.¹⁰⁸ The link between traditional folk events and the public expression of Sorbian culture was explicitly linked in the ninth general meeting on 23 March 2002. The resolution as part of the Sorbian culture and art section called for:

[...] greater attention to be devoted to spreading Sorbian cultural values to the whole population. Events and festivities in the villages and in residential areas of towns are to be used for this purpose.¹⁰⁹

These views are not only to be found amongst the members of the Domowina, but also in the actions of many of the major official Sorbian organisations. A brief look at many of the official introductory publications of the Foundation for the

106 'Sorben/Wenden', *Leistung Leidenschaft Lausitz*. Available at <http://www.lausitz.de/de/kulturregion/sorben-wenden.html>. Accessed on 2 January 2012; 'Startseite', *Sorbischer Kulturtourismus*. Available at <http://www.tourismus-sorben.com/de/>. Accessed on 2 January 2012.

107 Domowina, 14. Hauptversammlung proceedings (German version), p. 25.

108 Domowina, 14. Hauptversammlung proceedings (German version), p. 35.

109 Domowina, 9. Hauptversammlung proceedings (German version), p. 4.

Sorbian People show an overwhelming number of photos of Sorbian women in traditional dress, despite the dearth of such costumes worn in everyday life.¹¹⁰

The official Sorbian museums also focus a great deal of their floor space to displaying traditional Sorbian costumes. This cultural debate can certainly be seen in the light of the political debate that followed on from unification and that I have discussed in the previous chapter on politics. As I have argued, after unification despite strong representations from a progressive element that sought significant reform, it was ultimately the more traditionalist element that won out and remained in control of many of the most influential Sorbian organisations. Despite the many changes in cultural life made possible after unification, the image of Sorbs presented by official Sorbian organisations shares much in common with the official image portrayed during the GDR period. In that there remains a significant focus on literature and poetry as well as traditional folk dancing.

In light of the prominent public presence, today as during the GDR, of traditional folk culture and its annual traditions that a succinct examination of some of the major festivities is required. I have divided the festivals into three sections: Easter/Spring; Summer and Winter. This division gives some idea of the flow of festivities in the Sorbian calendar and the significance that they hold in providing opportunities to express Sorbian identity and language in the public sphere.

5.6.1 SPRING AND EASTER

To begin, the most important Sorbian festival of the year, that of Easter. There are several traditions associated with Easter, the most wide-spread practice is that of painting Easter eggs. This uses various techniques but predominantly the use of wax and scraping used in conjunction with coloured dyes to produce highly

110 Scholze D., *The Sorbs in Germany* (Bautzen: Stiftung für das sorbische Volk, 3rd edition, 2000); Stone G., *Easter with the Sorbs* (Bautzen: Sorbische Kulturinformation, 3rd edition, 1995); *Lausitz: Sorben in der Lausitz* (Sorbischer Kulturtourismus e. V. und Marketing-Gesellschaft Oberlausitz-Niederschlesien mbH, undated).

elaborate designs. This tradition is practised in homes and schools as well as at many local fairs and museums around the region, even as far as Dresden.¹¹¹ This is for many Germans in the region often the main characteristic they can recall when asked about the Sorbs.¹¹² It is also a tradition which is found in many Eastern European countries and this fact was used during the GDR to highlight the Sorbs and by extension the GDR state's close ties with its 'brother Slavs'.¹¹³

In addition to Easter egg painting, there is the tradition of the Easter fire in Protestant areas, Easter water and in the Catholic Sorbian areas the Easter riders. Many of these traditions are felt to be very much local village specific traditions rather than Sorbian traditions which take place simultaneously across the Sorbian area. In one interview around Easter when asked if the interviewee, from the village of Horno (in Lower Lusatia), would be attending the up coming Easter ride in Bautzen (a two hour train ride away in Upper Lusatia), I was promptly and in no uncertain terms told that 'we look after (*pfliegen*) our own traditions'¹¹⁴ and that the Easter rides had nothing to do with them. Due to the very local nature of many of the traditions I will mention only a select few.

5.6.2 SUMMER

One of the main traditional festivities of Summer is the tradition of *kokot* (*Hahnrupfen* in German). This tradition is, like many of the Sorbian traditions, rooted in pre-Christian notions of fertility. The cockerel is hung under a large archway and horse riders must pass through and attempt to rip off the cockerel's head. This symbolises the extinguishing of fertility so that the land can preserve

111 Dresden Museum, *Volkskunde* (annual exhibition). Volkunde Musuem Dresden annual exhibition. See in this volume, p. 11.

112 Evidence gathered by author from interviews and museum visits. See in this volume, p. 11.

113 Fulbrook M. (ed.), *German History since 1800* (London: Arnold, 1997).

114 Oral testimony to the author during an informal interview with P.S. (8 March 2009). See in this volume, p. 11.

its strength for the next harvest.¹¹⁵ The winner of the feat is then crowned first *kral* (or king), those who manage to tear the wings off are crowned second and third king respectively.¹¹⁶ Thankfully nowadays the cockerel is killed before *kokot* begins.

Another tradition, found across many parts of Europe, is the raising of the Maypole on the first of May. This is again a pre-Christian fertility symbol. As in many other communities this event allows Sorbs to come together in public and socialise often in the presence of Sorbs from the surrounding villages.

5.6.3 WINTER

The main festivity during winter is of course Christmas. In the region around Schleife there is the tradition of the ‘džěćetko’: during Advent a local girl with her face covered and in a costume which displays some of the traditional features of the local villages gives presents to local people.¹¹⁷ A similar tradition is also found in Lower Lusatia in the village of Jänschalde, in the form of the *Janšojski bog*.

On 25 January, the *Vogelhochzeit* (*ptači kwas* in Upper and in Lower Sorbian) occurs.¹¹⁸ The exact format varies from region to region, but it generally involves children dressing up as husband and wife and getting married. This again is a fertility ritual linked to nature. A photograph of one such event was in fact published in the British daily newspaper, the Guardian, in January 2011.¹¹⁹

115 Meškank W., *Die Sorben in der Niederlausitz* (Domowina; Bund Lausitzer Sorben e.V., Regionalverband Niederlausitz, undated; ca. 1992/3), p. 22.

116 Boldt S., ‘Erntebräuche: Hahnschlagen und Hahnrupfen’, *Kulturportal Brandenburg*. Cached version available at <http://web.archive.org/web/20060906031244/http://kulturportal.maerkischeallgemeine.de/cms/beitrag/10306650/511189/>. Accessed on 1 January 2013.

117 Scholze, *The Sorbs in Germany*, p. 42.

118 Thiemann, *Sorben Serbja*, pp. 152-153.

119 *Nowy Casnik*, January 2010.

5.7 SORBIAN YOUTH CULTURE

In this section I will look at some of the non-traditional activities that make up the cultural life of Sorbs in the region. The extent of ‘high culture’ in the form of Sorbian poetry and literature has been comparatively well documented both by the Sorbs themselves (The Sorbian Institute) as well as by outsiders (Barker, Stone). As this is the case I shall avoid any in-depth analysis here. I shall instead attempt to survey the general cultural Sorbian landscape. The fall of the Wall and the ending of tight propaganda controls under the GDR have resulted in a new found freedom of expression for the Sorbs and I will investigate how this has manifested itself in relation to culture. The most prominent public part of Sorbian culture especially to outsiders is that of music and costume.

The range of Sorbian music that can be found is perhaps not surprisingly heavily focussed on traditional folk music with countless village and regional choirs that have sprung up since unification. In 2009 alone, the Foundation for the Sorbian People provided financial assistance to fourteen separate choirs.¹²⁰ The traditional form is taken up professionally and propagated by the Sorbian National Ensemble, which produces plays and large scale dance performances both locally and internationally. The youth element is an important part of many of the choirs and especially the traditional dance groups. The role of traditional songs is very important within the Sorbian community and it is worth remembering that many of these so-called traditional Sorbian songs, are sometimes Victorian-era reinterpretations of older songs. In the case of a CD produced by the choir *Luzyca* several of songs are Sorbian language versions of much older Bach chorales.

Some of the most frequently sung traditional songs today are drinking songs such as *Palenc, palenc (Vodka or any alcohol based spirit)* and is widely known. One traditional song has connections to more contemporary music forms. This song places the girls on one side and the boys on the other, they each sing a verse which is already well established (the topic is generally bemoaning the state of the

120 Šimanowa & Schiemann, *Jahresbericht 2007-2009*, pp. 48-57.

other sex), after the first few verses the teams are expected to perform rhyming couplets that fit the time signature of the original verse. The back and forth continues until one team can no longer think of a rhyme or the other team perform a rhyme so well that the other team give in. This form of competitive singing will be familiar to fans of hip hop, given that it takes a similar format to that commonly used in so called ‘battle’ rapping. Though there is, as yet, no evidence to suggest that these phenomena are historically linked.

There are in addition to the traditional forms of music, more modern forms of popular music in Sorbian. In 2001 the Foundation provided the funding for an album to be produced, *Sorbspirit*, which featured ten different Sorbian bands.¹²¹ Their musical style ranges from heavy metal inspired track *Serbski dilema*, by the aptly named band Awful Noise to the well known Sorbian rapper Mike Winkler’s rap ‘Dawno južo zbytnje łdzy’ (‘superfluous tears’).

The migration of young people out of the area in particular contributes to a sense of cultural and linguistic decline amongst Sorbs. Without young people in Sorbian communities, the vital link in the transmission of language and cultural traditions is vulnerable to loss. As Roland Marti has argued,

The situation at the end of the last century is partially reflected in the following publications Norberg 1996 Jodlbauer, Spiess, Steenwijk 2001... But even these data demonstrate that there has been a much steeper and a much more rapid decline in the number of native speakers of Lower Sorbian than of Upper Sorbian. Moreover, it is known that unlike the position with Upper Sorbian in Lower Lusatia there is virtually nobody under 50 for whom Lower Sorbian is their native language. Even the teachers on the WITAJ programme are not real native speakers, but acquire the knowledge they need on intensive courses.¹²²

121 Sorbian Foundation, *Sorbspirit*, Audio Compact Disc (2001).

122 Marti R. in Dulichenko A.D. (ed.), *Slavic Linguistics: Leaving the XX Century* (Tartu: Slavica tartuensia VIII, 2008), pp. 154-77, at p. 172 n. 41. I am grateful to Dr John Dunn at the University of Glasgow for his kind assistance in translating this passage from the Russian original.

Conversely, however, the refrain amongst certain sections of Sorbian society – that young people are leaving the area and abandoning their heritage – is by no means unique to Sorbs, or even to Germany. It is a common experience of many rural areas in an increasingly urbanised and integrated western world. It seems to me that to view this demographic change as a ‘drain’ on Sorbian life is at least unbalanced, if not mistaken. The skills and opportunities which young Sorbs acquire by virtue of freedom of movement and open borders may eventually work to the advantage of the Sorbian communities in Lusatia. This will be particularly important if cuts in government funding of Sorbian institutions are ever enacted. Moreover, this pattern of migration may also help the image of Sorbs amongst other Germans – and perhaps correct one of the longest-running Sorbian complaints, dating from the GDR era, at their portrayal as a ‘timeless folk costume-wearing, Easter egg-painting fringe group’.¹²³ This is potentially a crucial aspect of a renewed Sorbian identity.

Amongst Sorbs, there are those who take a traditionalist view of Sorbian cultural activities, and regard Easter egg painting as a core part of Sorbian identity. Inevitably, however, there are others, such as the poet Kito Lorenc, who feel that the emphasis on quaint traditions serves only to further a nostalgic and backward-looking Sorbian identity, cut off from modernity and the benefits he believes it has to offer.¹²⁴

This is a debate common among many minority groups, but is further complicated among the Sorbs by their status as a ‘privileged’ minority during the GDR, when a very strong official uniform version of Sorbian identity was propagated by the regime, often based overwhelmingly on traditional rural aspects of Sorbian culture and identity such as the Easter celebrations, *Zapust* and the wearing of century-old folk costumes. To some prominent Sorbs, particularly towards the end of the GDR’s regime, this became more of an artificial strait-jacket than a living,

123 ‘Blume in der Sonne’, *Der Spiegel* 43 (1974).

124 See Barker, *Slavs in Germany*, p. 161.

breathing minority identity. This sense of official identity as opposed to a more relevant grass-roots identity has been noted subsequently by scholars, as, although the regime had professed full support to the Sorbs, towards the end of the 1980s it began to view them and their activities with increasing suspicion.¹²⁵ Suspicion fell especially on their connections with fellow Slav countries, though in the early days of the regime a minority within Germany with connections to the Slavic fellowship of brothers was seen as a significant plus-point, if only something to pay lip-service to. However, events such as the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and the rise of dissent across much of the Eastern bloc in the 1980s, gave rise to further suspicion of Sorbs' loyalty to the GDR state.

This particular aspect of Sorbian identity – being a part of a much broader Slavic neighbourhood – has once again become a popular theme in the debates regarding the 'relevance' of having a Slav minority in a much larger united Germany. This became even more pronounced with the eastward expansion of the EU in 2005, which took in a large number of mostly former eastern-bloc and mainly Slav countries. This opportunity was not lost on many of the leading Sorbs at the time. Even 'regular' Sorbs realised some of the potential of their language: many, along with countless local Germans, began to drive across the newly-opened border to take advantage of the much lower petrol prices.¹²⁶

5.8 MUSEUMS

In this section I will examine two museums which have flourished since unification: the museum at Jänschwalde, and the Archive of Disappeared Places in Horno. Making reference to primary evidence gathered from visits to many of the museums,¹²⁷ and from conversing with those responsible for the exhibits, I will

125 Granata C., 'The Cold War Politics of Cultural Minorities: Jews and Sorbs in the German Democratic Republic, 1976–1989', *German History*, 27/1 (2009), p. 62.

126 Oral testimony to author in informal interview with P.S. (29 July 2010). See in this volume, p. 11.

127 See in this volume, p. 11.

argue that – although these museums were instituted after the fall of the Berlin Wall – the Sorbian image and identity they seek to project is often a conservative and traditionalist one. Indeed, their presentation is in some ways in line with the official propaganda of the GDR – especially the emphasis on peasant and folk culture – but the reasons for choosing these representations are varied and complex.

A number of well-appointed Sorbian museums have been created since unification. However, their content tends to be very similar from one to the next. Displays of local Sorbian folk costumes form the majority of museum displays. Other exhibits usually include rural artefacts, such as farm equipment, pottery, and other items relating to local history. The museums themselves range from very small local *Heimatsstuben* to large, well-funded operations such as the Sorbian museum in Bautzen. Sources of museum funding vary, ranging from individual local collectors who put their collections on show to the public, to exhibitions funded by local parish and town councils. The largest museum in Bautzen receives (as of 2009) an annual grant of €389,200.¹²⁸ The Archive of Disappeared Places is one of the newest museums in the Sorbian area, and is situated in the relocated village of Horno. This is one of the few museums which were funded substantially by private money from the Vattenfall power company. Funding for such an Archive was a requirement of the Horno-*Vertrag* (treaty) – the legal contract which was signed by each villager and by Vattenfall when Horno was razed, relocated, and rebuilt.

As there are over fourteen museums which focus on the Sorbs, constraints of space mean that I will examine two of them in some detail: first, the *Deutsch-Wendisches Heimatsmuseum* in the village of Jänschwalde in Brandenburg; and then the Archive of Disappeared Places in Horno. These examples give an indication of the range of Sorb-focused museums in Lusatia.

¹²⁸ See in this volume, p. 158 ff.

5.8.1 JÄNSCHWALDE MUSEUM

The ‘Wendish-German country museum in the village of Jänschwalde’ (*serbsko-nimski domowniski muzej Janšojce*) is entirely in keeping with a typical Heimat (homeland) museum. Such museums are described in the doctoral thesis of Harald Bortz, which investigates the general history of the local museum, and its links with the idea of Heimat in Germany. Bortz conducted field research into four small local museums in parts of Berlin. He begins by linking the Heimat movements of the nineteenth century with the rise in the formation of Heimat museums. He describes how typically these

Heimat museums collected objects which they felt were meaningful and therefore wished to keep. Above all they collected agricultural objects. This is seen in the context of the transformation from an agrarian state to and industrial one.¹²⁹

While the museum at Jänschwalde was not set up until after unification, its structure and layout, as well as its broader aims, fall firmly within the remit of a traditional ‘Heimat’ museum, found across both East and West Germany. The main building of the museum is the former nineteenth century school house, and the rest is in a converted agricultural barn and stable across the street from the school house. The choice of artefacts exhibited, and the layout of the museum itself, are typical of this type of museum, although the artefacts themselves are of a predominantly Sorbian nature.

The main room of the old school house contains a display of local traditional folk costumes, and the Janšojki bog (Jänschwalde ‘Christkind’). The Janšojki bog is a local folk custom: a local woman dresses in white, covers her face, and delivers presents to the local children. This is similar to the German tradition of Christkind, which also involves the ritualised giving of gifts. This particular

¹²⁹ Bortz H., ‘Heimat Berlin. Großstadtkultur, Regionalgeschichte und Materielle Kultur in kleinen Museen’. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (February 2004), p. 12. Available at <http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/dissertationen/bortz-harald-2004-02-17/HTML/front.html>. Accessed on 16 August 2013.

example, though, is found nowhere else in the region. The layout also deviates slightly from tradition, though: the costumes have been arranged around the room in order of the local festivals at which they are worn. In an adjacent room, the costumes are arranged according to the stages of life: first, a baby's Christening gown; next, confirmation dresses; wedding outfits (male and female); and, finally, a mourning dress. The museum does not focus exclusively on Jänschwalde, but highlights the connections between villages, and the custom of making reciprocal visits between villages for major festivals and events. These rooms demonstrate, historically, how important both the seasons and the church were in shaping the lives of the villagers of Jänschwalde and beyond.

A key feature of the museum at Jänschwalde is that there is relatively little text to be found next to each display; what text there is, is usually in German. There are a variety of reasons for this, both practical and ideological. In practical terms, the museum has limited financial resources, and is predominantly staffed by volunteers. There is therefore little opportunity for the museum to research and record all of the details of each exhibit. The volunteers themselves, however, are often very knowledgeable about the artefacts on display, and they often provide detailed tours to visitors. As a result, each visit yields different information depending on the volunteer and on the direction of conversation with the visitor. This aspect of oral tradition and oral history is again relevant to the nineteenth-century Heimat movement, which promoted this kind of dissemination and education.¹³⁰

Another traditional aspect of the museum at Jänschwalde is its use of the neighbouring barn, which displays a variety of agricultural artefacts from local pre-industrial history. Again, there is very little text accompanying this part of the museum. It is clear, however, that there is an implicit expectation that visitors will be able to recognise, for example, the equipment used for threshing flax, or for spinning and weaving.

¹³⁰ Bortz, 'Heimat Berlin', p. 10.

The museum's chosen periodisation stretches only as far as the early-to-mid-twentieth century. There are next to no artefacts from beyond this period: in particular, there is no attempt in the permanent exhibition to record or examine the local history and *Alltagsgeschichte* (literally 'everyday history') of the Nazi period. Neither does the museum address the GDR or post-unification periods.¹³¹ While there are numerous examples of farming equipment from the pre-industrial era, no mention is made of the collectivisation of agriculture from the 1950s onwards. This is, perhaps, partly explained by a reticence to court controversy by addressing periods of history that are still highly contested; it is in the interests of the museum to maintain as broad a base of visitors as possible.

Despite the ostensibly traditional nature of the museum, it would be misleading to regard it only in those terms. Despite its small size and limited resources, the museum does engage with contemporary Sorbian life and culture. For example, in February 2011, the museum hosted a temporary exhibition by young fashion students, who had re-imagined traditional folk costumes for the twenty-first century.¹³² One of the most interesting aspects of this exhibition was the diversity of opinion generated amongst visitors. Types of reaction tended to correlate with visitor age: older visitors being generally unimpressed by changes to traditional Sorbian costume, and younger visitors preferring modern designs. This small exhibition illustrates the difficulties faced by the museum when being perceived to deviate from typical, traditional portrayals of Sorbian life and culture.

Finally, the name of the museum, and the terminology used by the museum, should not pass without comment. There is no mention of the German term *Sorbe* in the museum at all. All references are to the preferred Lower Sorbian term *Wend*. When asked about this, the then-head of the museum, Ursula Starick, stated

¹³¹ This contrasts with the increasing number of GDR-themed museums, which often adopt a light-hearted view of the period. Take, for example, the GDR Museum in Pirna, on the outskirts of Dresden.

¹³² See 'Sorbisches modern'. Available at http://www.sorbischmodern.de/de/projektinformation_17.html. Accessed on 30 August 2013.

that she is ‘Wendish, not Sorbian, as were [her] forefathers, who wouldn’t have recognised themselves as “Sorbian”’.¹³³ When pressed further on why the museum is called ‘Wendish-German’, and not just ‘Wendish’, she replied that the choice is intended ‘to be inclusive’. As I highlighted in the introduction to this thesis, the active decision to choose the term *Wend* rather than *Sorb* is a topic of general contention in Sorbian circles.

Here the gap can be identified between prominent ‘professional Sorbs’, who seek to downplay the importance of the distinction, seeing it as irrelevant and only existing in German; and others who feel that to use the term *Sorb* for *Wends* is to impose upon them an identity which is not their own. The importance to many people of the correct use of these terms was made clear during several research trips in the area. When I used the term *Sorb* over *Wend* in Lower Lusatia, I was almost always corrected and given an explanation as to why the term *Sorb* was inappropriate.¹³⁴ Again, there is a clear gap here between the terms used by ordinary local people, and the terms used by Sorbs in professional and official positions.

5.8.2 ARCHIVE OF DISAPPEARED PLACES

The Archive of Disappeared Places is in the relocated village of Horno, now in Forst, Brandenburg. The Archive is the newest and most innovative of all the Sorbian-orientated museums in Saxony and Brandenburg. This is immediately apparent in the name, in that it eschews the term ‘museum’ in favour of the term ‘documentation and information centre’ (*Dokumentations- und*

133 Oral testimony to the author in an information interview with Frau Starick (30 July 2009). See in this volume, p. 11.

134 See in this volume, p. 23. The main reason given by non professional Sorbs for this was that they felt the term *Sorb* (incorrectly, it must be said) referred only to Catholic Sorbs and as they are not Catholic they felt the term *Wend* to be more appropriate. A further explanation was that they felt *Sorb* exclusively referred to those in Saxony, whereas *Wend* referred to those in Brandenburg. These were just two of the most frequent explanations for the use of the term *Wend* over *Sorb*.

Informationszentrum). The Archive was founded in 2006, and was substantially funded by Vattenfall as part of the energy company's obligations to the village after its relocation. Instrumental in the Archive's creation were the local community, as well as the head of the Lower Sorbian branch of the Domowina, Harald Konzack. In an interview in 2009 he expressed how proud he was of this achievement..

The Archive has two stated goals: first, 'to make clear the special and quantitative dimensions of the destruction and relocation of the village'; and second, 'to present the views of those affected, by placing their subjective experiences of relocation at the centre [of the project]'. Further to these goals, the Archive is designed 'to be informative and entertaining'.¹³⁵ The fact that entertainment is a key part of the museum's design highlights just how different it is from the more traditional museum at Jänschwalde.

These goals are reflected both in the physical layout of the Archive, as well as in the selection and presentation of artefacts. Its central feature is the large 'landscape carpet', which covers the entire floor, walls, and some of the ceiling, with a map of Lusatia. Marked on this map are all the villages that have been destroyed or relocated since the industrial extraction of brown coal began in the 1920s. As well as indicating these villages, the map also shows the brown coal deposits: both the deposits that have hitherto been extracted, and those which remain.

In keeping with the Archive's entertainment-based ethos, the landscape carpet is interactive. The visitor is provided with an '*Info-Sauger*' (or an 'information Hoover'),¹³⁶ which displays details of each village on a touch-screen display as the visitor moves around the map. The information it displays includes date of destruction, population, Sorbian population, details of local traditions unique to

135 See Archive of Disappeared Places. Available at http://www.archiv-verschwundene-orte.de/de/ausstellung/konzept/inhalt_und_umsetzung/70439. Accessed on 30 August 2013.

136 This is a play on the German word for vacuum cleaner, *Staubsauger* (lit. 'dust sucker').

the village, as well as photographs of the settlement. The aim is, it would seem, not to offer a static display with a single authorised point of view, but rather to enable the visitor to take charge of what information they access, and what conclusions they draw.

The use of technology in the Archive also contrasts with more traditional museums in the region. ‘Information hoovers’ are not the only way in which visitors can interact with the information and with each other. The Archive also relies heavily on audio-visual materials in other displays. Around the edge of the single open-plan room, which houses the Archive, there are areas carved out of the map. These give visitors the opportunity to access information which is focused on the people affected by brown coal mining, rather than just on the landscape. There are several audio recordings in German of those who have had to relocate because of the destruction of their former homes. Furthermore, there is a section entitled the ‘Sorb/Wend language lab’ which has audio recordings of Lower Sorbian native speakers from 1960s to the present day. One of the language lab’s aims is to demonstrate the continuity of Sorbian language in the region. No doubt it is also hoped that it will generate more interest in learning the language. Both of these measures may help to increase the low social prestige from which Lower Sorbian, in particular, suffers.

The most significant point of difference between the Archive of Disappeared Places in Horno, and the more traditional Heimat museum in Jänschwalde, is the near-total absence of traditional folk costumes or other physical artefacts of folk culture (with the notable exception of three Sorbian painted Easter eggs in a display case).¹³⁷ The result of this is a reduced veneration of ‘traditional’¹³⁸ objects and artefacts, which – given the nature of the Archive itself – helps visitors to put themselves in the shoes of those affected by relocation. It also

¹³⁷ For an example of Sorbian Easter eggs see in this volume, p. 272.

¹³⁸ Many of these so-called traditional costumes and artefacts are often relatively young in age, usually under a hundred years old. However they are rarely presented as typical of their day but rather as timeless Sorbian artefacts.

grants much greater autonomy both to those telling their stories, and to those interacting with them. The Archive places greater emphasis on the spoken word than the written word. This is partly out of need: as I know only too well, there are very few written sources documenting those affected by these events. Also, though, it is out of a decision to collect and exhibit the actual voices of those who know better than anyone what it means to have your home and entire village destroyed.

Finally, the Archive states that ‘The Archive of Disappeared Places, with its thematic goals and innovative composition presents a unique resource so far within Germany’¹³⁹. The Archive is developing this resource through an ongoing programme to digitise as much of the local information as possible that can be found out about the villages. While the Archive does not have physically changing displays, the information which can be accessed via the information hoover does change as new evidence comes to light, sometimes coming directly from visitors themselves.

5.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have explored a wide range of different aspects of Sorbian cultural life: cultural organisations, media, religion, education, folk culture, youth culture, and museums. So, to what extent does this evidence indicate that German unification was a turning point for the Sorbs? While there have undoubtedly been cultural changes since unification – notably, in the increased presence of museums and an independent youth culture – many of these changes are similar to those that have taken place in the rest of Germany, and indeed the western world, during the past two decades. Many changes have also taken one or two decades to happen – for example, the introduction of the WITAJ Project in schools.

¹³⁹ See Archive of Disappeared Places. Available at http://www.archiv-verschwundene-orte.de/de/ausstellung/die_ausstellung/69928. Accessed on 30 August 2013.

There have, however, been extensive debates about change and a perception of cultural decline. This theme reflects, I think, the conservatism of Sorbian politics, as I explored in chapters three and four. Failed reforms, both in the structure and operation of Sorbian organisations, and in the personnel who run them, mean that the calls for change are similar now to during the unification period. This persistent lack of change will present problems and opportunities for Sorbian culture in the years ahead. However, it is only by engaging younger Sorbs and allowing them to make their mark on the culture of the region that the language and customs will survive. I have touched upon the intergenerational dynamic in the Sorbian area in this chapter, but it is an area that would benefit from further research in future.

CHAPTER SIX

HORNO/ROGOW: A CASE STUDY IN THE SORBIAN POLITICAL, LEGAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL SITUATION AFTER GERMAN UNIFICATION

Zwischen Tagebau und Tagesbrot¹
[Between mining and dining]

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapters three to five, I set out the evidence for and against viewing German unification as a ‘turning point’ (*Wende*) for the Sorbian national minority. Chapter three focused on political, legal and constitutional themes; chapter four on the relationship between the economy and the Sorbian population; and chapter five on the cultural effects of unification. In this chapter, I will again address each of these themes separately, but this time in the context of a case study of Horno (Rogow in Sorbian), a village in south Brandenburg, close to the border with Poland. Horno is one of 134 villages destroyed, part-destroyed, or relocated since 1924 to access deposits of brown coal.² In the words of Jurij Koch, Horno serves as a *pars pro toto*: that is to say that Horno is representative of the wider tensions between Sorbian and German society, and of the decisions necessitated by processes of modernisation and industrialisation.³

1 My own aphorism.

2 Archive of Disappeared Places, Horno. Display observed during fieldwork (12 August 2009). See in this document, p. 11.

3 ‘Horno als *pars pro toto*’ (‘Horno as a microcosm’) Koch J., Speech at Seventh Annual Conference of Environmentally-engaged Writers of Germany (October 1998).

As well as addressing the core research question of whether unification marked a turning point, in this case for the Sorbian resident of Horno, I also aim to assess the veracity of the themes I have examined during the past five chapters: the dissonance between official policy and practice; the narrative of Sorbian passivity and German hegemony; the distinct roles and attitudes of the Sorbian elite and ordinary Sorbs; the idea of Sorbian linguistic and cultural decline; and the effect of all these factors on any Sorbian ‘national identity’.

I will first explain the background to the destruction and relocation of Horno, and describe the events leading up to the village’s relocation in 2004 (6.2). I will draw on oral testimony as well as established scholarship and primary evidence, and will seek to document not only the material effects of relocation, but also some of the emotional effects upon an uprooted community. I will then examine some of the court cases which were brought by residents of Horno against the state-owned companies involved in the planned destruction, including appeals to the administrative court in Cottbus and the Constitutional Court of Brandenburg in Potsdam, and also the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg (6.3). I examine the economic effects of both brown coal mining in Horno, the formation and privatisation of the Horno LPG (farm collective), and the phenomenon of unemployment in post-unification east Germany (6.4). I examine the side-effects of unification upon Sorbian culture (6.5). In accordance with my arguments in chapters three to five, I conclude that there was more continuity than change in Horno during the post-unification period, and that a feeling of alienation from decision-making processes regarding village relocation persisted under the FRG in a similar manner to under the GDR.

6.2 THE STORY OF THE RELOCATION OF HORNO/ROGOW

6.2.1 TWO HORNOS

To locate a place in the early twenty-first century, the traveller, tourist, and even the researcher all typically turn to Google Maps. But where do they turn if a place is no longer where it once was? The old village of Horno was in the county of Spree-Neiße, south Brandenburg, in the traditional Sorbian area of settlement (a term that came into force with the ratification of the Sorbian Law (*Sorben/Wenden Gesetz*) on 7 July 1994).

In 2004, Horno was destroyed in order to access the brown coal underneath. It was then relocated five miles to the south of its former location, as a newly created district in the suburb of Eulo, on the outskirts of the town of Forst. Despite these seismic events on the ground, however, satellite images on Google Maps continued until the summer of 2011 to insist that the village was still where it had stood for over 650 years. Had someone visited the old village between 2004 and 2011 based on the directions of Google Maps, they would have discovered not a typical part of rural east Germany, but the Jänschwalde strip mine – a lunar landscape covering 625 hectares, and a hole in the ground up to forty-five metres deep. (In order to collect one tonne of brown coal from the Jänschwalde site, 9.3 tonnes of soil has to be removed from the area.⁴) Before its relocation, the village had a population of around 300 people, 232 of whom moved into the relocated village.⁵ Twenty-two families moved to Peitz. Of the fifty-five families who moved, around one-third were Sorbian. Although even in 1956 only thirteen per cent of the villagers were deemed to speak Sorbian.⁶

4 Vattenfall Infoblatt Jänschwalde und Cottbus-Nord (information sheet, 2009).

5 Quitz M. (ed.), *Verlorene Heimat: der Bergbau und seine Auswirkungen auf Kirchen und Kirchengemeinden der Ober- und Niederlausitz* (Cottbus:Semmler, 2007) p. 118.

6 *Horno: Zur Kulturgeschichte eines Niederlausitzer Dorfes* (Wünsdorf: Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, 2006), p. 395. For further information on the Sorbian population in the surrounding area see Kunze P., *Veränderungen in der ethnischen Bevölkerungsstruktur: Kolonisation, Kriege, Auswanderung und Industrialisierung* in Fasske

	1850	1867	1880	1899	1949	1955	2010
Total village population	509	606	606	596	725	586	320
Sorbian village population	476	413	594	580	no data	79	no data, but zero active speakers
Expellees population (<i>Umsiedler</i>)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	300	n/a	n/a

Figure 7: Population of Horno between 1850 and 2010. Sources: 1850, 1867: Schmitz P., Berendt R. & Salan, A., *Horno/Rogow: Eine Chronik* (Cottbus: Druckzone 2003), p. 41; 1880, 1899, 1949, 1955: *Horno: Zur Kulturgeschichte eines Niederlausitzer Dorfes* (Wünsdorf: Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, 2006), pp. 393-395; 2010: Oral testimony to author in formal interview with Bernd Siegert (12 August 2009). See in this volume, p. 11.

It was in 1977 that a coal planning committee based in Cottbus, then the district capital for the region, decided that Horno would be destroyed (and not relocated) in order to allow the expansion of the Jänschwalde coal field. Villagers did not regard the decision as particularly important or pressing at the time, since the scheduled date of destruction was 1997. But by the late 1980s, and in line with the growing environmental awareness of the day, the local population had begun to protest publicly against the plans. Their opposition was based both on a defence of the GDR constitution, which protected Sorbian land and culture, and on the need to prevent environmental damage. The Sorbian identity of the village thus became a key part of the argument against the proposed expansion.

One prominent figure in these protests was the Upper Sorbian author and poet, Jurij Koch. He argued strongly and publicly against the plans on these grounds of identity and environment. These themes have continued to be an element in Koch's work, as can be seen in *Joy and Pain of the European Roller Bird (Jubel*

H. et al., *Der Niedersorben Wendisch: eine Sprach-Zeit-Reise Wobrazki ze Serbow* (Bautzen: Domowina Verlag, 2003), p. 90.

und Schmerz der Mandelkrähe), a book which was published in both German and Sorbian.⁷ It was widely thought that a reprieve from the planned expansion had been granted by the collapse of the GDR in 1989-90. In interviews conducted almost twenty years after the events, villagers mark unification as the moment at which they first thought that the battle against the relocation of Horno had been won.⁸

6.2.2 RELOCATION STRATEGIES

During the GDR period, when Horno was first scheduled for destruction, the strategy for re-housing those displaced by the mining of brown coal was decided on a case-by-case basis: once a village had been informed of its dissolution, the individual families living there would then be assigned new accommodation, usually in a neighbouring town or suburb, and often in one of the many new high-rise blocks of flats. The first consequence of this was that the new flats were designed on the basis of one nuclear family per flat – a modern feature which was often not part of the configuration of the farmsteads and larger rural houses, where several generations of a village family might live together.

In one account (not from Horno), a woman whose village was to be destroyed asked the authorities if her elderly parents could be assigned a neighbouring flat. However, she was informed that they could perhaps be allocated a flat on the same storey, but that even this was not guaranteed.⁹ This disregard for family connections also indicated the broader disregard for maintaining community amongst the villagers themselves. In fact, they were frequently allocated to several different areas across the neighbouring towns. The attitude demonstrated

7 Koch J., *Jubel und Schmerz der Mandelkrähe* (Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 1992).

8 Oral testimony to the author in interviews with P.S. (10 August 2009; 29 July 2010) and Bernd Siegert (12 August 2009). See in this volume, p. 11.

9 Förster F., *Bergbau-Umsiedler: Erfahrungsberichte aus dem Lausitzer Braunkohlenrevier* (Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 1998); also oral testimony to the author in interviews with Jurij Koch (July/August 2009) and P.S. (10 August 2009). See in this volume, p. 11.

by the GDR authorities to those who were forcibly relocated is indicative of a majoritarian reality in the political system which was in clear conflict with the GDR's official policy of protecting the Sorbian minority. A further consideration in the relocation was that many who were forced to relocate had lived in a rural environment for their whole lives, having either worked in agriculture, or at least maintained a smallholding. Moving into an urban or suburban area was not only a major change in living environment, but also precipitated a great shift in people's ways of life. The relocation of Horno in 2004 was, and remains, the largest relocation for the purposes of brown coal mining since 1987 (350 people).

6.2.3 THE ROLE OF VATTENFALL

Vattenfall (Swedish for 'waterfall') is a state-owned enterprise (SOE). Although trading as a business, its sole shareholder is the Swedish government, which remains strongly involved with the running of the company. For example, in November 2012, it set financial targets for it.¹⁰ Vattenfall is not publicly listed. It was charged with undertaking the relocation of Horno.

This SOE arrangement would certainly not have been unfamiliar to those who worked in the coalfields and power plants under the GDR. The only surprise, perhaps, would be that the state company responsible for extracting brown coal in the Sorbian area of settlement is owned by a foreign government, rather than by the German government.

However, unlike its VEB forerunners, Vattenfall has to operate along much stricter, more profitable lines, as well as complying with new, more stringent environment regulation and legislation. In its communications activities, Vattenfall does often attempt to distance itself from its forerunners, by emphasizing that its exploitation of brown coal is free of government subsidy,

10 Ironically, from 1544 until 1972 one of the titles of the King of Sweden was 'King of the Wends', although it is not thought that this directly refers to the population which we now know as the Sorbs/Wends.

unlike in the days of the GDR. This claim is, however, one that should be regarded critically.

It is a claim that was also made in oral testimony to me by Prof. Dähnert, Vattenfall's head of resettlement (*Umsiedlung*), in August 2009. In response, I asked him how this claim squared with information I had discovered that Vattenfall's power plants in the brown coal area do not pay for the millions of cubic water they use every day. He explained that the free use of water was justified, because they return it to the water courses, ensuring it is filtered, and that they are therefore not removing anything permanently from the local ecosystem.¹¹

A further claim from Vattenfall is that they produce the cleanest electricity from brown coal in the world. If this claim were to appear in a historical document from the GDR period, it would automatically be viewed sceptically. On further inspection, it is not quite so impressive a claim. Again, during my interview with Prof. Dähnert, he made this claim without prompting. On further questioning, he acknowledged that the countries identified for comparison included China, Russia, India, and Greece. These are not countries to which Germany is normally compared when assessing environmental credentials.

6.2.4 THE RELOCATION STRATEGY OF VATTENFALL

The relocation strategy that was undertaken for Horno was one area where there was a significant break from the past. There was a much greater emphasis on consultation amongst all stakeholders as well as a desire as much as practicable to move the village as a single unit and maintain familial and social bonds and connections.¹² Berndt Siegert remarked in my interview with him that the

11 Oral testimony to the author in a formal interview with Prof. Dähnert (28 July 2009). See in this volume, p. 11.

12 Oral testimony to the author in a formal interview with Prof. Dähnert (28 July 2009).

relocation would have been ‘even worse’ under the GDR.¹³ The destruction of a village such as Horno and the creation of a copy raises important questions about the importance physical objects can hold for people in terms of being repositories of their own history. A further departure in the proceedings from that found in the GDR was the creation of a village level contract (*Vertrag*) which spelled out the commitments and responsibilities of the various companies and authorities.

Five years after the relocation of Horno, I visited a village that on the surface appeared to be almost too perfect. The pavements were immaculate, the houses all of a similar style, the trees around the village were all of the same age, and the house numbers had been logically re-ordered. The new site of Horno possesses an air of artificiality for the time being, although this is bound to dissipate with the passage of time. In my discussions with local residents concerning how life had changed since the relocation, several topics recurred. There was a strong perception of animosity from some members of the local German community. One woman told of when a small group of Germans came through to see the new village, something which, due to Horno’s high media profile, is relatively common. On seeing a resident working in their front garden, she reports that they began shouting, ‘What are you all complaining about? You’ve got lovely new houses, big gardens – you’ve got everything! I can’t even afford a house!’¹⁴ If this is true, the envy would not be surprising, given that Forst is an impoverished suburb which, like Manchester until recently, has not recovered from the decline of cotton manufacturing in the late nineteenth century.¹⁵ One further point raised by local residents was that the atmosphere of the village had changed. It has gone, they say, from being a stand-alone settlement to a suburb of a large town. It is now only twenty minutes’ walk from the local train station. This manifests itself

13 Oral testimony to the author in a formal interview with Berndt Siegert (12 August 2009). See in this volume, p. 11.

14 Oral testimony to the author. See in this volume, p. 11.

15 Forst was during the *Kaiserreich* second only to Hamburg in terms of income tax receipts making it then the second richest city at the time. Oral testimony to the author during an interview with Horno Burgermeister. See in this volume, p. 11.

in subtle but important ways, such as people no longer feeling secure leaving their bicycles unattended.

6.2.5 FUTURE PLANS

Once the brown coal has been extracted from the area, there are plans in place to transform the landscape into the world's largest inland lake network. The formation of artificial lakes in former quarry and mine sites has a long history. It is hoped by Vattenfall and the state and local governments that this development will boost tourism to the area and provide suitable employment for local people. The recultivation of the area after coal seams have been exhausted is in stark contrast to the attitude of the authorities in the GDR who made little or no attempt to repair any of the damage mining caused.¹⁶

6.3 THE POLITICAL AND LEGAL SITUATION OF HORNO/ROGOW

In this section I will look at some of the ten court cases which arose in response to the threat of Horno's destruction. These cases were heard at various levels of the German and European legal system. I will focus in particular on cases subsequent to the ratification of the Sorbian Law in the state of Brandenburg in 1994.¹⁷

In 1994 161 landowners, including several from Horno, petitioned the Mining Board to halt the planned mining operation; the petition was rejected. In response, in July 1994, the Domowina and the landowners requested a judicial review from the *Verwaltungsgericht* (Administrative Court) in Cottbus. This was the first legal case brought challenging the planned expansion of the brown coal mine and the destruction of the village of Horno. The appellants made a case based on the

16 See also Hüttl R., 'Ecology of post strip-mining landscapes in Lusatia, Germany' *Environmental Science and Policy* 1 (1998), pp. 129-135.

17 'Gesetz zur Ausgestaltung der Rechte der Sorben (Wenden) im Land Brandenburg (Sorben[Wenden]-Gesetz- SWG)', (7 July 1994). Available at http://www.bravors.brandenburg.de/sixcms/detail.php?gsid=land_bb_bravors_01.c.47208.de. Accessed on 1 January 2013.

protections they felt they were due under the Sorbian/Wendish Law of 1994. Article 3 of the law expressly guarantees the protection and maintenance of the Sorbian ‘traditional area of settlement’ by the Brandenburg state government in the first instance, but also by the federal state:

Article 3 – Sorbian (Wendish) Area of Settlement

1. The right of the Sorbian (Wendish) people to the protection, preservation and maintenance of their traditional area of settlement is guaranteed. The particular character of the traditional area of settlement, and the interests of the Sorbs (Wends), are to be taken into consideration in the formulation of state and local policies.

2. To the traditional Sorbian (Wendish) area of settlement in the state of Brandenburg belong all those districts in which there is evidence of a continuous linguistic and cultural tradition up to the present day. It includes the Landkreis Spree-Neiße, the city of Cottbus, the Märkische Heide, Lieberose and Straupitz within the Landkreise of Dahme-Spreewald, as well as in Lübbenau, Vetschau, Altdöbern, Großräschen and the Senftenberg Lake within the Landkreis of Oberspreewald-Lausitz.¹⁸

The Sorbian/Wendish Law, being new, had not been tested – particularly in respect of whether its provisions took precedence over the state’s broad power to seize land in the economic interests of the state, even at the expense of individual landowners. Four years later, on 17 December 1998, another appeal to the Administrative Court in Cottbus was rejected, ending this avenue of legal appeal.

After extensive public consultation, the state of Brandenburg passed the ‘Basic Law on Lignite’. This called for the dissolution of the municipality of Horno, and for the land to be incorporated into the Jänschwalde site. However, the court did rule that the government of Brandenburg would have to bring in a separate law to dissolve the administrative area of Horno and join it to Jänschwalde. The passing in 1997 of this ‘Horno Law’, as it is colloquially known, is the second major legal

18 ‘Gesetz zur Ausgestaltung der Rechte der Sorben (Wenden)’

event to affect Horno during the post-unification period. The full official title of the law is ‘*Gesetz zur Auflösung der Gemeinde Horno und zur Eingliederung ihres Gemeindegebietes in die Gemeinde Jänschwalde*’ (‘Law for the dissolution of the administrative area of Horno and the amalgamation with the administrative area of Jänschwalde’).¹⁹ It paved the way for the abolition of the administrative existence of the village of Horno.

The Horno Law was also subject to legal challenge. The result was the same; the ruling declared that Article 25 of the state constitution was not in fact a basic individual right (*Grundrecht*),²⁰ but rather a declared state aim (*Staatszielbestimmung*). This placed the provisions of Article 25 in a similar position to the right to work, which is guaranteed under Article 48. Since the ‘right to work’ does not obligate the state at all times and for all persons to provide employment, it was ruled that the same logic must apply to interventions in the Sorbian area of settlement. In 1998, a further case was brought to the European Court of Human Rights, which alleged a violation under the European Convention on Human Rights. However, the claim was rejected in 2000. The court ruled that their rights had been *infringed* but not *violated*, and that the infringement was justified in the interest of the well-being of the state of Brandenburg. It also ruled that the provision of a resettlement community within twenty kilometres was proportionate.

The third major legal event was a further court case brought before the European Court of Human Rights in 2002.²¹ The court acknowledged that the case of Horno ‘raise[d] a problem under Article 8 of the [European] Convention [on Human

19 ‘Gesetz zur Auflösung der Gemeinde Horno und zur Eingliederung ihres Gemeindegebietes in die Gemeinde Jänschwalde’ (7 July 1997). Available at http://www.bravors.brandenburg.de/sixcms/detail.php?gsid=land_bb_bravors_01.c.24670.de. Accessed on 2 January 2013.

20 See in this volume: 3.3 Constitutional and Legal frameworks, pp. 108 ff.

21 vLex European Union, ‘Extract: Case of European Court of Human Rights, May 25, 2000 (case NOACK AND OTHERS v. GERMANY)’ (25 May 2000). Available at <http://eu.vlex.com/vid/noack-and-others-v-germany-26874172>. Accessed on 2 January 2012.

Rights]’, which refers to the right to respect for a person’s ‘private and family life, his home, and his correspondence’.²² The ruling states that

The Government contended lastly that the Constitution of the Land of Brandenburg protected the rights of the Sorbs, who would consequently be transferred together to a town within the original Sorbian settlement area where they would be free to continue to enjoy their cultural activities and to speak their language.²³

This contention on the part of the German government implies that, while the Sorbian *area* of settlement is protected in law, each individual settlement is not necessarily protected. However, the court ruled unanimously against the applicants from Horno, concluding that

As to the purpose of the interference, the Court considered that it pursued a legitimate aim, namely the economic well-being of the country, in particular by ensuring a long-term low-cost energy supply for the Land of Brandenburg, and the creation of jobs.²⁴

This was the last legal resort to prevent the destruction and relocation. Having failed, the village was destroyed and relocated in 2004. Although it is clear that residents of Horno still had very little say in the fate of their village during the post-unification period, it should be acknowledged that even the possibility of legal challenge would have been impossible under the GDR.

Horno continued to be of interest to the commercial mining operation LAUBAG (*Lausitzerbraunkohle AG*) which wished to continue with the GDR-era plans. Their aspirations were boosted on 14 March 1994 (six months before the ratification of the Sorbian Law) by the approval of continuing open-cast mining at Jänschwalde by the Mining Board (*Oberbergamt*) of the state of Brandenburg.

22 European Court of Human Rights, ‘European Convention on Human Rights’ (1 June 2010). Available at http://www.echr.coe.int/NR/rdonlyres/D5CC24A7-DC13-4318-B457-5C9014916D7A/0/Convention_ENG.pdf. Accessed on 2 January 2013.

23 vLex European Union, ‘Extract’.

24 vLex European Union, ‘Extract’.

Permission was granted for extraction to continue until deposits were exhausted. LAUBAG also planned the relocation of Horno for 2003.

6.4 THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF HORNO/ROGOW

6.4.1 THE ENERGY INDUSTRY, BROWN COAL MINING AND HORNO

As I noted in chapter four, after unification, the amount of brown coal produced in east Germany fell dramatically. According to Gromm, in 1989, 195 million tonnes of brown coal were mined in Lusatia; by 1992, this figure had dropped to 93 million. By 1999, this figure had dropped further, to 44 million.²⁵ By 2011, this figure had increased again to 60 million tonnes.²⁶ However, as a whole Germany still produced 176.5 million tonnes in 2011.²⁷ The number of employees in local coalfields and power stations also fell substantially, from 140,000 at the time of unification to as few as 5,000 by 1999.²⁸ This was in the economic context of a widespread and significant shift in employment options in the region and east Germany as a whole. This led many, especially in threatened villages like Horno, to believe that demand would continue to fall.

Nevertheless this still makes Germany by far the world's largest producer of brown coal. It is also clear that Horno has been impacted by the shift in German energy policy following the Fukushima nuclear disaster, as discussed in chapter four. Although the decision was taken in the name of environmental protection, it has led to an increase in the quantity of brown coal extracted and burned in the

25 Gromm M., *Horno: Verkohlte Insel des Widerstands* (Horno: Edition Dreieck Horno, 2005), p. 32.

26 'Braunkohlenflussbild 2011', *DEBRIV Bundesverband Braunkohle* (January 2012). Available at <http://www.braunkohle.de/tools/download.php?filedata=1329905550.pdf&filename=Braunkohlenflu%DFbild%202011.pdf&mimetype=application/pdf>. Accessed on 2 January 2013.

27 'Braunkohle', *DEBRIV Bundesverband Braunkohle*. Available at <http://www.braunkohle.de/pages/grafiken.php?page=931>. Accessed on 2 January 2013.

28 Gromm, *Horno*, p. 32.

Horno area. In 2012, brown coal was the single biggest source of electricity generation in Germany, constituting twenty-six per cent of the total.²⁹ Although not all of Germany's brown coal is sourced from Lusatia, it does produce thirty-five per cent of annual German output. Furthermore, it is striking how events in a country as far away as Japan can have a greater impact on domestic German energy policy than decades of legal campaigns and protests of a village within commuting distance of Berlin.

6.4.2 AGRICULTURAL COLLECTIVISATION AND LPGS IN HORNO UNDER THE GDR

For most of its existence, Horno depended economically on farming and agriculture. This was typical for a large proportion of the Sorbian population.³⁰ Nowusch claims that labourers and collective agricultural farmers (*Genossenschaftsbauern*) are 'by numbers the strongest social grouping amongst the Sorbian population'.³¹ However, this economic pattern appears to have changed significantly by the early 1990s, so that the Sorbian pattern of employment in general was, and remains, almost identical to that of the wider German population.³² However, this pattern is not reflected in Horno, where Gromm claims that in 1995 seventy people were employed in agriculture.³³ Langehan disagrees with Gromm, though: she claims that in 1989, there were 135 members of the LPG, and forty-six direct employees of the LPG. In 1991, however, seventy were offered jobs in the Bauen AG Neißetal; and after 1991, she

29 'Die Braunkohle in der Energiewirtschaft Deutschlands 2011, *DEBRIV Bundesverband Braunkohle*. Available at <http://www.braunkohle.de/tools/download.php?filedata=1351077065.pdf&filename=GRAFIK13.PDF&mimetype=application/pdf>. Accessed on 2 January 2013.

30 Nowusch H., *Die Gleichberechtigung der Bürger sorbischer Nationalität in der DDR-verwirklichtes Menschenrecht* (Bautzen: VEB Domowina Verlag, 3rd edition, 1988, p. 91.

31 Nowusch, *Die Gleichberechtigung*, p. 92.

32 See Pech E. & Scholze D. (eds), *Zwischen Zwang und Beistand* (Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 2003).

33 Gromm M., *Horno: Ein Dorf in der Lausitz will leben* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1995), p. 36.

reports that there were only twenty-eight employees remaining.³⁴ Bearing this in mind, Nowusch's claim may reflect ideology, and an inclination towards 'traditional' Sorbian imagery, rather than an evidence-based assessment of GDR Sorbian employment patterns.

The most significant change to the village in respect of farming came in the shape of a programme of forced agricultural collectivisation from the 1960s onwards. In Horno, this resulted in the founding of the 'Höhenland' Type I LPG on 15 March 1959.³⁵ (There was also the 'Niederlausitz' Type I LPG, but for the purposes of this case study, I will focus on the formation of Höhenland LPG, which was the first to be formed.)³⁶ LPGs were structured as follows. Type I LPGs entailed the collectivisation of the farm, but the land remained in the private ownership of the farmer. This Type was particularly common in the early stages of the GDR, from the 1950s onwards. In Type II LPGs, both the farmland and the machinery were placed under collective control, although this structure was quite rare. Finally, Type III LPGs required the collectivisation of land, machinery, buildings, and livestock. From the 1970s onwards, in keeping with communist ideology, this became the most common form of LPG in the GDR.

The founding members of the Höhenland LPG were Wilhelm Hugler (then they mayor of Horno), Friedrich Buder (the waterworks pump attendant), Sigfried Guttke, Joachim Kornack, Willi and Marie Krueger, Fritz Lindner and Anna Jurrmann.³⁷ The LPG spanned 28.93 hectares. In spite of the fact that GDR national plans espoused the benefits of collectivisation,³⁸ it was clear that

34 Langenhan D., 'Vom Bauernhof zur LPG – Veränderungen in der Landwirtschaft nach 1945' in Karg D. & Schopper F. (eds), *Horno: Zur Kulturgeschichte eines Niederlausitzer Dorfes* (Wünsdorf: Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, 2006), pp. 365-392 at p. 392.

35 Schmitz P., Berendt R. & Salan, A., *Horno/Rogow: Eine Chronik* (Cottbus: Druckzone 2003), p. 45.

36 Schmitz et al., *Eine Chronik*, p. 46.

37 Schmitz et al., *Eine Chronik*, p. 45.

38 Die SED beschloss auf der 2. Parteikonferenz der SED, in Ost-Berlin vom 9.-12. Juli 1952, die Maßnahmen zur Bildung von Genossenschaften. Damit wurden landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaften zugelassen.

enthusiasm amongst farmers was far from widespread. Indeed, in Horno there was significant local opposition to the founding of the LPG in 1959. The backlash was such that an *Aufklärungsbrigade* (a ‘clarification team’ of government officials) was sent to the village:

From early morning through to late evenings the political educator (*Aufklärer*), from the city, steadfastly spoke to the farmers. The parish of Horno proved to be stony ground.³⁹

The *Aufklärungsbrigade* spent months trying to persuade the local farmers to agree to the collectivisation plans, without success.⁴⁰ On 15 February 1960 the local/parish council held an open session for all parishioners with the suggestion that they would all sign up to the council’s proposal to become a fully *genossenschaftliches* (co-operative) village by 1 October 1960. However, few of the parishioners were prepared to sign. Faced with this situation, the authorities changed tactics and wrote to each farmer to invite them to attend the mayor’s office, to discuss the matter ‘until they finally gave their signature’. Those who refused to subscribe to the plans were collected and brought to the office of the local mayor by police. Those who refused to subscribe to the plans were collected and brought to the office of the local mayor by police. This strategy of coercion worked: only five days later, on 10 March 1960, the last farmer (Martha Kechel of no. 107) signed up to form the LPG.⁴¹

The resistance to the plan was not entirely over. At the inaugural meeting of the LPG, which was charged with electing the executive committee, not enough people attended to form a quorum. The meeting was postponed. However, the second attempt also failed to attract the attendance of enough members, and was postponed again. At the third attempt, a quorum was formed, and the former mayor Karl Guttke was elected chairman of the board of the new LPG

39 Schmitz et al., *Eine Chronik*, p. 45.

40 Schmitz et al., *Eine Chronik*, p. 46; *Hornoer Dorfchronik* (1959), in Schmitz et al., *Eine Chronik*, p. 111.

41 Schmitz et al., *Eine Chronik*, p. 46.

‘Niederlausitz’. The fact that both LPGs were led by current and former mayors is a telling sign, either of the reluctance of ordinary villagers to assume the role, or of a continuation of top-down control from state officials.

It is now possible to see how developments in the national arena led directly to many of the changes in the village of Horno. Horno was by no means unique, and many other villages in the GDR had similar experiences of the collectivisation programme. Horno’s village chronicle also documents widespread opposition in other villages:

Hundreds of members of the parties, representatives of the civil/town administration and other institutions were active in the villages.⁴²

The collectivisation programme indicates the great emphasis the GDR administration placed on root and branch reform of local agriculture. The pressure on Horno continued: in 1962, Horno was in the position of having two separate LPGs for a village of less than 350 people. In February 1962, the two LPGs were merged to form ‘Horno’ LPG. Karl Guttke, the former mayor, was unanimously elected to chair the newly formed LPG. Helmut Boenisch, a resident of Horno at the time, attests:

Then came the LPG, we had to stick money in, give [money] to, so that we could share in the joy [*freude*]. And women were allowed to work in the LPG.⁴³

These were national policies which paid no attention to national minority status. Even though there was a privileged position afforded to the Sorbs under the GDR constitution, this didn’t amount to any extra support in terms of machinery, resources or workers. This dissonance between policy and practice is even evident

42 Schmitz et al., *Eine Chronik*, p. 46.

43 Quotation from Helmut Boenisch (b. 1939, and a resident of Horno from 1956) in Gromm M., *Horno: Ein Dorf in der Lausitz will leben* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1995), p. 82.

in the official name of the village, Horno, which was used in spite of GDR law mandating that local minority languages be used alongside the German.⁴⁴

The combined 'Horno' LPG was an arable farm as well as producing beef, and for a very short period, had a hen house. However, after two years, the hen house was scrapped as it was repeatedly destroyed by foxes.⁴⁵ In line with national policies to centralise farming further, and in the hopes of increasing levels of food self-sufficiency, a centralised cattle shed for one hundred cattle was erected in 1967. By 1976, the number of cattle had increased to 1,200 beef cattle and 150 calves, employing 42 people in a three-shift system. The arable farm (the so-called *Feldbaubrigade* – tilling brigade) was predominantly made up of women. The forces of centralisation continued so that by 1972 LPG Horno joined the village of Gross Gastrose LPG to become a type 3 LPG.

The investment in the Horno LPG was chosen because, in the words of a communist civil servant from the agriculture ministry,

the farmland belongs to the LPG, and there are no complicated private land ownership links which need to be resolved.⁴⁶

This quotation demonstrates that, despite the widespread misconception that private property ceased to exist in the GDR, even as late as the mid-1960s private property rights were still considered to be relevant to policy decisions. The extent to which private property continued to exist however was further diminished from the 1970s onwards, nevertheless it did still continue to exist. The reinstatement of formal legal private property rights after unification was therefore not as much of a novelty as might be supposed. In my interview with Berndt Siegert, the former mayor of Horno, Siegert remarked upon the reinstatement of such property rights as being one of the key changes brought about by unification. It is noteworthy that

44 This was by no means unusual within the GDR as the extent of bilingualism in official contexts was only to produce bilingual signage.

45 Schmitz et al., *Eine Chronik*, p. 47.

46 Langenhan, 'Vom Bauernhof zur LPG', p. 376.

even a politically engaged and prominent member of the community was unaware of the extent of this continuity of practice between the GDR and the FRG.⁴⁷

During the GDR period, there were three distinct phases of agricultural policy: First, policy based on Stalinist principles of voluntary collectivisation; second, coercive enforcement of these policies on a reluctant farming population; and third, a shift towards ever-larger industrial farming models, with a growth in the use of machinery and chemicals.⁴⁸ The events in Horno clearly match these three stages. The first stage was largely ignored by the farmers of Horno, which could in itself be read as an assertion of local identity over against national policy. During the second stage, state officials coerced farmers into subscribing to the LPG proposals. Third, in 1972, Horno's LPG joined with that of the neighbouring village, Gross Gastrose, indicating larger-scale management and greater efficiency in farming in terms of output at the expense of efficient allocation of labour and resources. The village of Horno also lost some of its identity as a result of this policy. Gross Gastrose, as a predominantly German village, also impacted on the protection of Sorbs as a national minority.

6.4.3 AGRICULTURAL POLICY IN HORNO AFTER GERMAN UNIFICATION

Following unification, the entire structure of the agricultural system was reformed: the policy of agricultural collectivisation was abandoned, and the standard western industrialised methods of agriculture were adopted wholesale. In 1989, the Horno LPG had an uncertain future, given the turbulent events of the collapse of the GDR and the subsequent process of unification. Mr H., a former

47 Oral testimony to the author in a formal interview with Berndt Siegert (12 August 2009). See in this volume, p. 11.

48 The periodisation here derives from the work of Schöne J., *Frühling auf dem Lande? Die Kollektivierung der DDR-Landwirtschaft* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2010).

member of the Horno LPG, remarked that ‘no-one wanted the plots back, because you can’t get rid of the livestock, or only for very little money’.⁴⁹

After this initial uncertainty, management of farming was transferred predominantly to one large private regional company, Bauern AG Nießtal.⁵⁰ The most immediate consequence of this was the loss of a majority of agricultural jobs in the village of Horno. Despite this, however, many Hornoers continue to maintain small holdings of agricultural land. Even in the relocated village of Horno, this has continued, albeit on a greatly reduced scale. Part of the Horno treaty between Vattenfall and residents gave each Hornoer one metre squared in the new Horno for every metre squared they had in old Horno. On paper this appears to be an equitable compromise. It is also certainly a marked change in terms of being more generous compared to what would have happened under the GDR.

Nevertheless, in reality this was not a like-for-like exchange, as no account was taken of the relative quality of each square metre of land. Some of the crops that smallholders had been cultivating for generations were no longer viable due to the new local soil conditions. This made the land less productive than the old. For example, one resident who used to plant a field of wheat on part of their smallholding can no longer do this in the new Horno as a significant part of the area is liable to flooding. Also, the cultivation of fruit varieties, some of which were unique to old Horno, have not been maintained.⁵¹

These factors meant a sharp reduction not only in agricultural employment in the village, but also a significant reorganisation of collective leisure activities.⁵² For example, there were no longer state-subsidised group holidays for specific LPGs.

49 Langenhan, ‘Vom Bauernhof zur LPG’, p. 392.

50 Schmitz et al., *Eine Chronik*, p. 48.

51 Oral testimony to the author in an informal interview with P.S. (10 August 2009). See in this volume, p. 11. See also Karg D. & Schopper F. (eds), *Horno: zur Kulturgeschichte eines Niederlausitzer Dorfes* (Wünsdorf: Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, 2006), p. 210.

52 Langenhan, ‘Vom Bauernhof zur LPG’, p. 375.

The Horno LPG was disbanded, and the land and livestock returned to their previous owners. All serious large scale agriculture in Horno ceased by the late 1990s, due to the encroachment of the brown coal field to supply the local Jänschwalde brown coal power plant.

The changes in Horno's situation, both before and after unification, are directly due to shifts in national policy. Under both the GDR and the FRG, Hornoers have had little influence on the formulation and delivery of such policy. Indeed, it is fair to say that in these economic changes, they have been powerless. First and foremost, this is because the GDR, from the top down, forced Hornoers to collectivise and invest money in the LPG. Second, this is on account of the rapid price rises after the unification of farming inputs (such as feed and fertilizer). And third, their lack of agency in these policies is exacerbated by the immediate competition from more efficient, established producers in western Germany.

My emphasis on these continuities is not to claim that there were no *differences* between the GDR and FRG arrangements. One clear difference is that the GDR had absolute control of the entire economic means of production. Under the FRG, market forces were allowed to operate (although regulation of this market remains in the hands of the central government). Similarly, developments in Horno after unification are entirely in line with the new national priorities of the unified Germany. Finally, the demise of the GDR also entailed the demise of the emphasis on the social side of agricultural production; the overriding priority was now the efficient cultivation of agricultural produce.

6.4.4 UNDEREMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

As I explained above, under the GDR there was officially no such thing as unemployment. However, there was, from an economic point of view, a large amount of 'underemployment' in both the GDR and across the eastern bloc. Although they were employed, many people either didn't have a lot of work to do,

or they were placed in jobs for which they were under- or over-qualified. Of course, under the social market system, unemployment plays a structural economic role. By contrast with the GDR, statistics on unemployment are now compiled, but only according to district boundaries, rather than on a village-by-village basis. So, while it is useful to look at some of these statistics to gain an insight into the economic situation after unification, I will draw on oral testimony and anecdotal evidence in this section.

Patterns of employment have changed considerably since unification, in line with a reorientation towards a service-based economy, and away from heavy industry. Since relocation in 2004, Horno is now within the district of the town of Forst. Forst, once known as the Manchester of the east due to its large number of textile works and cotton mills, was typical of many east German towns that witnessed the death of local industry and manufacturing after unification. The village of Horno has been as affected by this as much as any other eastern German village. The available evidence suggests that Sorbian patterns of employment are in no significant way different from German patterns of employment generally. Oral testimony suggests that the employment situation has improved in Horno since 2010, possibly due to the re-siting of the village near to the town of Forst, meaning that there is more passing trade.

In terms of brown coal mining, in Lusatia there were 79,016 people employed directly in both mining and power generation in 1989. In 2011, the number of people employed in the region by brown coal stood at only 8,126.⁵³ The rate of change was rapid: by 1995 only 19,248 people were employed in brown coal mining, and there were few jobs in the area available. This led to a rapid and prolonged rise in unemployment levels. For example, in the county of Spree-Neiße, which encompasses the village of Horno (both the old site and the new), the level of unemployment was 21.4 per cent at its peak in 1998. It gradually

53 Statistik der Kohlenwirtschaft e.V. Available at <http://www.kohlenstatistik.de/home.htm>. Accessed on 2 January 2013.

dropped to 16.1 per cent in 2007, and then to an all time post-unification low of 11.4 per cent in 2010. These figures are only slightly higher than for the state of Brandenburg as a whole, which had figures of 14.7 per cent in 2007, and 11.1 per cent in 2010.⁵⁴

A further consequence of the fall in employment opportunities in the region has been a sustained loss of working-age people. The population as of 2011 in the Spree-Neiße county is 124,662 – a level last seen in the county in 1900. It also represents a substantial decline since 1990, when the population stood at 157,358. This trend is expected to continue.⁵⁵

Since 2008, however, unemployment has consistently fallen across the whole of Germany, although the rate is still higher in the east than in the west. A further recent development has been the lifting of restrictions in 2011 on migration from the new member countries of the EU to the old fifteen members of the EU. The effects on Horno remain to be seen. Despite the fact that it is only three miles from the Polish border, it seems that there has been no significant movement of Polish people to the village.⁵⁶

6.5 THE CULTURAL SITUATION OF HORNO/ROGOW

It is harder to analyse the cultural situation of Horno, as there are no enforced collective activities, such as existed under the GDR. This is also in part a reflection of new patterns of employment, since large numbers of people no longer work at the same company or factory, which used to be a focus of social gathering. There are also generational shifts which also complicate the analysis of

54 Arbeitsmarktstatistik der Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA). Available at <http://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de>. Accessed on 2 January 2013.

55 Landesbetrieb für Datenverarbeitung und Statistik Brandenburg. Available at <http://www.statistik-berlin-brandenburg.de>. Accessed on 2 January 2013.

56 As my fieldwork was completed by this stage, I am unable to draw on interviews or personal experience to support this assertion. However, an assessment of German newspapers from the period will, I think, confirm it to be true.

the cultural situation; for example, as I noted in chapter five, there is a more globalised and outward-looking view amongst many of the younger generation, many of whom leave Horno upon reaching adulthood. They may move to Dresden, Berlin or even west Germany.

However, the traditional annual festivities have remained largely the same.⁵⁷ Easter is still widely celebrated, and the May tree is still put up in the village. Another Sorbian tradition, *Zapust*, which I explained in chapter five, is also celebrated in Horno in January and February, as it has been for hundreds of years. While the political and economic circumstances in Germany more widely have caused some cultural changes, the persistence of these traditions demonstrates that there are also many continuities. Moreover, the local branch of the Domowina was more active in Horno in terms of language courses per head, than anywhere else in Lower Lusatia.⁵⁸ This hints at the possible instrumentalisation of Sorbian language and identity for the purposes of preserving the village. This view that Sorbian identity was being instrumentalised was also put forward by Vattenfall during the public debate concerning the fate of Horno, as well as being a view that resonated with many local Germans.⁵⁹

First-hand experience and oral testimony also suggests that the economic value and prestige of Sorbian language to the average Hornoer remains low, as was also the case before unification.⁶⁰ German is in practice the only language heard out and about in the village. Although there is arguably greater freedom of expression in the FRG, there seems to be little inclination to use Sorbian language in everyday life. The explanations for this are not unique to Horno, in that it is seen

57 See in this volume, Appendix 1:

Sorbian Self-Representation to the Public, p. 265.

58 Elikowska-Winkler M., *15 Jahre Erwachsenenweiterbildung im Sorbischen (Wendischen)* (Cottbus, 2008), pp. 34, 36, 38.

59 Karg D. & Schopper F. (eds), *Horno: zur Kulturgeschichte eines Niederlausitzer Dorfes* (Wünsdorf: Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, 2006), pp. 400-401.

60 Oral testimony to the author in an informal interview with P.S. (10 August 2009); also in a formal interview with Berndt Siegert (12 August 2009). See in this volume, p. 11.

as a rural economically insignificant language, though it remains to be seen whether this will change with the opening of the border between Germany and Poland to economic migrants from 2012.

6.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have examined the case study of Horno, following the same thematic structure of the previous four chapters. First, rather than being a ‘turning point’, in the case of Horno, the practical consequences of continuity in energy policy from the GDR to the FRG far outweighed the political changes. Second, in terms of the passivity and agency of Hornoers, despite the legal and political changes post-unification, the degree of say that villagers had led to very similar results as would have emerged under the GDR. This was with the notable exceptions of the liberty to mount legal challenges against the government, and a fairer relocation strategy. Third, there has been an increase in the public visibility of Sorbian traditions, contrary to narratives of cultural declines noted in chapter one. However, patterns of migration and depopulation contribute to the low levels of Sorbian language usage.⁶¹

61 Langenhan D., ‘Vom Bauernhof zur LPG – Veränderungen in der Landwirtschaft nach 1945’ in Karg D. & Schopper F. (eds), *Horno: Zur Kulturgeschichte eines Niederlausitzer Dorfes* (Wünsdorf: Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, 2006), pp. 365-392.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION: TO WHAT EXTENT WAS GERMAN UNIFICATION A TURNING POINT FOR THE SORBIAN MINORITY?

7.1 SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT

In this conclusion, I will summarise the content and argument of the six previous chapters, and then reach a number of conclusions on the themes I identified in chapter one. I began the thesis by asking the question: to what extent was German unification (1989-90) a turning point for the Sorbian national minority? In chapter one, I reviewed existing scholarship on the topic of German unification and the Sorbs. I noted that there is a dominant narrative of German unification as a 'revolution'. My task in this thesis, I explained, is to examine how far the situation of the Sorbs before and after unification can be said to reflect the radical change of a revolution. I also identified a number of common themes in scholarship about the Sorbs: first, the theme of Sorbian nationality and national identity; second, the perceived endangerment of Sorbian language and culture; and third, the emphasis on urban history at the expense of the rural. In chapters two to four, I went about answering the core research question by addressing themes of Sorbian history, politics, economics, and culture in the context of German unification and the post-unification period.

In chapter two, I examined the history of the Sorbs, particularly the events of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I examined in particular the phenomenon of Germanisation in respect of the Sorbian minority, the early divisions between Lower and Upper Sorbs, their divergent histories based on changing political

boundaries and differing religious practices. In chapter three, I assessed the impact on the Sorbs of political, legal, and constitutional changes during and after the unification period in 1989-90. I discussed the debates within Sorbian organisations such as the Domowina and the Sorbian National Assembly. I analysed the amendments to state constitutions to include explicit protection for the Sorbian minority, as well as a specific Sorbian/Wendish Law in both Brandenburg and Saxony. I argued that, despite the existence of these legal and constitutional protections on paper, in practice these were at variance with the outcomes of post-unification policy. In chapter four, I investigated the effect of the economy on the Sorbian minority both before and after unification. I identified two areas which had the greatest impact on Sorbian life: first, the energy policies of the GDR and FRG, both of which rely heavily on brown coal mining, much of which is conducted in the Sorbian area of settlement. I argued that there are surprising similarities between the treatment of Sorbs under this policy, although there are also important innovations under the FRG. Second, I identified the realisation of agricultural policy under the GDR and FRG, arguing that under both governments the Sorbs had little say in the reforms of the agricultural sector. In chapter five, I examined in depth the effects of German unification on Sorbian cultural life, exploring themes of media, education, folk culture, youth culture, museums, as well as the major Sorbian cultural organisations, events, and institutions.

Finally, in chapter six, I presented a case study of Horno, a village which was under the threat of destruction for several decades, and which was finally destroyed and relocated in 2004 under the FRG. This case study was based on extensive primary research in the form of interviews and fieldwork, and also brought a number of little-known German publications related to Horno to an English-language audience. I argued that the case of Horno is an important example of the experience of Sorbs in their relationship with both the successive German governments, and German society at large, in that residents of Horno had

little say in the formulation of policies to which they were subject under both the GDR and the FRG.

7.2 REMARKS ON THE WENDS AND THE *WENDE*

One of the greatest problems faced by the Sorbian community in the twenty-first century is the declining use of the language itself as well as the continued low social prestige of Sorbian language and culture within society. As I noted in chapters one and four in particular, this is often lamented by many of the Sorbian elite. It is often cited as a reason for greater financial support from the German government. Furthermore, internal debates amongst the elite themselves between the various state funded Sorbian bodies regarding the allocation of financial resources, is clearly not something that inspires young Sorbs. Indeed, there seems to be a strong disincentive for young people to practise the Sorbian language in public, not only because of their presence in the midst of a German-speaking majority, but also out of a lack of identification with the traditionalist politics of major Sorbian institutions, some of which are also still staffed by figures who spent most of their lives under the GDR, and in some cases were sympathetic to the regime.

A younger generation which knows little of the system of the GDR, and which has many more opportunities to travel both within and beyond Germany, inevitably has a different perspective on what Sorbian culture could and should be. The elite's continued emphasis on a static view of Sorbian language and culture, including a preoccupation with 'traditional' folk costumes and customs, and with the literary form of the Sorbian language over the modern vernacular serves only to perpetuate or increase the intergenerational divide. The focus of some of the Sorbian elite on financial assistance from the government may also crowd out sponsorship and investment initiatives from non-government bodies, and may also discourage independent fundraising initiatives by ordinary Sorbs.

Furthermore, there are plenty of authentically Sorbian cultural activities which take full advantage of modern technology: for example, Sorbian Wikipedia (Upper and Lower), Sorbian Firefox, the Sorbian-German dictionary mobile phone application, which have been produced spontaneously and voluntarily by young, culturally-engaged and linguistically aware Sorbs without any official government or institutional co-ordination amongst the Sorbian elite. This engagement with global cultural media, rather than simply with the traditional activities, are perhaps what will help to bring Sorbian language and culture to a position where it will not simply survive, but also thrive.

Furthermore, the relative stability of the official Sorbian structures may be counterproductive, in that, on the basis of the evidence presented in this thesis, established institutions seem to inhibit changes which are widely acknowledged as being necessary. The fear that institutional reform will inevitably lead to loss and decline may, paradoxically, be what is holding back the flourishing of Sorbian language and culture across the generations.

Another striking aspect of the research presented in this thesis is the gap between official policy and what takes place in practice. This dissonance between rhetoric and reality manifests itself both at the German national level, where constitutional and legal protections have frequently conflicted with energy policy. This is illustrated no better than in the case study of Horno presented in chapter six.

7.3 THE SURPRISING CONTINUITIES FROM GDR TO FRG

The collapse of the GDR and the unification of Germany came as a surprise to many – both to those living on either side of the inner-German border, and to many experts, academics, and onlookers. Throughout the course of the thesis I have presented evidence of the continuities and changes between the GDR and FRG administrations. On the balance of the evidence I have seen, it is clear to me that, at least in the case of the Sorbs, the description of German unification as a

‘revolution’, ‘*Wende*’, or ‘turning-point’ is at odds with the striking, and often negative, aspects of political and economic continuity.

In the realm of law, for example, I showed that the changes made to the state constitutions of Brandenburg and Saxony were still insufficient to prevent the destruction of the village of Horno. Other areas in which this is evident, include the continued closure of Sorbian language schools in Saxony under the FRG. This and similar areas would be fruitful areas of further research. I also showed that, despite the increasing focus of German government funding on renewable energy sources, brown coal mining persists and remains the single largest source of electricity generation in the FRG. The means of brown coal extraction are, incontrovertibly, to the disproportionate detriment of the Sorbian national minority.

A question which I have not addressed is: why do so many historians adopt wholeheartedly, and relatively uncritically, the narratives of ‘revolution’, ‘*Wende*’, or ‘turning-point’? This topic itself merits much further research than has been practicable during the course of this project. I suggest that other fruitful avenues of research will surely include an in-depth inquiry into the putative Sorbian national identity, on which topic it has been possible for this thesis only to touch. The question of whether or not Sorbian identity amounts to a ‘national identity’, which I raised in chapter one, must, I think, remain open. I choose to reach no conclusion on this issue, and I wonder whether examining Sorbian identity through the prism of nationality and national identity is the most appropriate or effective route for the scholar to discover what it is to be Sorbian in the twenty-first century. In fact, based on the evidence I have presented here, it would perhaps in future be more fruitful to examine the plurality of Sorbian identities, especially as some of the intra-Sorbian differences are at least as significant as those between Sorbs and Germans.

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APPENDIX 1:

SORBIAN SELF-REPRESENTATION TO THE PUBLIC



im Haus der Sorben in der zweisprachigen Stadt Bautzen
w Serbskim domje w dwurěčnym měście Budyšinje



Wendisches Haus Cottbus

Serbski dom Chóšebuz

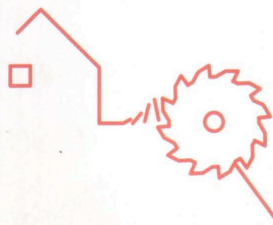




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Dolnoserbske nałogi

**Bräuche der Sorben/Wenden
in der Niederlausitz**



**Ostern
bei den Sorben
Jutry w Serbach**

KULTURELLE BESONDERHEITEN

Sorbische Impressionen

Serbske impresije



Die Lausitzer Besonderheiten entdecken –
eine Reise zu den Sorben/Wenden

 LAUSITZER
MUSEENLAND
ŁUŻYSKA MUZEJOWA KRAJINA

DIE SÜDTOUR



**Sorbian Customs
and Traditions
in the Course of the Year**

Jutry w Serbach Ostern bei den Sorben



Křižerjo
Das Osterreiten

SERBSKI MUZEJ
SORBISCHES MUSEUM

8.3.–26.4.2009

**„Eine wendische
Urgroßmutter
hat doch eigentlich
jeder bodenständige
Brandenburger.“**

(Ministerpräsident Dr. Manfred Stolpe 1994 zur Eröffnung
des Wendischen Museums in Cottbus/Chóšebuz)



Bild: H. G. Schmitt. Originaldruck von H. G. Schmitt. (d. H.)

**Wir laden Sie ein
ins
Wendische Museum
Serbski muzej**

Domowina



**Regionalverband
Niederlausitz e.V.
župa Dolna Łužyca z.t.**



*Serby – Serbja
Sorben / Wenden*



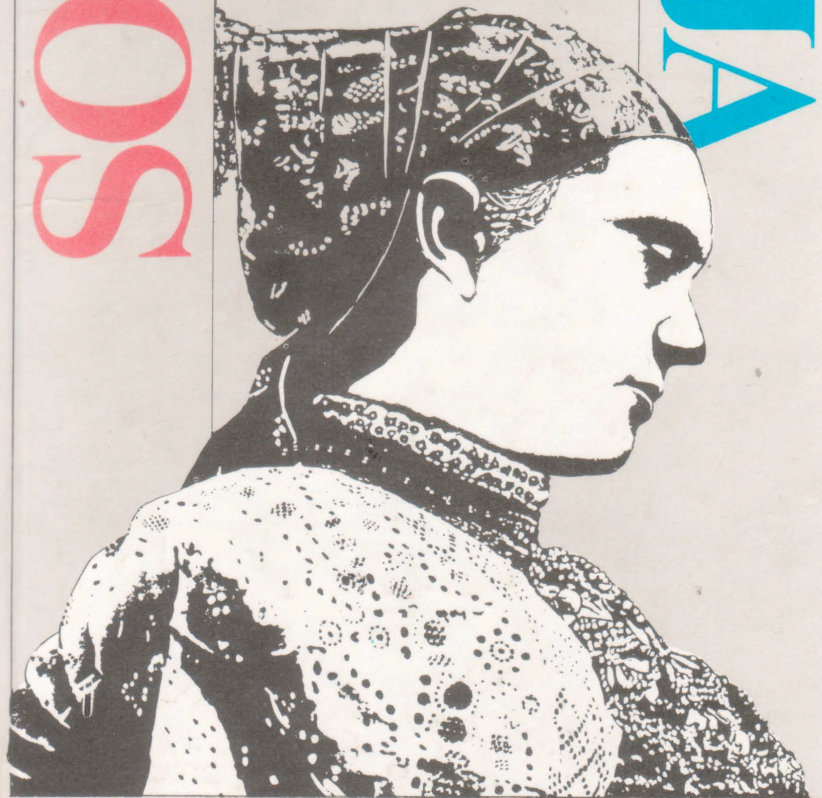
DIE SORBEN
IN DER NIEDERLAUSITZ

SERBY
W DOLNEJ ŁUŻYCY

SORBEN

Ein
KLEINES
Lexikon

SERBIA





Die Sorben in der Lausitz

Domowina-Verlag



DIE SORBEN
IN DEUTSCHLAND

SE
ER
BL
JA

APPENDIX 2:
SORBIAN DVDS





APPENDIX 3:

SORBIAN SHOPPING BAG WITH SORBIAN PROVERBS

Přisłowa – Sorbische Sprichwörter
slepjanska narěč / Schleifer Dialekt

Mjelc guba! Pón džož čece luba!
Wenn du den Mund hältst, dann bist du immer lieb!
Te gólce su kaž te wiršniny, gdyž kwěće, woni lubja a lubja; gdyž což je zněc žene nejsu!
Die Jungen sind wie Kirschblüme wenn sie blühen, sie lieben und schwärmen; aber wenn du sie ernten willst, sind keine mehr da.

gornoserbski / obersorbisch

Hdyž so psy kusaja, wjelkam so spodoba.
Wenn sich die Hunde beißen, freuen sich die Wölfe.

Diěši džeń a krótša nic.
Je länger der Tag, je kürzer der Faden.

Časnik zastanje, ale čas nic.
Die Uhr bleibt stehen, aber die Zeit nicht.


Rjeńša je korčmarka, lěpše je piwko.
Je schöner die Wirtin, desto besser das Bier.

Tón swět so džiwnje wobroća, hdyž žona muža w mocy ma.
Die Welt dreht sich merkwürdig, wenn die Frau den Mann in der Macht hat.

Mihel najbóle mača.
Niesel näßt am meisten.

Wot polubjenja do daća je dołha noha.
Vom Versprechen zum Geben ist ein langer Weg.

Dompuć je mudriši hač wonpuć.
Der Heimweg ist klüger als der Hinweg.

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dolnosorbiski/niedersorbisch

Kužda koza chwali swoju brozdu.
Jede Ziege lobt ihren Bart.

Ten jo tak pobožny ako kot w twarozje.
Er ist so fromm wie der Kater im Quark.

Z małeju łžycu dlej słoži.

Mit einem kleinen Löffel schmeckt es besser.

Płaś – wopłaś.
Wie du mir, so ich dir.

Stare baby a pratyje su jadnake.
Alte Weiber und Kalender sind gleich.

Zašyž žěrki, ga njezmějoš žěry.

Nähe die kleinen Löcher zu, dann wirst du keine großen haben.

Chtož w Blotach gnězdo ma, daš tam mlode wuměwa.

Wer im Spreewald sein Nest hat, möge auch dort Junge haben.

Žowćow a koni njedejš po jšme kupowaś.

Druga wjas – drugi pjas.
Ein anderes Dorf – ein anderer Hund.



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Chwal cuzbu a lagni doma.
Lobe die Fremde und liege zu Hause.