

Maria Mirtschin: Images of Sorbs as Targets of German-Nationalist Propaganda

Two wall paintings in the school of the housing estate for the Erika mine are part of the decoration of the public buildings there. They portray the taking-over of the heathland by industrialization as an act of German cultural sabotage in the tradition of early Christianization. This theme is based on the alleged discovery of chronicles from the sixteenth century, which turned out to be fakes. In the tympanum of the church which was consecrated in 1939 a Sorbian woman is kneeling, dressed in folk costume. Despite the ban on Sorbian activities in public the Sorbian way of life had a presence in Lusatia, which had to be acknowledged.

Two wall paintings for the Olympic Village in Berlin by the painter, Gerhard Keil, which portrayed Sorbian churchgoers, caused controversy in 1936. The Ministry of Propaganda demanded the omission of everything, which indicated “the existence of a particular Wendish people in the Reich.” This edict was adhered to by the removal of the banners; the figures remained. This inconsistency expressed the ambivalent attitude of the authorities towards the Sorbs. The folk costumes in any case fitted in with the way in which the Nazis glorified the idea of the homeland.

Viktor Velek: Historical Recordings of the Sorbian Language and Music from the Years 1907–1938

In this study all the accessible information about acoustic recordings in the Sorbian language (spoken and sung), or about Sorbian music, from the period between 1907 and 1938 is assembled. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the first example, interpreters, contents, external circumstances, as well as the importance of these initiatives for the Sorbian cultural heritage, are described again. Also, those recordings which have been lost are noted.

The collection of music cylinders and records, which the company Favorite produced in 1907 in collaboration with the Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv, represents the first phonographic recording. In 1928 songs by the “Girls’ Choir from Guhrow in the Spreewald” were made into a record; later several Sorbian records were issued in the Czechoslovak Republic. The efforts in Berlin - amongst others by the Prussian State Library - ended in 1934. The last, illegal, recording of four folksongs occurred in 1938, made by the opera singer, Ruth Krawcec-Raupp, accompanied by her father on the piano, the composer Bjarnat Krawc-Schneider.

Marén Schorch: The Easter Procession of the Sorbs in Upper Lusatia. Sociological Reflexions

Rituals are omnipresent in life, especially in the context of religion. Their function on the one hand (amongst others) is to mark changes in individual and family life cycle transitions (e.g. communion or marriage). On the other hand, they facilitate the transmission of values and beliefs, emotions etc., an image of continuity of a certain community through time and socio-economical changes. They especially help communities to assure themselves of their collective identity – also by implicitly defining the borders to others, non-members.

The ethnic minority of the Sorbs in south-eastern Germany is one example of such a collective identity. The Catholic Sorbs in Saxony, in particular, are faced with a double

minority situation: As an autochthonous minority they cannot refer to a nation state (in contrast to national minorities such as Turkish migrants), but live in an enclave in a more or less German and Protestant (or even atheist) environment. This article focuses on that special constellation by analysing one of the major religious rituals of the Catholic Sorbs: the Easter procession in Upper Lusatia. Annually, on Easter Sunday, nine processions of approximately 1,700 smartly dressed male Sorbs on horses celebrate a ritual similar to a full-time church service, announcing the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But most remarkably, lay groups are the organizers and protagonists of the procession, not the Church (even if church services provide the structure for the ritual). This analysis describes the ritual in detail and discusses its meaning for the Sorbian community. The continuity of the procession and its procedures over several centuries symbolize one central characteristic of the ritual (here described as a traditional anchor within a complex, globalized world). This is underlined by the fact that there is a recognisable increase in the number of participants (mainly young Sorbs) over the last two decades. Therefore, the article closes with a discussion about re-ethnicity in the context of the Easter procession of the Sorbs.

Elizabeth Spreng: Socialist Storms. Ideological Struggles in Sorbian Texts

Residing in their territorial homeland in post-socialist Eastern Germany, Sorbs have occupied subordinated positions in the shifting socio-political contexts. Through a textual analysis of socialist sources, I will demonstrate how Sorbian authors have constructed ideological frameworks according to the demands of the moment. In this article, I focus on the socialist-era national narrative that championed Sorbian language and culture, while recounting socio-political adversities. Sorbs, as bilingual socialist citizens of the German Democratic Republic, experienced multi-faceted dilemmas. During socialism (1945–1989) Marxist policies supported the Sorbian language and yet restricted linguistic practices. Adjusting to the inconsistent policies, socialist authors narrated ideological struggles that resonate with current conditions for Sorbs in the European Union.

Ludwig Elle: “Comrades are required to review attitudes which regard the language as the main problem.” The Sorbian Language as a Political Issue for the Domowina in the GDR

Problems relating to the maintenance and use of the Sorbian language always played a prominent role in the work of the Domowina. On the one hand the Sorbian language was regarded as an essential element in Sorbian identity, but on the other hand the attempts by the Domowina as an organization to support the language were subordinated to the political and ideological constraints imposed by SED policy. The languages policy of the Domowina described in this piece is divided into three phases. Up to the middle of the 1950s the dominant positions were those which interpreted issues of language as the basic problem of the nationalities policy (“Lusatia will become bilingual”). Up to the end of the 1960s it was more the case that problems relating to the Sorbian language were downplayed. From the 1970s the leadership of the Domowina gave greater attention to the interests of the Sorbian language again in view of the decline in the everyday use of the language in both parts of Lusatia, which was becoming evermore apparent.

Heinz Schuster-Šewc: The Place Names of Lusatia – Notes on the Present State of Research

The complete source material from scientific analyses of place names is now available thanks to the intensive research into place names conducted in Leipzig and Berlin since the 1950s. The Sorb, Ernst Mucke-Muka, had already created important premises for their interpretation. In 1973 the popular science work of Jan Meschgang, “The Place Names of Upper Lusatia”, appeared after his death, and was followed in 1975 by “The Place Names of Lower Lusatia” by Ernst Eichler, which had similar goals, and in 1993 by “The Place Name Book of Lower Lusatia” by Siegfried Körner. Building on the above works Walter Wenzel followed with two further publications: “The Lower Lusatian Book of Place Names” (2006) and “The Upper Lusatian Book of Place Names” (2008). This present piece undertakes above all a critical analysis of the two last publications and suggests a number of its own different interpretations of names.

Gunter Schaarschmidt: Code-switching in Sorbian and Doukhobor-Russian as a Possible Intermediate Level in the Preservation and Revitalization of Minority Languages in the EU and Canada

There is no agreement among sociolinguists and language planners concerning the scope of maintenance/revitalization efforts for minority languages. Specifically, there is a view that in the absence of a fully bilingual situation, certain linguistic domains (or levels) may need to be emphasized at the expense of others. Concentrating on Sorbian in Germany and Doukhobor Russian in Canada, it can be shown that while a fully developed level of LSP (“language for specific purposes”) is available for both language groups, a large percentage of speakers cite the lack of LSP terms for not using the language in business establishments (Sorbian) or ritual ceremonies (Doukhobor Russian). For this reason, it is perhaps necessary to aim for a “reconfigured” LSP, viz., a kind of “planned” code-switching within that level that will not necessitate the exclusive use of the LSP of the dominant language.

Jaroslawa Iwczenko: A Gentleman in a Green Costume. The Devil in Sorbian Paroemiology and Phraseology

This article represents an attempt to restore the image of the Devil in Sorbian phraseology and paroemiology. Based on cognitive linguistics and an ethnolinguistic approach as one of its branches in particular, the author creates a complex portrait of the mythological creature by comparing language information with noted beliefs, stories and other texts, as well as with common Slav mythology. The portrait is formed by three groups of typical motifs, which are “the Anthropomorphic Devil”, “the Devil representing the Other World” and “the Devil in the Christian context”. As a result of the contamination of two traditions – Christian and pagan, which is typical for folk mythology in Slav cultures, some of the motifs presented are hard to define clearly. The background of the “double-group” motifs is also explained. A cognitive definition of the Devil is suggested to summarize the description and his place in the Slav system of beliefs.