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BASIC CONCEPTS

The concept of *cultural liquidation*, developed by K. Buchanan (1978), is set in a wider theoretical context. The concept of *assimilation* is one that has widely been applied, even though rarely defined, especially in geographical literature. Generally, however, it can be recognised as a special case of the process of *social adaptation*. Membership in specific social groups has widely been accepted as an indication of social adaptation. The notion of assimilation suggests, in turn, that the adjustment of a minority group to the cultural pattern of the majority is considered. Assimilation of immigrant groups has especially been stressed, particularly of those ethnically peculiar (Kennedy, 1943; Price, Zubrzycki, 1962; Clarke, 1971; Peach, 1980).

Assimilation is opposite to *social integration*, which implies a mutual adjustment of the minority and the majority in cultural, social, political or socio-spatial contexts. As a result, a new cultural pattern can be formed that includes some elements of both minority and majority cultural patterns (Rykiel, 2002). The practice of assimilation, on the contrary, has been based on the assumption that it is advantageous for the minority to adapt to the majority's more satisfying, prosperous and „civilised" way of life. The majority, identified with the dominant ethno-class, believes therefore the dominant culture should not be modified by any aspect of minority culture. The merging of the minority to the majority is thus seen as inevitable and desirable in the long term, and the minority „problem" should be solved by hastening the process (Rowley, 1962).

Cultural liquidation is, however, something more than assimilation (Buchanan, 1978) because the former assumes some kind of intentional action, state compulsion or symbolic, if not physical, violence against a given minority or group (Watters, 1998), on the one hand, and visible success of this process (Peet, 1977), on the other. Those subjected to cultural liquidation are on the verge of extinction and few non-material products of their culture are about to survive.

Paradoxically, however, cultural liquidation should be considered in the context of *long duration* (Braudel, 1969) in which physical violence, state compulsion and assimilatory instruments could be used as defensive means of the majority, dominant group or ethno-class while subtle means are applied when the discriminated are no longer politically, socially or numerically powerful enough to oppose the domination of the majority. Moreover, minorities are legally protected provided, however, that they have lost their abilities to challenge the majority or even, more obviously, their chances to survive.

The aim of this paper is to present the mechanisms for the cultural liquidation of Lusatian Sorbs and the paradoxes of the process which stem from a dialectic of violent and subtle means of assimilation.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Fifteen centuries ago what is now eastern Germany was settled by Western Slavic tribes. The southern half of the area was populated by a group of tribes who referred to themselves as Serbs while was named Sorbs in Latin. From times of Charlemagne the western limit of the area was defined as limes sorabicus, which was a line of settlements established for trade with Slavs rather than the western limit of the Slavic-speaking area.

In 937, the king Otto the Great of Germany, then the emperor of Rome, established the Eastern March, with its centre and diocese in Magdeburg, to conquest Western Slavs. Granted to margrave Gero, the march expanded considerably to the east to reach the Polish border in 963. In 966 the march was divided in six, of which two, i.e. the Lusatian March in the north-east and the March of Meissen in the south-east of the area in question, are of interest for this paper. Importantly, the two gave rise to the lordships of Lusatia and Milsko, respectively, in which Lusatian Sorbian liegemen played some role for centuries. It was therefore only the two lordships that provided the frameworks in which the Sorbian Lusatian nationality has developed.

Since the late 13th century the name of Lusatia has come to apply to the whole area in question. The original Lusatian March has been referred to as Lower Lusatia since then and original Milsko as Upper Lusatia, referring to the course of the Spree river. In Germany, opposite to the Czech and Polish tradition, Lusatia has been treated as a merely ethnic specific Sorbian speaking area

that need not correspond to either of the territorial units of Brandenburg and Saxony that had developed in the meantime.

Apart from minor and temporal territorial changes, Lusatia, notwithstanding her formal appurtenance, was *de facto* ruled by Saxony till the Congress of Vienna of 1815. Interestingly, until 1806, when Saxony was proclaimed a kingdom, the Saxon electors used the outdated title of dukes of Saxony, Meissen and Lusatia (Davies 1982). On the Congress, it was decided that Lower and a considerable part of Upper Lusatia would be ceded to Prussia while another part of Upper Lusatia would be kept by Saxony. Prussia joined Lower Lusatia to the province of Brandenburg and three Upper Lusatian counties to the province of Silesia in 1815 to which another one was added in 1825. On the regional level, both Prussia-held parts of Lusatia were governed from external centres. Only the Saxony-held part of Upper Lusatia was governed regionally from an internal centre, Budyšin/Bautzen.

THE ERA OF NATIONALISMS

The development of modern national movements in nineteenth-century Europe, referred to as the national revival or, more precisely, nation creating processes, were underlain by liberal democratic movements. In Lusatia the institutional dimension of this process embraced the codification of the literary language and the foundation of national organisations, including the socio-cultural *Maćica Serbska* (the Serbian Queen) of 1847 and socio-political *Domowina* (the Homeland).

In this context a sharp contrast between Saxon and Prussian politics towards Lusatia could, however, be seen. In Prussia, Lower Lusatian areas, even though located only 70 km south-east from Berlin, were basically peripheral, provincial, depressed, experienced by long lasting enslavement and poverty (Clemens 1998), mostly peasants', traditional and thinly populated but, on the other hand, mostly Lutheran and thus not dangerous for the Prussian *raîson d'etat*, based on Protestant values. Dominated economically by undersized local gentry (*Junker*) and less developed towns, the area was subjected to a weak central control and left to its highly autochthonic development (Klich, 2004). Upper Lusatian areas formed merely a minor annex of the Prussia-held Lusatia. In this context Sorbs, and Lusatia in general, were marginalized in Prussia (Leszczyński, 1991/2) as a secondary country (*Nebenland* – Lehmann 1963), with the Sorbian minority constituting only one fifth per cent (0.2%) of Prussia's population in 1900 (Rykiel, 1971).

In Saxony, on the contrary, Upper Lusatia was denser populated, more highly urbanised and industrialised, and richer. It also represented a higher cultural position and stronger political power (Blaschke 2003). The latter fact can be explained by three main factors. First, the Lusatian speaking areas were located

only 20 km east from Saxony's capital city, Dresden. Secondly, the Upper Lusatian town of Budyšin/Bautzen was a regional centre itself. Thirdly, in the Kingdom of Saxony, which had a Lutheran majority but was ruled by the dynasty of the Wettins who converted to Catholicism in 1699, a Catholic majority among Lusatian Sorbs must have met an extensive tolerance, if not sympathy, of the Crown, because they legitimised the conversion.

In this context the *Maćica Serbska* demanded in 1848 to recognize Sorbian as the other official language of the kingdom. Even though unsuccessful, this resulted in recognition of the interests of Lusatian Sorbs in Saxony. Young Saxon princes were taught Lusatian to be able to speak to their subjects in their own language (Leszczyński, 1991/2). This explains why the cultural centre of Lusatia shifted to Saxony-held Upper Lusatia in the 19th century. In Lower Lusatia, the branch of the *Maćica Serbska* was founded in Chośebuz/Cottbus only a half century later, i.e. in 1889.

The *Domowina*, founded in Budyšin/Bautzen in 1912, was aimed at the representation of the socio-political Sorbian interests, understood in conservative and nationalist terms. It was paralleled by other nationalisms in Europe, including the German nationalism. The latter was not only a counter-balance but rather a threat for the very existence of the Sorbian nationality. Supported by its numerical force and the state apparatus of united Germany, including the scholar compulsion from 1872, with education provided merely in German, the objective process of Germanisation was set in motion that only formally might be categorised as voluntary. Actually, Lusatia was subjected to a ruthless Germanisation, and severe economic restrictions were placed on Sorbs (Klich, 2004).

The main lingual problem was that German and Sorbian were far from having an equal status. Functionally therefore, even though not linguistically, Sorbian worked as a dialect, whose usefulness in public life was rather limited. Being one part of the ethnic heritage, it was also a handicap in public career. Since the modernisation was parallel to Germanisation, the assimilation to German culture can only be avoided at the price of the isolation from any social innovations, including civilisation progress (Mrozek, 1964). In this context the expansion of Germanhood was obvious. A slow but permanent shift of the lingual border eastwards and, especially, a growing German majority, especially in towns, were the territorial manifestations of this development. The western part of Lower Lusatia was completely Germanised in the 19th century (Klich, 2004).

THE SIZE OF THE SORBIAN COMMUNITY

The size of any national or ethnic group is equivocal as it strongly depends on criteria applied. In Europe, two basic criteria were traditionally used, i.e. the

declared ethnic/national feelings or language used. In the latter case, however, the distinction between mother tongue, every-day language and lingual competence is being made. Additionally, denomination is being applied as an indicator of ethnicity (Wasilewski, 1933). Moreover, based on statistical or other official sources, ethnic data are often intentionally or unintentionally biased.

Almost 117,000 native speakers of Lusatian were indicated in Germany in 1900 (Wasilewski 1933). This number was reduced to less than 73,000 in 1925 (Rykiel, 1971) while the total number of Sorbs, classified on the base of other than purely lingual criteria, was estimated for ca. 160,000 in that time (Wasilewski, 1933).

Epistemological atomism is a basic shortcoming of quantitative approaches to ethnic matters. It is assumed that the national or ethnic identity is a question of affiliation, which is unequivocal. In fact, however, it is more a question of the participation in the respective culture. As suggested elsewhere (Latoszek, 1990), the size of ethnic minorities should be based on a syndrome of *ethno-cultural characteristics rather than on a single characteristic*. If so, the ethnic identity need not be unequivocal. Rather contrary, it is possible to be involved in two alternative ethnic cultures. In this context, the bilingual category, applied to in German censuses (cf. *Statistisches Handbuch*, 1928), apart from its political intention, seems to provide some insight in the process of assimilation. If so, the given ethnicity is gradable between the two extremes. As it was indicated elsewhere (Rykiel, 1988), more than two classes of individuals could be identified in ethnic borderlands. In the Sorbian-German borderland the following classes could be identified (Rykiel, 2004):

1) people with developed Sorbian national feelings manifested in every-day life;
2) those conscious of their Sorbianhood but anxious about its manifestation in times of oppression, especially the Nazi period;
3) those who constituted the most numerous and typical bilingual transitory stratum, using Sorbian at home and German in official situations; feeling their separateness applying to ethnicity or regional attachment rather than nationality;
4) local individuals of a Slavic stock able to speak Sorbian if necessary but using German in every-day life (*deutsche Umgangssprache*);
5) Germanised individuals of the local stock, able to understand Sorbian;
6) local Germans able to understand some Sorbian;
7) immigrant Germans with no relationships with Sorbianhood.

Taken the number of 160,000 of Sorbs as indicated in 1926-27, the total number of ca. 120,000 in 1961 (*Atlas Narodov Mira, 1964*) would illustrate the progress of the cultural liquidation of the Sorbian ethnic group in the Nazi period. The self-estimated 60,000 Sorbs in 2000 A.D. can, on the contrary, illustrate this process in the German Democratic Republic.

THE FAILURE OF THE SORBIAN NATIONHOOD

The Versailles system after the First World War, declared to be based on the national self-determination principle in Central and Eastern Europe. In this context, the Sorbian Lusatian National Committee was established in 1918 that strived for independence, or at least autonomy, for Lusatia during the Versailles peace conference. Because of the lack of any considerable international support the measures failed, however. The national self-determination principle appeared not to apply to the weak (Davies, 1981).

Because of the separatist tendencies revealed in Lusatia, the situation of the country and the Sorbian nationality was not easy during the Weimar Republic and even dramatic during the Nazi regime. Sorbs were given special attention of security services (Meškank, 1991/2) as potentially disloyal. All Sorbian organisations were dissolved in 1937 and their members persecuted. Lusatian-language books were burnt publicly if not bought out by Polish intellectuals (Meškank, 1991/2). What Lusatian Sorbs could achieve in the Third Reich was the status of a folk group, with their dialect spoken at home, within the German nation.

After the Second World War the Lusatian question arrived again in the new geopolitical context. From the Sorbian point of view the new situation seemed to give a better chance for national autonomy as it was in Versailles. Anti-German separatism, based on pan-Slavic euphoria, was vivid in the 1945-47 period (Meškank, 1991/2). This might find four potential resolutions: independence, joining Czechoslovakia, joining Poland or obtaining a territorial autonomy within Germany. For geopolitical reasons, discussed elsewhere (Rykiel, 2004), no of the resolutions was able to be arrived at. The Lusatian autonomy was simply not needed to any of the interested states: Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia or the USSR. The new established German Democratic Republic took, of the Soviet will, the responsibility for Lusatia and the national development of the Sorbs. The reason was that, in the expected military confrontation with the West, the Soviet Union needed the support of East German communists rather than the establishing of a new territorial entity, dominated not only by separatism but also by anticommunism (Leszczyński, 1991/2).

As a result of the liquidation of the Prussian state, federal states (*Länder*) were introduced as regional units. This involved changes in interregional boundaries in this way that Upper Lusatia was united within Saxony and Lower Lusatia was part of *Land* Brandenburg. No attempt was made to establish *Land Lausitz (Lusatia)* as a new territorial unit in the Soviet occupation zone in Germany.

THE CULTURAL LIQUIDATION OF LUSATIA

The revival of the cultural, social and political life in Lusatia after the Second World War should be analysed in the context of the Soviet occupation zone in Germany, to which the country happened to be included. The *Domowina* was restored in 1945. Its separatism and, especially, anticommunism were a reaction for the behaviour of the Soviet occupation army and social reforms introduced by the regional communist governments of Saxony and Brandenburg, which included the collectivisation in agriculture and anticlerical policy. The collectivisation resulted in massive rural-to-urban migration of young people. The migration must have explicitly influenced the ethnic structure since the rural areas as the origin were Sorbian and urban areas as the destination were German.

These developments were more severe in Lower than Upper Lusatia. As socially more traditional agrarian community, Lower Lusatia was more acutely experienced by the collectivisation and hardly able to provide local leftist activists, not only of the Sorbian but even German origin. The Communist activists were therefore recruited from among the in-migrants to the region that, outside the Berlin agglomeration, had traditionally Christian Democratic sympathies. Being few and mostly neophyte, the Communist activists were more open for the primitive Stalinist version of their ideology and practice.

Upper Lusatia, especially that part which had belonged to Saxony before, was lucky to be more highly industrialised since the 19th century and thus to have grounded its own Social-Democratic tradition. The agrarian question was milder and the leftist activists did not need to be recruited from among in-migrants because they were on the spot (Blaschke, 2003), besides much more open-minded, at least till 1949.

Interestingly, the restitution of the *Maćica Serbska*, as an independent cultural institution and the lair of the Sorbian national identity, was not allowed during the whole GDR period and happened only in 1990, after the re-unification of Germany (Leszczyński, 1991/2). This was an open signal that the explicit Stalinist national policy would be implemented. Instead, the Sorbian Lusatian Scientific Institute was founded in Budyšin/Bautzen in 1946, and the Department of Sorabistics in the Carl Marx University in Leipzig/Lipsk in 1952. The cultural autonomy for the Sorbs was granted in Saxony in 1948 and in Brandenburg in 1950.

The foundation of the scientific institutions was based on the assumption they would function within the framework of the political recommendations of the communist party (*SED*). The Stalinist policy of the party, and then the GDR state, concerning the national questions was based on assimilation, referred to as the "rapprochement between nationalities" (Schiller, 1982).

After the foundation of the German Democratic Republic in 1949, a new territorial reform was made, intended for the new state. Fourteen districts (*Bezirke*) plus East Berlin were introduced instead of five federal states (*Länder*). The districts, as units of the centralist state, were functional regions, delineated on the spatial accessibility principle. The Lusatian area was included in two districts, i.e. Cottbus and Dresden. The former boundary between Saxony and Brandenburg disappeared within the *Bezirk Cottbus*, to which two northernmost Upper Lusatian counties were amalgamated.

The traditional Sorbian areas covered more than a half of either district. However the traditional regional centre of Upper Lusatia, Budyšin/Bautzen, was not designated as a district centre while the centre of Lower Lusatia, Chośebuz/Cottbus, got a new administrative function. Within the cultural autonomy of the Sorbs, bilingual counties were defined in which bilingual local names of localities and streets were intended. Thirteen bilingual counties were defined (*Atlas zur Geschichte*, 1975) while five other Lusatian counties (*Historia Polski*, 1963) were defined as monolingual German. A general result of this development is that, intentionally or not, Chośebuz/Cottbus has grown as the main administrative centre of the centralist GDR state in Lusatia while the Sorbian cultural centre of Budyšin/Bautzen was marginalized.

The new administrative position of Chośebuz/Cottbus had certain historical, political, symbolic and economic implications. From the historical point of view it was important that the town was, with its immediate umland, a Brandenburgian/Prussian exclave on the Saxon territory for three and half centuries between 1462 and 1807. As such, it was a local centre of Prussian political system in the area whose unity and political freedom were always related with Saxony. The location of the administrative centre of a considerable Lusatian area in Chośebuz/Cottbus could therefore be interpreted as an explicit political signal of the ethnic policy of the GDR, the state that, for both geographical and ideological reasons, seemed to follow the Prussian rather than Saxon traditions.

For the logic of the centralist state, the location of administrative functions in Chośebuz/Cottbus seemed, however, more a technical than political question. The very structure of the settlement system predestined this place as one that had hardly any alternative. Other potential places were either too small, located eccentrically to their potential hinterlands or too close to other regional centres to be considered. In the design of the territorial structure of the GDR, the local Sorbs seemed to be intentionally ignored rather than persecuted by the location of the new administrative centre. The same can be said about the southern boundary of the *Bezirk Cottbus*, which was delineated so as to include all Lusatian lignite mines in the district (Klich, 2004). Symbolically, however, it was important that this *Bezirk* was a focal point for the Soviet and East German military forces (Klich, 2004).

From the socio-economic point of view the location of administrative func-
tions was, however, and important factor of urban growth under socialism (Ry-
kiel, Jażdżewska, 2002). This provided a stable urban growth while industry
was responsible for rapid growth (Grimm, 1984). A synergy of the two must
have produced enormous results.

It is in this context that large-scale industrialisation of Lower Lusatia sho-
uld be analysed. The lack of balance in energy supply in the autarkic socialist
economy was the departure point. In its tight boundaries, the GDR was separa-
ted from the pre-war sources of supply in coal in the Ruhr area, and Lower and
Upper Silesia. This was responsible for the exploitation of the local deposits of
energy resources, to which only lignite could be included. The extensive reso-
urces were located and exploited in the industrial district around Leipzig and
Halle. Other deposits of lignite happened, however, to be found in Lower Lusa-
tia. Importantly, apart from being as large and necessary as the former, it appe-
ared to be useful politically and ideologically.

The fact was that hardly any considerable heavy industry was located east
of the Elbe river and the Berlin agglomeration when the GDR was established.
In socialist states, however, the location of heavy industry fulfilled not only
quasi-economic functions in the uniform distribution of productive forces, which
dominated the doctrine of spatial planning, but also had an important ideologi-
cal function by producing the working classes whom the political system was
declaratively based on. Moreover, the location of industrial projects was based
not so on economic as on political criteria among which the "improvement" of
the social structure played an important role.

Lower Lusatia, being rural, depressed, traditional, clerical, Christian De-
mocratic, anticommunist and separatist, represented the social structure that must
have been changed in the model socialist country the GDR had been designed
to be. The opencast exploitation of lignite in the very centre of Lusatia was the
best thing the communist government might do to achieve its goal.

Even though the lignite deposits were discovered in Lower Lusatia in 1789
and exploited since 1844, their role in the GDR was unprecedented. In the 1950s
and 1960s, a quarter of the GDR industrial investment were given to the Lower
Lusatian lignite mining. The largest in Europe lignite refining factory was loca-
ted in Čorna Plumpa (Schwarze Pumpe). The share of the Cottbus district in the
GDR lignite extraction grew from 27% in 1950 to 65% in 1989 and the energy
production from 9.4% in 1955 to 55% in 1989 (Kehrer, 2000).

Open-cast mining even reinforced the fragmentation of the local settlement
(Klich, 2004). Extensive quarries made it necessary to liquidate individual vil-
lages and to displace their inhabitants to other social milieus. Implemented lar-
ge investment projects involved extensive in-migration on not only regional but
even national scale. Specialists were needed who could not be found locally.
Industrial administration and public bureaucracy, located in Chośebuz/Cottbus,

expanded. The size of the city increased by about four hundred per cent (400%) during 25 years (Grimm, 1984). Enormous urban growth of Grodk/Spremberg, Wojerecy/Hoyerswerda, Zły Komorow (Seftenberg) and Lauchhammmer was also reported (Klich, 2004).

Quarries were dispersed in central and southern Lower Lusatia, with the larger of them located near the very centre of Lusatia, similarly as the related chemical enterprises. The quarries were responsible for drying up wells, and chemical enterprises for air pollution. It was Sorbian villages that where being liquidated (Niedźwiedzka, 2003) while extra-regional migration was ethnically German. Generally therefore the massive inflow of extra-local labour force and urbanisation, including the unprecedented urban growth of Chośebuz/Cottbus as an administrative centre, made Lower Lusatia dominated by German culture. Intermarriages between ethnic groups of unequal social status resulted in Germanisation. The process of the cultural liquidation of Lusatia was therefore put in motion.

The social process worked in this way that industrial development of Lower Lusatia underlay the including of the area in the socialist labour "market" of the GDR. It involved a massive inflow of engineers, officials and technical supervisors from non-Lusatian areas of the country, as there were not enough qualified cadres on the spot. Those people formed upper stratum of employees and thus influenced the rest of the local communities (Długoborski, 1966). The objective process of Germanisation was related to the correlation between ethnic divide of the GDR, on the one hand, and the disparity by the stage of economic and cultural development, on the other. The extensive expansion of mining was therefore a threat for the traditional way of life but also a chance to overcome the collective history of poverty (Klich, 2004). The interpretation of the correlation in causal terms might, however, involve the misidentification of Germanisation with social development (Michalkiewicz, Chlebowczyk, 1970).

On the other hand, hardly any large-scale industrialisation was introduced to the most part of Upper Lusatia, in which the nineteenth-century industry was being submitted to the process of de-capitalisation.

LUSATIA AND THE SORBS AFTER THE RE-UNIFICATION OF GERMANY

After the re-unification of Germany, Lusatia passed from the socialist paradise of necessity to the capitalist hell of freedom. The amalgamation of the GDR in the Federal Republic of Germany indicated that the eastern German economy was not as modern and developed as it seemed under socialism. Many large industrial enterprises bankrupted or must have at least reduced employment. As relatively weak region, even on the scale of eastern Germany, Lusatia suffered much from massive unemployment, which reached 24% in the lignite

mining district. The employment in lignite extraction decreased from nearly 80,000 in 1989 to 5,646 in 2001 (Klich, 2004).

The high unemployment in whole Lusatia was responsible for an increase in out-migration to the west within the common German labour market (*Ost-flucht*). Lower Lusatia lost 4.4% of its population between 1990 and 1999 but as much as 13% of those aged 20 to 40 and 22% of young people under 20 (Klich, 2004). Moreover, low birth rate and negative natural increase results in a depopulation of the country. Older males of lower level of education and qualification are typical inhabitants of this area now. Needless to say that the out-migration, or rather emigration, of Sorbs to western Germany hardly allows keeping their ethnic culture (Niedźwiedzka, 2003).

On the other hand, urban ethnic Germans are likely to move to Lusatian rural areas because of lower rent. As a result of suburbanisation, villages aro-und Chośebuz/Cottbus are mostly German-speaking. The tendency of Sorbian emigration is, however, weakened by the fact that country folk dominate among Sorbs. However, after forty years of the GDR, there are hardly any native spe-akers of Lower Lusatian as a language treated as a stigma by the local people and as an attraction by ethnic Germans (Niedźwiedzka, 2003).

After the amalgamation of the GDR, federal states were organised in eastern Germany. The pre-1952 federal states were taken as a point of departure. The names, boundaries and even the number of the *Länder* were, however, disputed. In local plebiscites of 1990 on the regional attachment of the borderland coun-ties, the 1947 boundary between Saxony and Brandenburg was accepted, minor changes disregarded that resulted from the principle that counties of 1952 wo-uld not be divided. This is to say that Upper Lusatia has been re-integrated within Saxony while Lower Lusatia remained within Brandenburg.

Cultural Sorbian institutions were subsidised by the state in the GDR pe-riod, even though politically controlled. After the re-unification of Germany, the responsibility for the cultural autonomy of the Sorbs was transferred to indi-vidual federal states. On this level subsidies for cultural institutions have been limited and regionally differentiated.

In Brandenburg, Lusatia is traditionally marginalized because a lack of mo-ney and complicated ownership relations of the ethnic cultural institutions make their functioning difficult. As a result, Sorbian culture can now be hardly obse-rved in Chośebuz/Cottbus.

In Saxony, on the contrary, a consistent policy concerning Lusatia seems to be made. Sorbian institutions have a legal and financial support there. There is minister plenipotentiary for Sorbian matters in the Saxon government. The Sor-bian culture and language are constitutionally protected in Saxony. The law provides, even though does not guarantee, that exceptions for ethnic minorities in the accessibility to schools would be given. As a result, Upper Lusatia comes to dominate culturally over Lower Lusatia. Four out of five districts (*župy*) of

the *Domowina* are located in Upper Lusatia while Lower Lusatia is covered by one district. Generally, however, the *de facto* extent of the operation of the *Domowina* does not even cover the GDR recognized bi-lingual counties.

There is, however, a considerable divergence between the legal regulations and the every-day administrative practice concerning the Sorbian matters in Germany, including Saxony. One of the two existing in Germany secondary schools with monolingual Sorbian education provided, i.e. that in Chróścicy/ Crostwitz north-west from Budyšin/Bautzen, was decided to be closed in 2003 under the formal regulation that twenty students are needed for a minority public school to be subsidised by the Free State of Saxony while there are only seventeen Sorbian young people involved. To change the formal regulation in question, a local referendum would be applied, for which, however, 50,000 votes are needed while there is 60,000 *Lusatian Sorbs in both Saxony and Brandenburg, including infants.*

There are no legal regulations in Saxony according to which teachers and other personnel of Sorbian minority schools should be fluent in Lusatian. Ethnic Germans are employed as well and this practice changes the lingual situation of schools dramatically (Białko, 2003).

The school affair has an explicit symbolic context. For the German side, the liquidation of a village school was legal and did not violate the constitutional law of the minority to protect its culture. For the Sorbian side, however, this was a question of the liquidation of one sixth of all Sorbian secondary schools, bilingual including. Moreover, the Chróścicy/ Crostwitz school has existed for a hundred years and was the lair of the Lusatian language. It was there that the *Domowina* was re-established after the Second World War and the GDR forced atheist customs were massively ignored. For the external observer it seems astonishing that the largest European economy cannot afford to subsidise a provincial minority school.

After the re-unification of Germany, a reform of the territorial structure applied not merely to federal states but also included counties and communes. In 1993, the so-far counties were combined in more extensive and less numerous. In Brandenburg, nine Lower Lusatian counties, including seven Lusatian speaking, were combined in four, of which only two Lusatian speaking. The county-borough of Cottbus/Chośebuz was extended (Dolata, Kaczmarek, 2003) and this development reduced any symptoms of its Sorbianhood. Because of the decentralised structure of the *Land* Brandenburg, some governmental institutions of this federal state are located in Cottbus rather than Potsdam. The same applies to the Brandenburgian Technical University. In Saxony, nine Upper Lusatian counties were combined in four plus two extensive county-boroughs.

For economic reasons, single-village communes were combined. In Saxony, the 1,614 communes in 1992 were combined in 544 units in 2000. In Brandenburg, the 1,813 communes in 1992 were combined in 1474 in 2000 (Dolata,

Kaczmarek, 2003). The reform changed the social structure in the ethnically mixed areas. Money saved on the local administration could be spend on local schools, the problem, however, is that it may happen in multi-village communes that Sorbian minority could not have such an electoral power as to win the voting for the minority school as they had in single-village communes.

CHANCES TO SURVIVE

Lusatian Sorbs have kept their ethnicity for a millennium, even though were expected to extinct a few centuries ago (1). It is a paradox of history that the cultural liquidation of Lusatia, which did not succeed even in the Third Reich, is being succeeded in democratic Germany. In this paper mechanisms are shown that are responsible for the acceleration of ethnic assimilation of the Sorbs under the GDR granted cultural autonomy and an explanation is provided why the cultural liquidation is likely to complete in united Germany.

As the discussion in the Internet indicated (*www.internecy.de*), the perspectives for the survival of the Sorbianhood are not good. For the political correctness it is not suitable to speak in a language not understandable for others. This has been characteristic of totalitarian states where what was not understandable, might have been suspected. It is therefore not suitable to speak Lusatian in the presence of Germans. This is to say that the only place suitable to speak Lusatian is home and Sorbian pages of the Internet. Moreover, a Lusatian-German intermediate dialect is being developed. This is based on German words to which Lusatian endings are given. The local Germans used to recognize the dialect as the proper Lusatian language. The ability to write in Lusatian is even more limited. Moreover, the disparity between the Upper and Lower Lusatian languages, even though not making the intercommunication difficult, does not promote the lingual consolidation.

Lower Lusatian is on the verge of extinction. Older native speakers who had experienced a lingual stigmatisation, did not come down the language to the next generation. This resulted in both inferiority complex (Kurcz, 2003) and double dialectism of Lower Lusatian, i.e. in its relation to both German and Upper Lusatian (Niedźwiedzka, 2003). A lack of a Lusatian statehood or even territorial autonomy is responsible for the lack of a unification of the Sorbian culture, which continues it existence among the German majority in two federal states (Białko, 2003).

As a result, the collapse of the Lusatian lingual standard can be observed and the language is being changed in a group of oral dialects. In this context, there is hardly any motivation to attend the Sorbian minority schools if the mother tongue cannot be a means of communication in the homeland. In the Sorbian secondary school in Budyšin/Bautzen not more than one third of stu-

dents speak Lusatian during pauses (*w Budyskim gimnaziju hišće jenož třećina abo mjenje serbuje na přestawkach*).

In Lower Lusatia within Brandenburg the situation is traditionally even worse than in Upper Lusatia within Saxony. Lusatian masses in local churches are said less frequently than once a month. Lusatian programmes in the local radio station are listened to merely by pensioners. The language is being used as a folklorist attraction rather than one part of the community identity. The preservation of the language seems therefore but an illusion. The mass culture comes to achieve what the German conquerors from margrave Gero to Hitler failed to.

Moreover, the neighbouring Slavic nations are generally ignorant about the very existence of the Lusatian Sorbs. Both Poles and Czechs believe the Sorbs live in former Yugoslavia rather than Lusatia. The fact that some Poles and Czechs try to write in Lusatian in the Internet, does not change the general pattern.

With the amount of the Sorbs self-estimated for 60,000 in 2000 A.D., including 40,000 in Upper and 20,000 in Lower Lusatia, and the rate of Germanisation estimated for 1000 people per year (Białko, 2003), it is easy to count that in 2060 A.D. there would be no single member of this ethnic community if the trend were maintained (Rykiel, 2000).

THE CHANCES OF SORBS UNDER THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The cultural liquidation of Lusatia is a function of her geopolitical location. No political power and none of the sizable European nations around have needed Lusatia and Lusatian Sorbs. The question therefore arises whether the Sorbian chances for the survival of the ethnic separateness should still be related to the sizable neighbours or rather to the European minorities, small as themselves. As the history of Central and Eastern Europe in general indicated, alliances based on interests are more successful than those based on a common stock.

The chance of the European integration for the Sorbs is that ethnic minorities can join their efforts in their fight for their rights. The position of Lusatian Sorbs is formally not bad, since they have been officially recognized as a national minority by the Federal Republic of Germany. It is even better than that of other ethnic minorities in Germany because the GDR originated official bilingual signposts prevail in Lusatia. On the other hand, however, the process of assimilation continues, also in a territorial dimension. As the regional organisation of the *Domowina* indicates, out of the thirteen bilingual counties recognized in the 1950s five are already non-Lusatian speaking.

In the democratic state, Lusatian Sorbs are also one part of the electorate the political parties cannot afford to ignore. They, especially the Christian Democrats (*CDU*), perform a tactical personal policy and declare general sympa-

thy that has, however, limited relations to *de facto* politics they make (Lesz-czyński, 1991/2). The latter depends much of the political will and bureaucratic routine, as the local school affair in Saxony indicated.

Interestingly, the cultural liquidation of Lusatia happens with the total in-difference of the Polish side, as the embarrassing case of the Chróścicy/Crost-witz school indicated. A dispassionate information in Polish press appeared while a public collection of money for a multi-cultural school in Sarajevo, Bosnia had been organised five years before, i.e. in 1998. Today's Poland behaves as she had interests in Iraq rather than Lusatia.

Freedom in United Europe gives, however, chances to the Sorbs to unite their efforts with those of other national and ethnic minorities throughout the continent, the association of the *Domowina* with the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) in 1990 being only one example. The chances for Lusatia in free but market-oriented Europe is to develop her own political marketing to create Lusatia's new image as more than merely a tourist attraction. It is also the Internet that seems a niche in which the Lusatian language can be preserved as a means of interpersonal communication not interfered by German, as the *Serbska cyberwjeska* (Serbian cyber-village) in *www.internecy.de* indicates. For-tunately therefore, no one can say whether the Sorbian groups will eventually lose their separate identity.

To conclude, let me cite *Serbska baseń* (A Sorbian story) by Jurij Březan in the Upper Lusatian origin:

Wulkeho słowjanow splaha
najmjeńši narod smy my.
Synojo serbskeho kraja,
Synojo łužiskej' krwě (2).

And to provide it in Lower Lusatian while it still exists:

Wjelikeg' słowjańskeg' splaga
nejmjeńšy narod smy my,
syny smy serbskego kraja,
syny smy łužyskej' kšwě.

CONCLUSIONS

As was indicated in the inicial section of this paper, the cultural liquidation should be considered in the context of a long duration. The liquidation can be achieved by violent, oppressive or subtle means, depending on historical cir-cumstances. The results of the process in Lusatia were, as H. Böll (1975) put it, neither intentional nor incidental but indispensable. This was achieved by feu-

dal expansionism, capitalist nationalism and economic growth, Nazi oppression, communist homogenisation under industrialisation, democratic formalism and global mass culture. This brings the present author to the truism that *de facto* Lusatian question is not so one of the Sorbian minority but rather of the German majority if not the capitalist world system in general.

NOTES

(1) In this context Martin Luther's opinion used to be referred to, who maintained it was no use translating the Bible into Lusatian as the language would extinct in one generation's time span.
(2) Of the grand Slavic tribe
  the smallest nation is us.
  We're sons of the Sorbian country,
  The ones of the Lusatian blood.

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