

# Science, Education and Periodical Publications of the Sorbs in the German Democratic Republic and Immediately Following the Fall of Communism

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*The political changes in 1989/1990 affected all of East German society, including in particular the country's ethnic Sorbs. Sorbian institutions that had enjoyed a relatively regular influx of financial resources in the GDR now found themselves in an uncertain situation. The new democratic and liberal society did not guarantee Sorbs their previous certainties in the fields of science, education, culture, and other areas. This article looks at selected institutions to provide an idea of how the transformation process took place. One educational institution that did not survive the collapse of the GDR is the Zentrale sorbische Sprachschule Milkel (Sorb.: Centralna serbska rěčna šula w Minakatu), which provided language instruction and an overview of Sorbian history and culture for many people who subsequently went on to work for Sorbian institutions. By comparison, one organization that weathered the changes was the Sorbian Institute, although the dissolution of the Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR necessitated a change in legal form (e.V.). One new institution, whose main task is to distribute financing to the most important Sorbian organizations, is the Foundation for the Sorbian People. Smaller changes affected the Sorbian print media at this time as well.*

Key words: Sorbs; GDR; unified Germany; transformation of institutions

## Introduction

It has been nearly thirty years since the socialist GDR collapsed and became part of a unified German state. The former GDR's citizens found themselves living under the new conditions of a functioning democracy and market economy. Members of the Sorbian minority, too, had to come to terms with the changes in East German society after the autumn of 1989. In particular, this related to Sorbian organizations and institutions to which the socialist government, through its ministries, had guaranteed a nearly automatic flow of financial resources. The Sorbs' main umbrella organization for a large number of Sorbian institutions and associations remained the Domowina, whose functioning was the subject of much

debate after the autumn of 1989. Some Sorbian institutions were discontinued, while others were newly founded. Perhaps the most important date for Sorbian society in Germany was October 19, 1991, when the Foundation for the Sorbian People (Germ.: Stiftung für das sorbische Volk; Sorb.: Założba za serbski lud) was established upon a proposal by the minister-president of Saxony. The organization's website describes the foundation's tasks and objectives as follows: "The Foundation for the Sorbian People, as a joint mechanism of the German Federation and the federal states of Saxony and Brandenburg, works to preserve, develop, promote, and spread the Sorbian language, culture, and traditions as an expression of the Sorbian people's identity."<sup>1</sup> The Foundation for the Sorbian People thus became the most important source of financing for Sorbian institutions following the political and economic unification of the two German states.

To date, not many academic studies have taken a thorough look at the end of the East German state in relation to the Sorbian ethnic minority, especially with a view to the various areas of Sorbian life.<sup>2</sup> Previously published works have focused primarily on the Sorbian political movement during the *Wende*. For instance, the Sorbian historian Měrćin Kasper analyzed in detail the political activities of the Sorbs between 7 October 1989 and 3 October 1990. In particular, his book contains documents from this period.<sup>3</sup> Several other publications (written primarily by people with first-hand experience of the given events) also explored selected issues, in particular political life in Sorbian Lusatia.<sup>4</sup> The publications of two Sorbian authors with different views on the existence and final years of the GDR hold a special place among these works. These are the writings of the long-serving first secretary of the Domowina (and SED functionary) Jurij Grós,<sup>5</sup> which

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<sup>1</sup> <https://stiftung.sorben.com/stiftung/geschichte-und-finanzierung/> [12. 10. 2019].

<sup>2</sup> Monographic works include Pech E. (2012). *Ein Staat – eine Sprache? Deutsche Bildungspolitik und autochthone Minderheiten im 20. Jahrhundert. Die Sorben im Vergleich mit Polen, Danen und Nordfriesen*. Bautzen Domowina-Verlag; Kaleta P. (2017): *Lužičtí Srbové v lidové sněmovně. Nástin politického života Lužických Srbů v srbské Lužici v době NDR*. Praha: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy.

<sup>3</sup> Kasper M. (2000). *Die Lausitzer Sorben in der Wende 1989/1990. Ein Abriss mit Dokumenten und einer Chronik*. Bautzen/Budyšin: Domowina-Verlag.

<sup>4</sup> These include a summary of articles published in the Sorbian-language magazine *Rozhlad*, see (2000). *Rozhlad* 50, no. 7–8, and the article: Pałys P. (2010). The Sorbs and "Přewrót we Němskeje." In Krákora P. et al. (ed.). *Obnova demokracie v Československu po roce 1989. Edice Erudica*. Praha: Nakladatelství Epocha, p. 298–309.

<sup>5</sup> Grós J. (1992). *Na wšěm wina je ta Domowina...? Pytanje za wotmołwami*. Budyšin: Ludowe nakładnistwo Domowina; Grós, J. (2004). *Staatsangehörigkeit: Deutsch. Nationalität Sorbe. Nicht nur Lebenserinnerungen. Über die Sorben, ihre nationale Organisation und die Nationalitätenpolitik in der DDR und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Schkeuditz: GNN Verlag; Groß, J. ([2009]). *Nach 20 Jahren nachgefragt. Betrachtungen zur Nationalenlage der Sorben*. Bautzen: Lausitzer Druck- und Verlagshaus GmbH.

contain his personal political views during that era, and the works of the historian and linguist Timo Meškank,<sup>6</sup> an uncompromising critic of communist-era Sorbian functionaries who among other things published the names of known figures of Sorbian political and cultural life who collaborated with the Stasi.

Our aim here is to describe selected institutions (primarily the Sorbisches Institut and the Zentrale sorbische Sprachschule Milkel) and various areas of Sorbian life (in the area of science, this includes a brief quantitative analysis of the languages of the articles published in *Lětopis* magazine) during the GDR era, with a special focus on the late 1980s and early 1990s.

### Science

Up to and including the interwar era, Sorbian science was practiced exclusively under the purview of the scientific association Maćica Serbska, which until 1937 also published the trade journal *Časopis Maćicy Serbskeje*, with articles written exclusively in the Sorbian language. The first true Sorbian scientific organization was not founded until 1951 in Bautzen, after the establishment of the GDR. The Institute for Sorbian Ethnographic Research (Germ.: Institut für sorbische Volksforschung; Sorb.: Institut za serbi ludospyt), which in 1952–1991 fell under the Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften (after 1972, the Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR). After German reunification, however, the Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR ceased to exist, and its subsidiary institutions were dissolved, meaning that the central scientific institution of Sorbistics (Sorbian studies) found itself at risk as well. Thanks mainly to the fact that one of the

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The full text of Grós's memoirs is stored at the main Sorbian institution. See Serbski institut / Sorbisches Institut, Budyšin/Bautzen, Serbski kulturny archiw / Sorbisches Kulturarchiv, AS XI 7 B, Grós, J. Nic jenož žiwjenske dopomnjenki. 35 lět w načolnej funkciji w narodnej organizaciji, w Domowinje. Napisane w Budyšinje w lěće 2000; Grós J.j, Nicht nur Lebenserinnerungen. 35 Jahre in leitender Funktion in der nationalen Organisation, der Domowina. Bautzen im Jahre 2001/2002; Grós J. Moje nowinske wozjewjenja wot 28. oktobra 1989 hač do septembra 2005. Zbërku zestajał w lěće 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Meškank T. (2009). Nalěčo w nazymje. Serbja na proze lět 1989/1990. (1.– 2. džěl). *Rozhlad* 59, no. 11, pp. 402–406; no. 12, pp. 451–456; Meškank T. (2010). Nalěčo w nazymje. Serbja na proze lět 1989/1990. (3.–4. džěl), *Rozhlad* 60, no. 1, pp. 3–7, no. 2, pp. 3–10; Meškank T. (2011). *Kultura w službje totalitarneho režima*. Budyšin: Ludowe nakładnistwo Domowina [German translation of the Sorbian original: Meškank T. (2014). *Instrumentalisierung einer Kultur*. Zur Situation bei den Sorben 1948–1989, Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag]; Meškank, T. (2012). *bjez wčerašeho dnja njeje jutřišeho. zapiski & rozmołwy*. Praha, skriptum; Meškank T. (2016). *Sorben im Blick der Staatssicherheit. Die Akten der K 5 MfS der DDR 1949–1989. Mit Unterstützung des Sächsischen Landesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR*, Bautzen, Domowina-Verlag; Meškank T. (2017). *wčerašeho dnja njeje jutřišeho. nastawki & dokumenty*. Lipsk, skriptum.

organization's main areas of research was in the field of a minority language (Sorbian), the Institut für sorbische Volksforschung was not shut down, but continued to function after German unification. It was necessary, however, to give it new legal status, and so, on January 1, 1992, the Institut für sorbische Volksforschung was transformed into the Sorbian Institute (Germ.: Sorbisches Institut; Sorb.: Serbski institut), a registered association (e.V.) established jointly by the Freistaat Sachsen and Land Brandenburg. The institute thus continued functioning under a new legal status, financed through the Stiftung für das Sorbische Volk.

After the Second World War, it was clear that this new Sorabistic institute would need its own scientific magazine, and so *Lětopis* was born in 1952 (the magazine was essentially the successor to *Časopis Maćicy Serbskeje*), published annually in three series: Reihe A: *Sprache und Literatur* (1952–1991), Reihe B: *Geschichte* (1953–1991), and Reihe C: *Volkskunde* (1953–1991). In the mid-1980s, a fourth series was added, Reihe D: *Kultur und Kunstwissenschaften* (1986–1991). In 1992, *Lětopis* changed its format: Instead of four separate series published annually, it was transformed into a unified magazine, published twice a year and containing all the branches of Slavistics from the earlier series. From the beginning, the magazine's articles were published in Sorbian and German, but room was also made for studies and articles in other Slavic languages (mainly Polish and Russian).

A statistical analysis of selected volumes<sup>7</sup> shows that in its first year (1952), series A published five articles, all in Sorbian. Series B and C began publishing in 1953, when series B published three articles, all in German, and series C published five articles in Sorbian (one was partially in German). It was almost certainly no coincidence that, because of censorship, articles on Sorbian history (series B) were from the beginning written in German, although some issues also included studies in Sorbian. If we look at the year 1986, when there were four series of this Sorabistic periodical, we see that Sorbian was in slow retreat. Of eight articles in series A, five were in German, two in Sorbian, and one in Polish. In series B, all twelve articles were in German; in series C all seven were in German; and of the twelve articles in the newly added series D, six were in Sorbian, four in German, one in Polish, and one in Russian.

What was the situation like in 1991, one year after German unification? Of seven articles in series A, three were in Sorbian, three in German, and one in Polish. Series B published seven articles (six in German and one in Russian), all seven articles in series C were (again) in German, and of the eight articles in series

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<sup>7</sup> The statistics include short informational articles as well as studies several tens of pages in length, but not news articles or reviews of books and scientific conferences.

D, three were in Sorbian and five in German. Of all twenty-nine articles from all four series published in 1991, twenty-one were in German and only six in Sorbian. This trend continued in subsequent years as well. If we look at the second issue from 1996, we find that it contained seven articles: five in German, one in Polish, and one in Ukrainian. Although the complete absence of Sorbian is an exception, it nevertheless confirms the earlier trend. What is more, only one article was on linguistics, while the remaining six were on history, culture, ethnology, or literature. The final studied issue (no. 1, 2019) published six articles: four in German, one in Sorbian, and one in Polish. This most recently published issue confirms the trend that has been apparent since the 1990s.

Especially around 2014, when the Sorbisches Institut underwent several changes, there was debate as to which direction the only professional Sorabistic periodical should take. Current developments in all branches of science indicate that the magazine's articles should be published primarily in German or English. But under no circumstances should Sorbian disappear from its pages – after all, what would the Sorbisches Institut be without this language! Articles in the field of linguistics should be published primarily in Sorbian, occasionally in German or English. Sorbian is clearly on the decline in the magazine, and so Sorabists writing in other Slavic languages should try to publish their papers in Sorbian. Today, as we near the end of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is also important for every competitive scientific magazine to meet the criteria and standards required by most European scientific organizations and institutions. *Lětopis* is now in the ERIH PLUS database, but Sorabistics would certainly be helped if its editors succeeded in getting the magazine into the most important databases such as WOS and SCOPUS. The idea that it should be published only once a year has been abandoned for now.

### Schools and education

Thanks to Edmund Pech (Sorab.: Edmund Pjech), the topic of Sorbian education in the GDR is one of the best studied subjects.<sup>8</sup> In the 1990s, the changes following the collapse of the GDR necessarily affected Sorbian education as well. Various institutions and organizations in Sorbian national life that had existed during the GDR era could not be maintained after reunification. One of the Sorbs' most important and fundamental educational institutions in East Germany was the Zentrale sorbische Sprachschule Milkel (Sorab.: Centralna serbska rěčna šula w Minakatu), founded on 1 July 1953. This institution offered adult inhabitants of

<sup>8</sup> Pech E. (2012). *Ein Staat – eine Sprache? Deutsche Bildungspolitik und autochthone Minderheiten im 20. Jahrhundert. Die Sorben im Vergleich mit Polen, Danen und Nordfriesen*. Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag.

Upper Lusatia the chance to learn the Sorbian language and also Sorbian history and culture. Until 1956, the school fell under the Ministry of the Interior's Department for Sorbian Questions; from 1957 it fell under the Council of Bezirk Dresden. In 1960, the school, which initially offered instruction in three classes according to the level of language skills (A, B, C), was incorporated into the system for adult education in bilingual regions. An important goal was to produce bilingual graduates, but the division by level of knowledge was abolished. Students could take courses for an entire year and thus achieve education at the level of the earlier C class. However, it all depended on prior knowledge, and it was possible to complete the school in just half a year. The most common courses, nevertheless, were three weeks long. In the first ten years of its existence, the school had 623 graduates. One important factor for potential students was the fact that instruction was free of charge, and workers who attended courses here even continued to be paid by their employers.<sup>9</sup>

Starting in 1973, the school offered other Slavic languages as well (mainly Polish and Czech), and in 1976 it began to hold regular short courses on ethnic policy in which participants – members of parliament, local councilors, and employees of public institutions – were familiarized with the Sorbs' legal status in the GDR. Over the course of its existence, the school graduated 1,298 people from its language courses and 10,400 people from its short courses. Besides ethnic policy, other courses focused on interpreting for retreats of choirs, theater ensembles, folk artists' workshops, artist gatherings, and outdoor education events. In addition to its educational goals, the school also hosted various social events or concerts, making it a cultural center for Milkel and its surroundings. In late 1992, the Centralna serbska rěčna šula w Minakale was shut down after thirty-nine years, primarily for financial reasons.<sup>10</sup>

Despite its unquestioned political character, the Zentrale sorbische Sprachschule Milkel clearly educated thousands of people in the Sorbian language and on the political and cultural life of the Sorbs. It thus offered a chance to learn the Sorbian language to those Sorbs whose mother tongue was already German but who would have had difficulties learning the language of their ancestors on their own. Others who took advantage of these courses were ethnic Germans interested in working at Sorbian institutions because these offered attractive employment opportunities. The school also helped people with a solid foundation in Sorbian to improve their language skills. The school's closure in 1992 can be seen as a negative intervention into Sorbian social and cultural life, with especially

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Nukowa H. (2003). Před 50 lětami Centralna serbska rěčna šula w Minakale (CSRŠ) založena. *Rozhlad* 53, no. 7, pp. 242–243.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 243–244.

negative implications for the preservation of the Sorbian language as such. The most ideal possibility would probably have been to transform the organization in line with the new conditions in society in the 1990s.

On the other hand, the 1990s also saw the creation of new institutions and new projects that helped to spread Sorbian science and culture. One ingenious step undertaken by the Stiftung für das sorbische Volk came in 1996 when the foundation began to provide three scholarships every year for students or doctoral candidates from Slavic countries in order to spend two semesters at Leipzig University's Institut für Sorabistik studying Sorbian or reinforcing their knowledge of the language. The first three scholarship recipients (Kateřina Macháčková and Silvie Džiamová from the Czech Republic and Mariam Abdel Al from Poland) studied at the institute in the 1996/1997 school year. In the 1996/1997–2013/2014 school years, the scholarship was awarded to a total of forty-six people from nine countries (18 from Poland, ten from the Czech Republic, five from Bulgaria, four from Serbia, three from Ukraine, two from Slovakia, two from Russia, one from Slovenia, and one from Macedonia).<sup>11</sup> If we look at the list of scholarship recipients, we find that a large number remained in contact with the Sorbian language and with the field of Sorabistics, even if they do not directly work in Slavic studies. Some of them worked or still work for the Institut für Sorabistik in Leipzig (M. Abdel Al, T. Derlatka, K. Štumpf, S. Tomčík, E. Stefanova), three defended their doctorate at the institute (L. Jocz and V. Zakar, E. Deutsch), and one even did his habilitation there (L. Jocz). A not insignificant group of scholarship recipients found employment at Sorbian institutions in Saxony and Brandenburg (M. Szczepański, V. Zakar, J. Sokół, E. Deutsch).

The important thing, however, is that a large number of graduates from the two-semester scholarship program in Leipzig have not forgotten Sorbian studies and have included Sorabistic topics into their teaching and research activities at their academic places of employment. Examples include R. Bura, Z. Valenta, M. Šekli, D. Sokolović, and L. Jocz. The data also shows that the scholarships provided by the Stiftung für das sorbische Volk since 1996 have had a significant influence on developing or preserving Sorabistics as a field of Slavic studies in the recipients' home countries. Besides the Summer Courses in Sorbian Language in Culture, the scholarship program thus was of fundamental importance for the development of Sorbian studies abroad.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, interest in the Leipzig scholarship program

<sup>11</sup> More exact statistical data for the 2012/13 school year may be found in: Deutsch E. (2011). Wkład stypendystów Fundacji na rzecz Narodu Łużyckiego w rozwój sorabistyki. *Zeszyty Łużyckie. Tom 45. Łużycanie i inne mniejszości językowe, kulturowe i etniczne w Europie. Część I*. Warszawa: Uniwersytet Warszawski, Instytut Sławistyki Zachodniej i Południowej, pp. 58–70; Deutsch E. (2013). Přínošk stipendiatow Založby za serbski lud k wuwicu sorabistiki. *Rozhlad* 63, no. 9, pp. 20–23.

<sup>12</sup> [http://stiftung.sorben.com/usf/%C3%9Cbersicht-Stipendiaten\(3\).pdf](http://stiftung.sorben.com/usf/%C3%9Cbersicht-Stipendiaten(3).pdf) [11. 5. 2016].

has declined in recent years. This none-too-positive trend has been apparent since 2011/2012, when the program only had two recipients three years in a row. In the 2014/2015 school year, nobody took advantage of the scholarship, although the situation began to improve somewhat in the following year. The program's most recent graduate is Tereza Hromádková (Czech Republic), who completed her two-month stay (she was the only scholarship recipient) in 2018/2019.

Interest in the Foundation for the Sorbian People's scholarship at Leipzig University's Institute of Sorbian Studies is no longer as high, nor will it probably ever be, as it was in the 1990s. Nowadays, students in Europe can choose from an almost unlimited range of universities anywhere in Europe, especially as part of the Erasmus+ program. The scholarship's organizers thus have to make their program more attractive, which they did not succeed in doing until 2018 when the stipend was raised to 800 euros a month. Despite somewhat stagnating recently, the three annual stipends for students from Slavic countries can be considered one of the most successful programs ever realized in the history of the Stiftung für das sorbische Volk.

### Periodicals

Sorbian periodicals were from the beginning subject to East German censorship and can thus be considered independent only in the post-1989 period. The Sorbs' main print publication during the GDR era was *Nowa doba*, subtitled *The News of the Sorbian People* (Sorb.: *Nowiny za serbski lud*) and published from January 1947 in Bautzen, initially on a weekly basis, twice-weekly starting in October of that year.<sup>13</sup> In July 1948 it switched to a thrice-weekly schedule, and in October 1955 it was made a daily paper. In 1948, it also added a German insert, *Nowa doba. Deutschsprachige Beilage*. The last issue of *Nowa doba* was published in December 1990, more than two months after German reunification. With just a few exceptions, all of its articles were in Upper Sorbian. In January 1991, it changed its name and began to appear under the traditional title *Serbske Nowiny*. In January 2005, the paper's editors, with their non-Sorbian speaking readership in mind, began to publish a German version titled *Monatliche Ausgabe in deutscher Sprache Serbske Nowiny*.

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<sup>13</sup> In 1947, *Nowa doba* published four issues of its monthly insert for young people, *Hłos młodźiny* (a later youth insert named *My* was published from October 1973 to December 1990), five issues of the insert *Nowa doba za džěci*, and five issues of the insert *Nowe Słowjanstwo*. In 1953–1956, the magazine published a special insert titled *Nowa doba we Wobrazach*. In addition, starting in 1948, the magazine published a monthly German insert, *Nowa doba. Deutschsprachige Beilage*. In 1990, the German insert was published every two weeks, first as *Sonderbeilage in deutscher Sprache Nowa doba* and then (starting in June) as *Spree Kurier*. The final issue of this insert was published at the end of October 1990.



In the immediate postwar period, the Sorbs of Lower Lusatia did not have their own newspaper. During this time, *Nowa doba* published only three issues (November and December 1947 and March 1948) of the Lower Sorbian *Dolnoserbški casnik*, subtitled *Pšiloga casnika “Nowa doba” za dolnych Serbow* (*Nowa doba* insert for Lower Sorbs). In June 1949, *Dolnoserbški casnik* changed its name to *Nowy Casnik* and was published as an insert in *Nowa doba* until 1955 (from late January 1954, the paper was published every two weeks). Starting in 1956, it began to be published under the auspices of the Domowina. In January 1957, it was made a weekly, published until 1989 with the subtitle *Organ Domowiny* (changed in 1990 to *Tyženičnik Domowiny*). From 1991 until today, the paper has been called *Nowy Casnik. Tyženičnik za serbski lud*.

Throughout the GDR era, both *Nowa doba* and *Nowy Casnik* were propaganda tools for promoting the policies of the SED and the National Front among the Sorbs, and this situation only began to slowly change in the mid-1980s. Some of the changes associated with Gorbachev’s perestroika and glasnost, although usually only the less visible ones, did make it onto the pages of *Nowa doba*. Heiko Kozel (born 1966), the son of the paper’s editor-in-chief Sieghard Kozel, has written about these tendencies,<sup>14</sup> one example of which was the editor-in-chief’s responses to readers’ questions at a meeting with the *Nowa doba* editorial board in Driewitz (Sorb.: Drěwcy) in early July 1987.<sup>15</sup> Similarly open viewpoints were also expressed in articles published by *nd.diskusja* in November 1988.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, in 1989 *Nowa doba* maintained its status as a pro-regime paper that reported dispassionately on the tense situation in the GDR and for a relatively long time stuck to official interpretations. In this regard, Michał Šořta has noted that the Sorbian paper was perhaps “more obedient than the German papers.”<sup>17</sup>

After 1945, Sorbian society also needed a magazine focused on teaching, schools, and education. In 1948, this need was filled by the circular *Serbska šula*. In 1952, *Serbska Šula* ceased to be printed as a circular, and in 1953 it became a magazine. From 1972, the magazine’s subtitle stated that it was published by the Domowina-Verlag (Sorb.: Ludowe nakładnistwo Domowina) on commission from the Ministry for People’s Education, a statement that remained on the magazine’s cover until October 1990. Except for a new ideological orientation, the magazine did not see any greater changes following German reunification. The GDR era also saw the publication of magazines for the education of Sorbian children. For instance, the Upper Sorbian *Płomjo*, subtitled *Magazine of the Free German Youth for Sorbian Children* (Sorb.: *Časopis swobodneje němskeje młodžiny*

<sup>14</sup> Kozel H. (2000). “Nowa doba” a pjerjestrojka. *Rozhlad* 50, no. 7–8, pp. 245–249.

<sup>15</sup> (4. 7. 1987). *Nowa doba* w a wo Nowej dobie. *Předženak*, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> (22. 10. 1988). *nd.diskusija*. *Předženak*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>17</sup> Šořta, M. (2000). *Nadběh a zakitowanje*. *Rozhlad* 50, no. 7–8, p. 251.

*serbske džěći*) began publishing in 1952. A Lower Sorbian magazine, *Plomje*, began to be published five years later, in 1957. Both children's magazines appeared on a monthly basis in the following years and even after German reunification, and they are still published today.

Ever since the 16<sup>th</sup> century the religious difference between Sorbian Protestants and Catholics has been an important part of their identity, and this description still applies today. Although the GDR era saw the emergence of a large group of atheists, the communist regime failed to eradicate religious sentiments from the lives of most Sorbs. After the Second World War, Sorbian priests' efforts at publishing their own periodicals resulted in the renewal, in December 1950, of two religious magazines that had been banned by the Nazis. Now published monthly, these were the Catholic Sorbs' *Katolski Posoł* (previously published from 1863) and the Protestants' *Pomhaj Bóh* (previously published from 1891). In 1956 *Katolski Posoł* began publishing twice monthly, and in 1993 it was turned into a weekly. *Pomhaj Bóh*, meanwhile, saw no changes in periodicity after the events of 1989. The Sorbs' main postwar periodical in the field of popular science was *Rozhlad*, which continued the tradition of the interwar magazine *Lužica*. Like all Sorbian periodicals, *Rozhlad* saw many changes in terms of content at the turn of 1989/1990, but its form (structure) remained mostly unchanged and it continues to be published as a monthly today.

From this overview of Sorbian print media, we can see that Sorbian newspapers and magazines did not undergo any revolutionary changes after the collapse of the GDR. *Nowa doba* and other print publications had to accept the new state of affairs in the GDR after the autumn of 1989, which was naturally reflected in the democratization of these publications. The main change in terms of form was the fact that the socialist daily *Nowa doba* changed its name to the traditional *Serbske Nowiny*, which had been banned by the Nazis before the war. All of the main periodicals continued to exist, but on the other hand no new ones were established either. One new addition to the world of Sorbian magazines during the transformation from socialism to democracy appeared before the revolution – the independent student magazine *Serbski student*,<sup>18</sup> whose existence the Domowina's representatives viewed with distrust and which they tried to bring under their control. The democratization of East German society in the second half of the 1980s had also influenced some young Sorbs, who felt the need to speak openly about issues in society.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> For more on this magazine, see Kaleta P. (2017). Die Zeitschrift "Serbski student" – eine Brücke zwischen Totalitarismus und Demokratie in der sorbischen Lausitz. *Lětopis* 64, no. 1, pp. 56–70.

<sup>19</sup> The author wrote similarly about the Sorbian press in the GDR era one part of his monograph: Kaleta P. (2017). *Lužičtí Srbové v lidové sněmovně. Nástín politického života Lužických Srbů v srbské Lužici v době NDR*. Praha: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, pp. 48–53.

## Conclusion

The transformation of Sorbian cultural, educational, and scientific organizations and institutions in the reunified Germany in the early 1990s was not a simple process. Like the GDR's other inhabitants, the Sorbs were "thrown" into a democratic (but also competitive) environment without much preparation. Some institutions (such as the *Zentrale sorbische Sprachschule Milkel*) did not survive the changes, while others like the *Domowina* or the Sorbian Institute managed to weather the transformation, although the latter of the two was legally changed into an association (e.V.), a legal form sometimes associated with difficulties in German scientific life. The security that the East German state had provide Sorbian institutions through the regular influx of the necessary financial resources was gone. Today, it is the Foundation for the Sorbian People that has a decisive influence on financing, for it is responsible for distributing financial resources to Sorbian institutions and organizations, and this is not done automatically, as had been the case in the GDR. Newly founded and growing institutions include the Witaj Language Center (Germ.: *Sprachzentrum-Witaj*; Sorb.: *Rěčny centrum Witaj*), founded as a special department of the *Domowina* in 2001. Sorbian society and its main institutions had to change, as most clearly reflected by developments at the main scientific institution, the Sorbian Institute, whose personnel policies over the past five years have resulted in the gradual retreat of the Sorbian language.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> For examples, official meetings of the institute and its departments are usually held in German.