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East Germany and the lost German East: Dresden–Wrocław 'socialist friendship' after Nazism and forced migration

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Abstract

In 1959, East German Dresden and western Polish Wrocław were twinned to promote cross-border contact between political leaders, worker delegations and cultural groups. Officially formed to promote worker solidarity among friendly East Bloc regimes, in practice the inter-relationship exposed a troubling history that was just below the surface. In the recent aftermath of Nazi defeat, the German population of Breslau (over 600,000 people) had fled or been expelled from a city which had long been German. At the same time that Breslau became Polish Wrocław, a significant number of old Breslauers settled in the East German province of Saxony, especially Dresden. This article uses archival and published sources to show how, under the umbrella of worker exchanges, field trips and official amity, the sister-city programme unintentionally became a venue for German exiles from Breslau to encounter Wrocławian delegations in Dresden and to return 'home' to discover Wrocław's post-war Polish reality.

In 1959, the East German city of Dresden and western Polish city of Wrocław were twinned as sister cities (German: *Partnerschaft*; Polish: *Miasto Partnerskie*) to promote exchange and understanding within the East Bloc. This transnational accord resulted in almost annual cross-border contact between political leaders, worker delegations and cultural groups such as worker orchestras and athletic teams. Officially, the twinning of Dresden and Wrocław was supposed to promote worker solidarity among friendly East Bloc regimes (like other East Bloc sister-city arrangements) as well as afford experts on both sides the opportunity to examine feats of socialist industry and post-war urban reconstruction. In practice, however, East German visitors to Wrocław had a special reason to fixate on the city's restorative approach to historical architecture: the recent aftermath of Nazi defeat had prompted the flight and expulsion of the city's overwhelmingly German population (over 600,000 people). At the same time that a significant number of old Breslauers settled in East German Saxony, notably Dresden, German Breslau became Polish Wrocław. Assisted by nationalists and the Catholic church, Polish communist authorities sought to Polonize the vast landscapes they had inherited across the former German

East by effacing German inscriptions, cemeteries, place names and historical contributions. Dubbed as capital of the so-called Recovered Territories (*ziemie odzyskane*), the old Silesian metropolis was now said to have suffered a 700-year German occupation that had nonetheless failed to eradicate its medieval Polish soul.[1]

Although forced migration and post-Nazi communist-nationalist politics put each of these East Bloc cities on a divergent course, the twinning of Dresden with Wrocław affords an opportunity to explore how, under the umbrella of sister-city worker exchanges, field trips and official amities, Central Europeans grappled with a recent shared catastrophe that was just below the surface. After Nazi Germany had left demographic and physical devastation across Poland and Germany's eastern provinces were ethnically cleansed by communist-nationalist Poland, the sister-city programme unintentionally became a venue whereby (1) an array of elite and non-elite Germans and Poles could touch shoulders in the palimpsest spaces of Wrocław and confront quandaries in urban reconstruction intensified by the post-war politics of memory; (2) German exiles from Breslau could encounter Wrocław's new residents when they visited their new area of settlement in Dresden; and (3) old Breslauers now resident in East Germany (whose status as resettled people was officially censured) could return 'home' to their city, witness what it had become and seek closure after their loss.

After a brief survey of how population upheavals created the two Cold War cities and forged an apprehensive political climate, this article discusses the context and origins of the Dresden–Wrocław sister-city relationship and then assesses two general periods during the three decades of Cold War-era cross-border interaction. First, under the rhetoric of 'socialist friendship' and amid considerable ongoing economic and political tensions, the period before 1972 saw officials struggle to maintain strict censorship amid recurrent 'lapses', in which the problematic past came to the surface. In no small part due to the presence of 'resettlers' in German delegations or Polish concern about the border, officials regularly reported on anxieties during the exchanges that failed to contribute to socialist solidarity. At the same time that such encounters exposed thinly buried scars from the recent past, they also had potential to create an alternate space of exchange about that past outside the control of official narratives. As the second period demonstrates, after visa-free travel by East Germans to Poland opened in 1972, officials increasingly lost control of how East Germans and Poles interacted during the exchanges, much less outside the auspices of the *Partnerschaft*. Especially after the onset of Solidarity, when democratic reformist pressures prompted hard-line Polish authorities to institute marshal law, East German officials came to fear that grassroots German–Polish understanding, also in the context of the *Partnerschaft*, was undermining communist rule.[2] The twinning of Dresden and Wrocław thus exhibits how an officially initiated and choreographed platform for 'socialist friendship' unintentionally stimulated an

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[1]For communist adaptation and marshalling of long-standing nationalist 'Endek' mythologies in its post-war Western Territories, see T.D. Curp, *A Clean Sweep? The Politics of Ethnic Cleansing in Western Poland, 1945–1960* (Rochester, 2006). For further discussion of Silesia's transformation in the context of West German expellee travel accounts, see A. Demshuk, 'Reinscribing Schlesien as Śląsk: memory and mythology in a postwar German–Polish borderland', *History & Memory*, 24 (2012), 39–86.

[2]For Cold War-era official-level interchange between Poland and East Germany, see essays in B. Kerski, K. Woycicki and A. Kotula (eds.), *Zwangsverordnete Freundschaft: Die Beziehungen zwischen der DDR und Polen, 1949–1990* (Osnabrück, 2003).

increasing tide of often ambiguous cultural and economic tourism that included grassroots discussion of recent population upheavals which had affected both nationalities – a multifaceted transnational interchange that steadily undermined communist rule.[3]

Before they were twins: population upheaval and the making of post-war cities

Historically, Dresden and Breslau functioned as the administrative, religious and economic hubs for their respective regions. Although the Piast dukes of Breslau had died out by the early fourteenth century, the Silesian capital presided over a powerful Catholic archdiocese, the spread of the Reformation, a thriving Jewish community, academic life at a leading university and economic networks far and wide. Although Leipzig was historically larger and economically more important, Saxony's capital was always Dresden: residence of Wettin electors who, at the end of the seventeenth century, became kings of Poland under Augustus the Strong. Like Breslau, Dresden was tri-confessional: dominated by Lutheranism, but home to Catholics (the dynast himself converted to become king of Poland) and Jews. Hence, both cities featured an architectural medley of spires belonging to various branches of the Jewish and Christian faiths. And while in Breslau this skyline reflected from the shores and islands of the Oder (Polish, Odra) river, Dresden earned renown as 'Florence on the Elbe': a jewel of primarily Baroque architecture from the heyday of Saxon rule over Poland.

The epochal shift in territory and population during and immediately after Nazi rule brought about a cataclysmic transformation in both regions and their historic capitals. Kristallnacht decimated each city's monumental reformed synagogue and initiated the total destruction of Jewish life. Then, although both Breslau and Dresden survived almost unscathed until the very end of the war, the firebombing of Dresden on 13–15 February 1945, and the bombardment of Breslau as a 'fortress city' from 13 February through to the end of the war, left both cities among the most devastated in the world. Some of the refugees who fled from Breslau reached Dresden right on time for the firebombing. As the wild flight gave way to Allied-approved expulsions that summer, German refugees continued to pour into the Soviet occupation zone of post-war divided Germany. Referred to as 'resettlers' (*Umsiedler*) in early state parlance, many of them reached the ravaged Saxon capital with what little they had managed to carry with them. Told to surrender their pasts, they were to contribute their labour and skills to the classless socialist experiment. Meanwhile, Poles who had lost their homes amid Nazi brutality or through the Soviet annexation of about a third of pre-war Polish territory arrived in the shattered landscapes of an historically German city and were told they were pioneers reclaiming a built heritage stolen from their nationally Polish ancestors.[4]

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[3]This underpins K. Kunakhovich's recent analysis of how cultural institutions in East Germany and Poland became spaces for public discussion of history and even politics critical of regime decisions. See *Communism's Public Sphere: Culture as Politics in Cold War Poland and East Germany* (Ithaca, NY, 2022).

[4]For analysis of official Polish communist-nationalist propaganda and both official and grassroots Polonizing efforts in Poland's new 'Recovered Territories', see A. Hofmann, *Die Nachkriegszeit in Schlesien: Gesellschafts- und Bevölkerungspolitik in den polnischen Siedlungsgebieten, 1945–1948* (Cologne, 2000); G. Strauchold, *Myśl zachodnia i jej realizacja w Polsce ludowej w latach 1945–1957* (Toruń, 2003); and idem, *Wrocław. Okazjonalna stolica Polski. Wokół powojennych obchodów rocznic historycznych* (Wrocław, 2003).

As the Iron Curtain steadily solidified, 7.5 million ethnic German refugees from pre-war Germany's lost eastern territories found themselves in post-war Germany's western zones, while 4.3 million landed in the eastern, Soviet zone; Germans from the East were also overrepresented among those who fled over the future German–German border, sometimes only years, even months after reaching the Soviet zone.[5] In the areas that would become West Germany in 1949, Germans from the East were given the politically charged designation of 'expellees' (*Vertriebene*), which implied both the 'expulsion from Paradise' and the inherent, lasting injustice of the 'flight and expulsion' that had just taken place. The West German government and a host of expellee political leaders (many with Nazi pasts) adopted what became an inherently contradictory approach to expellees and their vaunted 'right to the homeland' (*Recht auf die Heimat*) and right of return (*Recht auf Heimkehr*) to the spaces they had lost.[6] On the one hand, extensive efforts to economically integrate expellees reinforced in their minds that their displacement was permanent, and that they should take advantage of the material assistance they had been given to move on and rebuild their lives in the West. On the other hand, the West German government financially supported the commemoration of the lost territories as an integral part of Germany, and expellee political leaders asserted that the millions they claimed to represent were sitting on their suitcases, just waiting to exercise their right of return.[7] In fact, already within the first decade after the war, expellees increasingly consigned themselves to the unpleasant reality that they would not be returning.[8]

Key to the officially fostered commemorative process were *Patenschaften*. Unlike twin cities (*Partnerschaften*), in which municipalities across borders forge mutual ties between their respective societies and populations, in taking on a *Patenschaft* a West German 'godfather city' established a sponsorship role for a specific expellee community it 'adopted' from the lost German East. For example, Cologne formed a *Patenschaft* with expellees from Breslau in 1950. Henceforth, the city of Cologne sought to provide expellees with a sense of 'surrogate *Heimat* space' in the West.[9] In addition to the creation of a *Heimat* gathering space and archive (today called the Breslauer Sammlung), publication of a '*Heimat* book' documenting Breslau's history and allegedly timeless ties to Cologne and establishment of Breslauer Square (still a

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[5]P. Ther, *Deutsche und Polnische Vertriebene: Gesellschaft und Vertriebenenpolitik in der SBZ/DDR und in Polen, 1945–1956* (Göttingen, 1998), 12.

[6]A. Demshuk, 'What was the "right to the *Heimat*"? West German expellees and the many meanings of *Heimkehr*', *Central European History*, 45 (2012), 523–56.

[7]Considerable scholarship has covered such commemorative practices. See, for instance, E. Hahn and H.H. Hahn, 'Flucht und Vertreibung', in É. François and H. Schulze (eds.), *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte. Eine Auswahl* (Bonn, 2005), 332–50; K. Struve, 'Vertreibung und Aussiedlung', in M. Czapliński and T. Weger (eds.), *Schlesische Erinnerungsorte. Gedächtnis und Identität einer mitteleuropäischen Region* (Görlitz, 2005), 281–305; C. Lotz, 'Roads to revision: disputes over street names referring to the German eastern territories after the First and Second World War in the cities of Dresden and Mainz, 1921–1972', in B. Niven and C. Paver (ed.), *Memorialization in Germany since 1945* (Basingstoke, 2010), 37–47; S. Scholz, M. Röger and B. Niven (eds.), *Die Erinnerung an Flucht und Vertreibung. Ein Handbuch der Medien und Praktiken* (Paderborn, 2015); H.H. Hahn and R. Traba (eds.), *Deutsch-Polnische Erinnerungsorte*, 5 vols. (Paderborn, 2015); S. Scholz, *Vertriebenendenkmäler. Topographie einer deutschen Erinnerungslandschaft* (Paderborn, 2015).

[8]A. Demshuk, *The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945–1970* (Cambridge, 2012).

[9]For detailed discussion, see A. Demshuk, 'Godfather cities: West German *Patenschaften* and the lost German East', *German History*, 32 (2014), 224–55.

prominent space behind the central train station), the ancient Rhenish metropolis sponsored regular gatherings of Breslauers, who reminisced about the world they had lost and explored their godfather city as a means of finding rootedness in the West. This intimate personal exchange took place in the shadow of pitched political speeches, in which expellee leaders sought to use *Patenschaften* as a way to keep alive territorial revisionist claims against Poland.[10]

The officially territorial revisionist aims espoused under the auspices of most *Patenschaften* made them suspect to East Bloc regimes, notably Poland and Czechoslovakia, and further burdened West German efforts to create *Partnerschaften* with East European cities, sometimes with the same cities whose expellees they supported through *Patenschaften*. Such a strikingly different context must be kept in mind in the late 1950s environment – the heyday of *Patenschaft* creation in West Germany – when East German Dresden was twinned with Wrocław, which Poland framed as the capital of its Recovered Territories. Unlike the booming *Patenschaft* environment, West German *Partnerschaft* 'sister-city' programmes were largely restricted in a Westerly direction (especially with France) before the mid-1970s. Even in East Germany, the creation of *Partnerschaften* only picked up as the West German *Patenschaft* movement made the first signs of winding down in the 1960s.[11]

For German refugees from former eastern Germany who found themselves in the Soviet zone, the official ideological departure point for considering the lost territories could not have been more different. After the 1950 Treaty of Görlitz/Zgorzelec, the East German state officially recognized the Oder–Neisse border with Poland and prohibited any public reference to the lost territories. The very term 'expellee' was denounced as stemming from revanchist militarist fascists in the West, and by 1950 even the euphemisms of 'resettler' and 'new citizen' had all but vanished from official parlance. What was more, East German leaders upheld the 1950 treaty as proof that their polity had sufficiently reconciled with Poland, with the result that German 'guilt' for Nazi crimes was irrelevant and thus absent from official sister-city discourse.[12] Nonetheless, just as West German expellees did not embrace and espouse the ideological dogma of territorial revisionism their leaders put forth in their name, so too were East German resettlers hardly prepared to surrender their old identities as East Prussians or Silesians.[13] In the first place, even in the 1950s many of the roughly 4 million remaining resettlers were still 'foreigners' to the natives of Saxony and Mecklenburg and sustained interest in their former homes. Second, although contrasting political contexts influenced the sort of atmosphere within which each group could talk about the past, Michael Schwarz is right to observe that resettlers were not the 'exposed, helpless objects of the political decisions of a Soviet-unified Socialist dictatorship', but instead regularly manoeuvred to discuss their sense of loss in

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[10]See Demshuk, *The Lost German East*; C. Eisler, *Verwaltete Erinnerung – symbolische Politik. Die Heimatsammlungen der deutschen Flüchtlinge, Vertriebenen und Aussiedler* (Munich, 2015); J. Faehndrich, *Eine Endliche Geschichte. Die Heimatbücher der deutschen Vertriebenen* (Cologne, 2011).

[11]I. Bautz, 'Die Auslandsbeziehungen der deutschen Kommunen im Rahmen der europäischen Kommunalbewegung in den 1950er und 60er Jahren', University of Siegn Ph.D. thesis, 2002, 41–3.

[12]M. Pieper, *Parteiauftrag: Städtepartnerschaft. Kommunalpartnerschaften zwischen Polen und der DDR und ihre Transformation nach 1989* (Berlin, 2020), 357.

[13]For ample examples based upon early post-millennial interviews, see M. Parek (ed.), *Schlesier in der DDR. Berichte von Flüchtlingen, Vertriebenen und Umsiedlern* (Görlitz, 2009).

whatever way they could.[14] For instance, resettlers in Dresden nourished their sense of victimhood during officially sanctioned mourning rituals surrounding the firebombing by Anglo-American 'terror bombing'. Although Dresden's old town functioned as a dramatic lapidarium of ruins to evoke nostalgia and loss, the jagged fragments of the Frauenkirche quickly became the foremost site for commemorating German victimhood. Like native residents, Dresden's resettlers could use this exceptional context to express their melancholy at the loss of an idealized world of the past.[15] Set apart by the limits of economic integration and undaunted by official taboos when they met in private, they ruminated on the world they had known just across the border and pondered how to see it again. After 1959, some resettlers started to satisfy this desire under the auspices of Dresden's twinning with Wrocław.

The twinning of Dresden with Wrocław

Dresden was twinned with Wrocław just before East Germany entered the Fédération Mondiale des Villes Jumelées (FMVJ) in 1960. By 1965, SED district leaderships in East Germany had concluded 16 solidarity pacts with counterparts in Poland, second only to the 17 pacts with Czechoslovak districts; all of these served as a basis for official contact, delegation exchanges and twinning agreements.[16] Despite such activity, however, the East German leadership shrank before concluding any sister-city accord that, as Ingo Bautz observes, lacked 'a high foreign policy and symbolic value, as well as demonstrable practical usefulness'.[17] Only when Brandt's Ostpolitik sought (at first in vain) to twin West German cities with East Bloc counterparts did the German Democratic Republic (GDR) aggressively use sister-city connections to advertise East German superiority to its Cold War competitor and thus attempt to blunt Bonn's growing influence in the East Bloc. As Christian Rau shows in his contribution to this special issue, by the 1970s the SED regime twinned its cities in earnest to compete with West Germany. This paralleled the trend Maria Pasztor and Dariusz Jarosz have illustrated based upon extensive archival research, namely that the Polish communist regime twinned Polish cities with counterparts across both blocs to further the 1956 Gomułka thaw.[18] The result, Markus Pieper adds, is that East German–Polish sister-city relations both mirrored official bilateral relations and facilitated contacts along with the transfer of ideas and goods.[19] Thus, as Ingo Bautz

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[14]M. Schwartz, *Vertriebene und Umsiedlerpolitik: Integrationskonflikte in den deutschen Nachkriegs-Gesellschaften und die Assimilationsstrategien in der SBZ/DDR 1945–1961* (Munich, 2004), 1119.

[15]J. Haubold-Stolle and M. Saryusz-Wolksa, 'Die doppelte Geschichte einer Stadt', in Hahn and Traba (eds.), *Deutsch-Polnische Erinnerungsorte*, vol. I, 239.

[16]SED stands for Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands; this 'Socialist Unity Party' was forged on the eve of the founding of East Germany in 1949 through a forced merger of the German Communist Party (KPD) with the more moderate German Socialist Party (SPD).

[17]Bautz, 'Die Auslandsbeziehungen der deutschen Kommunen im Rahmen der europäischen Kommunal-bewegung in den 1950er und 60er Jahren', 289–90.

[18]M. Pasztor and D. Jarosz, 'Władze komunistyczne w Polsce a ruch miast bliźniaczych w Europie', *Stodunki Międzynarodowe – International Relations*, 4 (2016), 293–313.

[19]Pieper, *Parteiauftrag*. Although his thesis features the Wrocław–Dresden twinning, Pieper offers only fleeting attention to the burdened heritage of forced migration, namely in his mention of a June 2015 Dresden exhibition of memories by expelled Germans, Ukrainians and Poles, partly sponsored by the *Partnerschaft* (354).

concludes, international tensions and domestic politics within the nation-state overwhelmingly determined whether twinning proceeded and to what extent it remained active.[20]

After establishing a treaty of friendship through socialism in June 1957, Wrocław and Dresden took on the very first GDR–Polish *Partnerschaft* in May 1959, just months after Coventry became Dresden's first sister city. Officially, they were paired due to their comparable size, industrial profile and cultural institutions, all with the goal to support the 'building up of socialism'.[21] Cultural exchanges were co-ordinated by each city's respective communist party leadership, and East German worker delegations often consisted of leading SED party functionaries. Similar expectations were laid out in Dresden's special relationship with Leningrad and Ostrava: the 'development of friendship and co-operation through *Städtepartnerschaften*' was to be in keeping with the notion that 'the deciding preconditions for the further growth of the strength of the international influence of socialism is and will always be the unity and cohesion of the socialist lands [and] their interconnectedness with the USSR'.[22]

Henceforth, the Silesian and Saxon capitals exhibited annual celebrations of the other's culture, portrayed mainly through the industrial achievements of socialism. In 1960, a Polish photo exhibition in the Dresden Semperoper celebrated the reconstruction of Wrocław.[23] After the Dresden–Wrocław *Partnerschaft* was reaffirmed in 1963, both sides renewed their commitment to regular party-approved trans-border exchanges.[24] From 1971 onward, the 'Wrocław Cultural Days' took place in November in Dresden. By 1972, the Polish restaurant 'Wrocław' had opened on the Pragerstrasse in Dresden, and an exhibition celebrating '30 years of Lower Silesia (Dolny Śląsk) in the People's Republic of Poland' appeared in Dresden's cultural palace.

The Dresden–Wrocław twinning was conceived amid a particularly hostile East German–Polish state dynamic. This was a 'forcibly ordered friendship', Ludwig Melhorn argues, in the context of what Sheldon Anderson may overstate as a 'Cold War in the Soviet Bloc'.[25] On a personal level, Walter Ulbricht and Władysław Gomułka mutually loathed the neighbouring country's response to de-Stalinization; Gomułka could not abide Ulbricht's stolid adherence to Stalinist repression, while Ulbricht publicly denounced Gomułka's populist marriage of communism with

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[20]*Ibid.*, 124, 337.

[21]'Landeshauptstadt Dresden Amt für Presse- und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit Abteilung Europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten, 'Städtepartnerschaft Dresden-Breslau – von der Gründung bis 2011', Jan. 2012, www.dresden.de/media/pdf/europa/Info-Breslau-bis-2011.pdf, accessed 16 Sep. 2012. This document has since vanished from the Dresden city webpage in favour of a graphics-intensive but superficial treatment: www.dresden.de/de/leben/stadtportrait/europa/01-partnerstaedte.php, accessed 16 Mar. 2019.

[22]'Die Entwicklung der Partnerschaftsbeziehungen zwischen Dresden und seinen Partnerstädten Leningrad, Wrocław, Ostrava', *c.* 1973, Stadtmuseum Dresden Abteilung Stadtchronik (SDSC).

[23]Pieper, *Parteiauftrag*, 115.

[24]'Abkommen über die Zusammenarbeit zwischen dem Präsidium des Rates der Stadt Wrocław der Volksrepublik Polen und dem Rate der Stadt Dresden der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, abgeschlossen in Dresden am 1. November 1963', SDSC.

[25]L. Melhorn, 'Zwangsverordnete Freundschaft? Zur Entwicklung der Beziehungen zwischen der DDR und Polen', in Kerski, Woycicki and Kotula (eds.), *Zwangsverordnete Freundschaft*, 35–40; S. Anderson, *A Cold War in the Soviet Bloc: Polish–East German Relations, 1945–1962* (Oxford, 2001).

nationalism as counterrevolutionary. Compounding Polish reservations, East German recognition of the Oder–Neisse border in the 1950 Treaty of Görlitz fell flat as East Germany pushed full blame for Nazism onto West Germany.[26] Rapprochement between Erich Honecker and Eduard Gierek – each the successor to a monolithic party leader – peaked with the unparalleled border opening in January 1972, which allowed visa-free travel between the two countries as something of a pressure valve for populations hemmed in by Cold War borders.

In many ways, the Dresden–Wrocław twinning paralleled this context of 'forcibly ordered friendship', as it coincided with aversion at the highest levels of both regimes. Even as interstate relations reached their best levels during the Cold War, Daniel Logemann records enough tension and superficiality in the case of Leipzig's 1973 twinning with Cracow to argue that there was little meaningful rapprochement at the official level, concluding: 'official propaganda certainly stressed the brotherly co-operation with socialist neighbours, but generally hollow platitudes were seldom followed by sustainable outcomes'.[27] Hence, it was at the grassroots level, as East Germans vacationed in Cracow and Poles consumed in Leipzig, that one might speak of transnational interchange as a 'successful project'.[28] If this was a sort of 'Eigen-Sinn' – an influential yet ambiguous concept about wilful individual self-direction and self-interest – it should not be read as active dissent from socialism.[29] Much as Mateusz Hartwich observes that East German tourists ventured to the Riesengebirge mountains, not to dissent, but to vacation and escape repressive state observation,[30] Dresdners (especially resettlers) took part in the sister-city programme, not to resist socialism, but to defy a state taboo on discussing the lost German East. Seldom for any dramatic political reasons, they talked about their lost *Heimat* to deal with their own sense of uprootedness and seek some semblance of closure. In sum, even if sister-city programmes were locked into the shifting international political morass, and even if individual East German resettlers were not seeking to defy the political status quo, the recent past bled through official pronouncements about the value of sister-city interchange. And rather than lacking personal agency, participants manoeuvred themselves to serve their own interests and, sometimes, even to serve in the cause of trans-border understanding. In particular, trans-border interchange under the auspices of the Dresden–Wrocław

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[26]B. Kerski, 'Die Beziehungen zwischen der DDR und Polen', in Kerski, Woycicki and Kotula (eds.), *Zwangsverordnete Freundschaft*, 9–26, at 15–16. For discussion of divided approaches in each Cold War German state to the legacies of Hitler and the Holocaust, see J. Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, MA, 1999); B. Niven, 'The sideways gaze: the Cold War and memory of the Nazi past, 1949–70', in T. Hochscherf, C. Laucht and A. Plowman (eds.), *Divided, but not Disconnected: German Experiences of the Cold War* (New York, 2010), 49–62.

[27]D. Logemann, *Das polnische Fenster. Deutsch-polnische Kontakte im staats-sozialistischen Alltag Leipzigs, 1972–1989* (Munich, 2012), 35.

[28]*Ibid.*, 343.

[29]In addition to its use by scholars such as Alf Lüdke and Detlev Peukert in the Nazi context, Eigensinn has featured as a conceptual framework in the East German context. See, for instance, T. Lindenberger (ed.), *Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur* (Cologne, 1999); C. Rau, 'Socialism from below: Kommunalpolitik in the East German dictatorship between discourse and practice', *German History*, 36 (2017), 60–77.

[30]M. Hartwich, 'Reisen von DDR-Bürgern ins Riesengebirge in den 50er und 60er Jahren', in M. Parak (ed.), *Schlesier in der DDR* (Görlitz, 2009), 121–35, at 132.

Partnerschaft often served to expose the buried traumatic past of Nazi atrocities, forced migration and the lost eastern *Heimat*.

Dresden delegations to Wrocław

On the surface, exchanges between the two communist parties reveal mainly two-dimensional attacks on West German imperialism and militarism, overwhelming interest in 'progress' in Poland's new Western Territories and a glaring lack of discussion about the region's German past or expelled inhabitants.[31] Through deeper reading, however, the roughly bimonthly East German delegations across the Oder–Neisse border to visit factories and museums and take part in cultural events touched on the recent past. In the first place, East German visitors to the formerly German metropolis of Breslau walked on a palimpsest cityscape: a layered urban parchment on which Polish rulers and inhabitants inscribed new meanings upon existing landmarks. Immediate post-war Polonizing frenzies had indeed scratched away German inscriptions as thoroughly as possible, but a wide array of architectural monuments remained intact or were painstakingly restored as testament to a supposedly eternal Polish past.[32] Restoration highlights included the Romanesque chapel of St Martin on the Odra islands, façades on the four sides of the market with their Renaissance gables, the historic university ensemble with its golden Baroque tower and contours and the Prussian-era neoclassical opera designed by Carl Gotthard Langhans (the son of the architect of Berlin's Brandenburg Gate). Moreover, reconstruction efforts on supposedly national-Polish churches on the Cathedral Island in 1946 included an allocation of 708,464 zloty to renovate the neoclassical bishop's palace due to its 'character as an historic monument', even though it dated solidly to the Prussian era.[33] Hence, notwithstanding official rhetoric that a nationally Polish reconstruction was gripping the once-German city, a great deal of the architectural legacy returned, which German visitors easily recognized from their own memories of Breslau.[34]

In the second place, roughly one quarter of participants in the 1960 delegation had been born in Breslau, Guben or some other city just across the border in the lost German East; that the majority of participants, notably leaders, were seldom from the territories was proven by their regular ignorance about the region's heritage, their inability to spell former German names when they opted not to record Polish-language place designations and their credulity when Polish guides recounted the region's ancient Polish history.[35] Anniversaries such as the joint 15th anniversary of the 'Liberation from Fascism' in 1960 formed a typical cause for sending a delegation

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[31]A. Frenzel, 'Bericht der Delegation des Bezirksverbandes der DBD Potsdam über den Besuch bei der Vereinigten Polnischen Bauernpartei des Bezirkes Opole vom 19.–24. Juli 1964', 27 Jul. 1964, Bundesarchiv Berlin (BAB) SAPMO DY 60/4645, 1–10.

[32]For a survey of immediate post-war reconstruction in Wrocław as compared to West German Frankfurt and East German Leipzig, see A. Demshuk, 'Rebuilding after the Reich: sacred sites in Frankfurt, Leipzig, and Wrocław, 1945–1949', in T. Keogh (ed.), *War and the City* (Paderborn, 2019). For a post-war urban biography of Wrocław's transformation, see G. Thum, *How Breslau Became Wrocław during the Century of Expulsions* (Princeton, 2011).

[33]Inż.Arch. M. Bukowski, 'Kosztorys', 7 Oct. 1946, Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu, WDO 126, 38.

[34]For typical guidebooks, see Z. Antkowiak, *Ulice i place Wrocławia* (Wrocław, 1970); and A. Bajcar, *Führer durch Wrocław* (Warsaw, 1966).

[35]See records from the April 1960 delegation in BAB SAPMO DY 34/24607.

from Dresden to Wrocław.[36] In this instance, leading Görlitz communist Alfred Janietz unwittingly exploited a chance to pass through Legnica, formerly his birthplace of Liegnitz, on the way to Wrocław as part of the delegation.[37]

Amid discussions that took place during an exchange, the difficult recent past of forced migration regularly bled through rhetoric about socialist friendship. In a typical programme, a 1963 'friendship visit' of 260 delegates and 140 guests from the Dresden and Leipzig districts to explore reconstruction and agricultural developments in Wrocław and its surrounding district emphasized the struggle to 'defend the Oder–Neisse Peace Border' and assail 'West German imperialism and militarism' without ever mentioning the wartime heritage of ethnic cleansing emblazoned in some of the participants' memories in ways that gave their visit particular resonance.[38] When Dresden party leader and Stasi informant Rolf Otte commented during a 1959 trip to the Wrocław art museum that an overabundance of Polish romanticism left out works unrelated to the Polish nationalist liberation movement, 'our [Polish] friends gave the opinion that twentieth-century Polish art had not produced contemporary works that dealt with the national liberation struggle'. In reality, there could have been little twentieth-century Polish art produced in a city and region that until 1945 had been overwhelmingly German-speaking, and Otte was unnerved to observe that curators had painstakingly excluded any reference to a German artistic heritage. Twentieth-century Polish art, thus, could only be featured in a special exhibition of very recent works by Polish artists.[39]

The quandary was, if anything, even more intense in the city historical museum, which sought and failed to feature the nineteenth-century worker tradition. As Otte observed:

> In their representation of the political history of Silesia since the mid-nineteenth century, in which the history of the worker movement has to take on the greatest space, our Polish friends consequently enter into great difficulties. It is just a fact that this region stood under German administration for a long historical period and above all a German worker movement was present here. However, the struggle of the *Polish* worker and their struggle for social and national liberation have to stand in the foreground.

Although Otte averred that the German visitors were not qualified to judge why this history was missing from the Polish historical narrative, he breached the taboo that

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[36]Sekretariatssitzung des Bundesvorstandes, Beschlüsse, 25 Apr. 1960, BAB SAMPO DY 34/24583, 329. Unlike Polish delegations (which averaged 30–40 people), East German participants numbered 3–4, except in cases where a larger team or cultural ensemble travelled.

[37]FDGB-Bezirksvorstand Dresden Abt. Org.-Kader, 'Kurzbiographie des Koll. Alfred Janietz, Vorsitzender des FDGB-KV in Görlitz', 19 Apr. 1960, BAB SAPMO DY 34/24607.

[38]'Bericht über den Freundschaftsbesuch einer Delegation der Demokratischen Bauernpartei Deutschlands in der Wojewodschaft Wroclaw in der Zeit vom 6.–10.11.1963', 25 Nov. 1963, BAB SAPMO DY 60/4645, 5.

[39]'Bericht der Delegation der Abteilung Kultur des Rates des Bezirkes Dresden über den Aufenthalt in Wroclaw in der Zeit vom 12.–17.1.1959', Dresden, 22 Jan. 1959, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden (SHD) 11430, Nr. 06720, 5. For Otte's Stasi identity, see Unterleutnant Schumann, Bezirksverwaltung (BV) Dresden Abteilung V/2, 'Vorschlag zur Werbung eines GI', 4 Mar. 1959, Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BstU) MfS BV Dresden, AIM 2556/90, 5–9.

'the overwhelming portion of our [Polish] comrades, like the majority of the current Silesian population, comes from the region around Lwów (Lemberg). Thus there are hardly any contributions to local history.'[40]

More ghosts from the recent past appeared in reports about cultural ensembles. As soon as the sister-city agreement was signed, it was decided to send a cultural ensemble from the Wrocław region to Dresden to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the GDR; likewise, an ensemble from the Dresden region was to perform in the formerly German towns around Wrocław.[41] This was the VEB Steel and Rolling Mill 'Joliot Curie' ensemble from Riesa, whose regular trips into Lower Silesia took place under the banner of 'German–Polish friendship'.[42] The ensemble's name was itself tied to Wrocław: French communist-physicist Frédéric Joliot-Curie had served as the first president of the Soviet-dominated World Council of Peace, which had held its initial meeting in Wrocław in 1948. From 22 to 28 June 1959, the Riesa ensemble performed in front of thousands of Poles at locations the East German performers typically referred to with German names (such as 'Waldenburg', rather than Wałbrzych).[43]

Polish audiences did not always appreciate all the ensemble's songs, since at first benign lyrics took on a potentially nefarious undertone in light of the recent past. For instance, although the tune *Heimat wir lassen dich nicht* (Homeland, we won't leave you) had been written by the stalwart East German Socialist Realist musician and musicologist Ernst Hermann Meyer, delegation officials discovered after the first concert that 'the programme required a change, because the song *Heimat wir lassen dich nicht* was not properly understood by the audience and was met with unrest'. Polish listeners were likewise unnerved by the song 'Thank you, Soviet soldiers', which included the raising of a Soviet flag.[44]

Even more embarrassing, spontaneous arguments had arisen during the trip about the Oder–Neisse border. Compelled to acknowledge the taboo of forced migration, the delegation group leader insisted to his SED superiors that of course his performers had 'given clear, politically correct arguments about problems like the Oder–Neisse border, the nature of circumstances in West Germany, as well as German–Soviet friendship'. However, he also revealed that two Polish workers had told him: 'one day Adenauer is certainly coming here', and resettlers performing in the ensemble may have prompted some of the anxiety on both sides. In light of such misconduct at the concert, the Polish secretary of propaganda and culture in Wrocław, Wiesław Derych, soon complained to East German SED authorities that 'many uncertainties arise among the Polish people concerning the finality of the Oder–Neisse border'. He advised publication of an official East German statement in Polish and German that East Germans were not militarists like West Germans, because he feared that 'this uncertainty about the border is such that many Poles take a wait-and-see attitude and are therefore less active in building up' Poland's new Western Territories. Of course, the transnational musical exchanges were not just a negative experience: after a Polish

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[40]Italics in original, 'Bericht der Delegation der Abteilung Kultur des Rates des Bezirkes Dresden über den Aufenthalt in Wrocław in der Zeit vom 12.–17.1.1959', Dresden, 22 Jan. 1959, SHD 11430, Nr. 06720, 7–8.

[41]'Vorschläge zur Konkretisierung des Planes vom 5.11.1958 über den kulturellen Austausch zwischen den Bezirken Dresden und Wrocław im Jahre 1959', SHD 11430, Nr. 06533, 2.

[42]VEB is a *Volkseigener Betrieb*, a 'people-owned enterprise' in which private ownership is prohibited.

[43]'Bericht über die Reise des Volkskunstensembles Joliot Curie des VEB Stahl- und Walzwerk Riesa nach der Volksrepublik Polen (Bezirk Wrocław) von 22.–28.6.59', SHD 11430, Nr. 06720.

[44]*Ibid.*, 1.

ensemble from Sobótka performed two Polish national dances for their counterparts, the two groups exchanged numerous 'addresses and gifts'.[45] Nonetheless, the acrimonious personality of the German delegation group leader, whom performers ridiculed as 'dictator Maes', even got on Derych's nerves. After almost excessive discussion of German–Polish co-operation and friendship, Maes declared that a Polish worker had told him that in two hours they had experienced more political enlightenment than in the entire year, an assumption the final report noted that 'comrade Derych opposed with justifiable sharpness. He asserted that, thanks to the political work of the United Polish Worker Party, the first preconditions were created for the friendly reception of our ensemble in Poland's Western Territories.'[46]

Later trips evinced greater caution from the organizers. For its May 1960 trip in honour of 'the 15-year anniversary of the Polish Western Territories', the Riesa ensemble's list of songs changed radically to feature more innocuous tunes like the 'dance of international solidarity' and 'song of Warsaw'. The group played twice in Wrocław, and once in 'Jelenja Gora' (Jelenia Góra), 'Polanicy' (Polanica-Zdrój), and 'Walbrzych' (Wałbrzych).[47] Likewise, the Riesa ensemble's concerts for the 20th anniversary of 'liberation' by the Red Army in 1965 featured works by Gershwin, Wagner, Khachaturian and Beethoven that both sides perceived as unrelated to the traumas that had gripped the region two decades ago. Nonetheless, the past could not be avoided once the ensemble had crossed from Saxony into Silesia. They performed in the 'Hala Ludowa', the massive, domed *Jahrhunderthalle* designed by the famous German architect Max Berg in 1913; they climbed to the 'Schneekoppe' in the mountains behind Jelenia Góra, some of them hiking along very familiar paths from their childhoods; their performances in Wałbrzych and Legnica (which still had considerable indigenous German minorities) elicited far more substantial crowds than in Wrocław itself, despite its much larger population; they were harassed repeatedly about 'the Problem of the Oder–Neisse Border'; and twice on their tour, in Wrocław and Jelenia Góra, they reported that 'swastikas were smeared through the dirty outer surfaces of our bus'.[48] In his report, the group leader asserted that of course every participant had known that most Poles did not hate Germans.

Due to their repeated visits, ensemble members witnessed Polish achievements in reconstruction. Celebrating how 'in its free time the ensemble had the opportunity to visit the beautiful and renowned historical sites such as the cathedral island, Halle Ludowa, etc.', a 1965 report celebrated

the enormous new construction in Wrocław, which we had last seen five years ago. Whole city districts have newly come into being. Beautiful new apartment buildings, new streetscapes, many parking areas, clubs, and other institutions for social gatherings and discussion. The resulting, pulsing life confirmed our

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[45]*Ibid.*, 1–2.

[46]Uhlmann, Informationen, SHD 11430, Nr. 06720.

[47]'Programm des Ensembles Joliot Curie für die Reise in die Volksrepublik Polen vom 7. bis 15. 5. 1960', SHD 11430, Nr. 06533.

[48]Klubhaus der Gewerkschaften 'Joliot Curie' VEB Stahl- und Walzwerk Riesa Volkskunstensemble, 'Bericht über die Reise des Volkskunstensembles Joliot-Curie des VEB Stahl- u. Walzwerkes Riese anläßlich des Jahrestages der Volksrepublik Polen vom 17.–25.7.1965 im Bezirk Wrocław/VR Polen', 8 Nov. 1965, SHD 11430, Nr. 06722, 4–5. A Wrocław ensemble travelled to Riesa from 1 to 8 May, and the Riesa ensemble went to Wrocław from 17 to 25 July.

impressions: Wrocław has become larger and more beautiful, not least through the population's efficiency and desire for reconstruction.

The official report thanked their Polish hosts, who had given them the chance to collect such 'numerous, great impressions and reflections [and] beautiful memories'.[49] By the 1970s, inspection at building sites – especially apartment blocks – became a common tour highlight in Wrocław and Dresden alike.[50]

Lest resettlers should exploit the exchange for personal reminiscences, SED authorities vetted ensembles that passed into Poland under the auspices of the *Partnerschaft.* While seeking to confirm the loyalties of leaders in an East German Sorb ensemble before its 1959 tour, the comrade in charge was asked to make sure 'that former resettlers who are part of the ensemble today won't not use this trip as a way to satisfy any kind of private desires or interests'.[51] Over the course of its four-day trip, the ensemble (comprised chiefly of members for whom Sorbian was not their first language) passed through sites either misspelled or given German designations such as 'Hirschberg', 'Wrowlaw' (where they were to play in the 'Jahrhunderthalle') and 'Bad Salzbrunn bei Waldenburg (im Kurpark).' Some 25,000 people – most of them likely from the town's considerable German minority – came to hear the concert near Wałbrzych, in contrast to no more than 6,000 in Wrocław and Jelenia Góra combined. German attendance was further evinced when, amid singing the German-language hymn 'Brother attend to the Red Banner', enthused railway workers in the crowd started to sing along spontaneously. This contrasted with concerts in Jelenia Góra and Wrocław, where Polish functionaries sought to translate the lyrics into Polish or even ban them, because they were in German, Sorbian and Russian, rather than in Polish. Ultimately, Polish programme translators, one of them an actor from the local theatre, even sought to eliminate any references to socialism and friendship with the Soviet Union. Only after cries of outrage from the audience could they sing the original version which contained such references.[52] Here again, censorship could be hard to carry out on the ground amid audiences weary of having fragments of history routinely excluded.

Censorship could also go the other way, such as when an ensemble from Wrocław performed in Dresden in 1959; perhaps here there had been concerns about explicit references to Polish territories with so many resettlers likely in the audience. The plan had been to sing Maria Koterbska's *Wrocławska Piosenka*, 'The song of Wrocław', a contemporary Polish hit wherein 'in the form of a streetcar ride through Wrocław, reconstruction and new achievements are displayed'. Also featured was 'Warsaw, city of peace', a new 'song that has spread all over Poland singing of the reconstruction of Warsaw and the will of its residents for peace'. East German party officials crossed both the Wrocław and Warsaw songs off the list, leaving only revolutionary worker hymns that were far less in tune with contemporary Polish culture.[53]

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[49]Klubhaus der Gewerkschaften 'Juliot Curie', SHD 11430, Nr. 06722, 4–5.

[50]See reports in SHD 11857, Nr. IV C – 2/18/737.

[51]An das Ministerium für Kultur Abt. Volkskunst, 'Stellungnahme zum Gastspiel des Staatlichen Ensembles für sorbische Volkskultur in der Volksrepublik Polen', 13 Aug. 1959, SHD 11430, Nr. 06720.

[52]Abteilung für Kultur, Aktennotiz über ein Telefonat, 'Staatliches Ensemble für sorbische Volkskultur (Jurij Winar) nach Wrocław', 10 Aug. 1959, SHD 11430, Nr. 06720.

[53]'Programm mit kurzem Inhalt', in 'Einsatz und Betreuungsplan für das Genossenschaftsensemble Wrocław 4.10.–12.10.1959', SHD 11430, Nr. 06720.

Another repeated point of anxiety for East German travel planners was the apparent inability of Polish artists and onlookers to differentiate between the two German states: a concern that often coincided with further evidence that the heritage of recent violent population policies could not be suppressed amid blithe narratives about socialist friendship. After 110 Polish musicians visited Dresden in 1959, the SED report complained that 'they don't consider West German militarism to be as dangerous as we do'.[54] Fistfights even broke out when a translator (a Polish Jew who knew German) failed to recount everything his Polish associates had said and even insulted them. When the translator was expelled back to Poland, 'he did not want to board the bus, because in his opinion the ensemble reproached him for his Jewish heritage, something that was absolutely not the case. Then he boarded it after all and in tears bid his farewell to Dresden and the ensemble. Even after his dismissal, he tried to retain contact with some who accompanied [the ensemble]', an outrage that led the German leadership to commence an immediate discussion with their Polish counterparts, wherein they recognized 'our reasons for dismissing' him, not because of apparent racial discord that had arisen, but 'due to the good work of the new translators'. Black market trade in coffee and cigarettes, and the dismissal of another translator for his 'political' lapses, further reveal that, in their 'particulars', German–Polish cultural encounters could never free themselves from an unresolved past or illegal material proclivities.[55]

Although later trip reports largely excluded such details, a Dresden Bezirk cultural secretary expressed his annoyance in 1965 that a Polish ensemble that played in Dresden for the Day of World Peace was of poor quality, leading his department to advise that 'cultural exchange in 1966 should no longer be executed so often; rather, exchanges by cultural groups and ensembles should only coincide with political highlights, in order to guarantee that only really good ensembles are put into action'.[56] In fact, exchange writ large was about to expand.

Out of control: twin cities and visa-free travel after 1972

As the push for visa-free travel triumphed in January 1972, the *Partnerschaft* touted its place as a trans-border conduit for understanding, and leaders encouraged the people of Saxony to visit western Poland. The very highest officials plugged the better relations between East Germany and Poland; party leaders Eduard Gierek and Erich Honecker met in Frankfurt an der Oder to great acclaim to celebrate coming economic and cultural interchange on both sides, and in October 1972, Dresden and Wrocław celebrated German–Polish Cultural Days.[57] In the context of interviews he conducted about 1970s Leipzig and Cracow, Logemann observes that a select few East Germans became 'crazy about Poland' (*polenverrückt*); although they

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[54]'Bericht über das Gastspiel des Genossenschaftsensembles im Bezirk Dresden vom 4.–12.10.59', Dresden, 28 Oct. 1959, SHD 11430, Nr. 06720, 1.

[55]'Anhang zum Bericht über das Gastspiel des Genossenschaftsensembles im Bezirk Dresden vom 4.–12.10.59', SHD 11430, Nr. 06720.

[56]Rat des Bezirkes Dresden, Abteilung Kultur, Koll. Burkhardt, 'Einschätzung über den Kulturaustausch zwischen den Städten Görlitz und Zgorzelec im Jahre 1965', 11 Nov. 1965, SHD 11430, Nr. 06722.

[57]See the much illustrated brochure: J. Mirtschin (ed.), 'Dni Kultury Okręgu: Drezdeńskiego NRD w Województwie Wrocławskim w dniach od 25.10 do 29.10.1972 r.', SDSC, 1–32.

first ventured to Poland for political reasons, fascination with Poland could follow (including the desire to learn the language and even to take tours there).[58] Certainly, official propaganda sought to instil a sense of Polonophilia. A 1973 report on the sister-city relationship lauded that: 'information about the city of Wrocław in Dresden attracts an ever increasing number of residents in our city who use the possibility of visa-free travel to get to know the Polish city on the Oder'.[59] After chronicling the 'metre-high heaps of ruin' at the end of the 'criminal fascist war' but never mentioning that the city's 'imperialist heritage' had in fact been German, a 1976 newspaper report in the *Sächsische Zeitung* noted: 'perhaps you yourself have already taken some vacation days or a weekend to visit our sister city?'.[60] The raw statistics are indeed staggering. In 1972 alone, 10 million Polish citizens visited the GDR, 4.5 million of whom entered Bezirk Dresden; and 6.6 million GDR citizens travelled to Poland, 2.5 million of whom heralded from Bezirk Dresden. Although 1972 was a peak, this overall trend of bustling interchange continued until 1980.[61]

Of course, as tens of thousands of East German tourists (many of them resettlers) crossed the Oder–Neisse border, there was even less that could be done to control what they chose to see and do in 'Polish' spaces that propaganda inevitably failed to mention (but which every resettler knew) had been largely German just a few years before. And overwhelmingly, they were seeking out their lost *Heimat* spaces, consequently coming into contact with their new Polish inhabitants, and so encountering the recent past, regardless of what the official rhetoric had to say about it.[62]

Meanwhile, cultural exchange between the two sister cities continued to expand. Student delegations ventured to each sister city in early 1972; under the guidance of each party leadership, 45 industrial concerns and institutions in the Dresden and Wrocław districts entered into joint party organizational agreements; and from early 1970 onward, economic and technical co-operation, worker exchanges, children's excursions, travel by vacationers, sport competitions and cultural collaboration flourished. In October 1973, 22 artistic events took place amid the second annual Wrocław District Cultural Days, visited by about 12,000 Dresden residents, some of them likely with origins in the sister city.[63] On their June 1974 tour of Silesian cultural and industrial concerns, leading party officials (some of them resettlers and some of them Stasi informants) celebrated with their Polish counterparts that 'the trip of the Dresden delegation was an expression of proletarian internationalism' that solidified

[58]Logemann, *Das polnische Fenster*, 33.

[59]'Die Entwicklung der Partnerschaftsbeziehungen zwischen Dresden und seinen Partnerstädten Leningrad, Wrocław, Ostrava', *c.* 1973, SDSC.

[60]G. Seethaler, 'Gute Nachbarn – enge Partner. Wie sich die Beziehungen zwischen Wrocław und Dresden immer mehr festigen', *Sächsische Zeitung*, 23 Jul. 1976, 2.

[61]'Material für die Beratung mit dem Sekretariat Wroclaw der PVAP', May 1973, SHD 11857, Nr. IV C – 2/18/737, 30.

[62]For the frequency of East German resettler travel into Poland to see the lost *Heimat*, see files in BAB DDR DM 102/691.

[63]'Städtepartnerschaft Dresden-Breslau – von der Gründung bis 2011', Jan. 2012. For a list of twinned industrial, educational and cultural organizations, see Abteilung Parteiorgane Internationale Verbindungen, 'Aufstellung über die Zusammenarbeit von Betrieben und Institutionen des Bezirkes Dresden und der Wojewodschaft Wrocław', 25 Nov. 1972, SHD 11857, Nr. IV C – 2/18/738. For a further list as of 1987, see 'Direktbeziehungen zwischen Kunst- und Kultureinrichtungen des Bezirkes Dresden und der Wojewodschaft Wrocław', BStU MfS BV Dresden, Abteilung XX 9495.2, 217–18.

transnational friendship and the 'deepening of reflections by workers in Bezirk Dresden'.[64]

Even more Poles travelled in the opposite direction, to East Germany. As an official report noted, the purpose of such visits was supposed to be cultural: 'the urge increases to come to know the achievements of socialist construction (*Aufbau*), historical sites, cultural events and the beauties of the land'. Already in 1971, roughly 10 per cent of all Polish visitors flocked to see state art galleries.[65] But far more swarmed in to buy scarce goods they could use or sell back home. Already in 1972, as about 10,000 Polish visitors crossed over each weekend, a Dresden party delegation in Wrocław warned the first party secretary of the Wojewód administration that, even though communists on both sides could agree 'that the opening of the border equals tremendous progress', they feared that Poles would strip the stores. With grim sarcasm, they noted: 'we fear that some goods are getting bought up, but we in the GDR cannot demand that prices get raised, such as for pepper'. Here a note was pencilled in: 'meanwhile this isn't necessary anymore, it's already all gone'. They concluded: 'we cannot look on with indifference when farmers ride with their carts into the GDR to shop'.[66] Even as 1.5 million mark was invested to enhance commercial sites in Görlitz, emphasis continued on cultural offerings, tourist signage, Polish-language menus and possibilities for camping; but the fact that camping sites were regularly left unused further points to the fact that most Poles crossed primarily to shop, rather than to spend the night.[67]

Martial law in Poland following the Solidarity protests drastically reduced sister-city exchanges and ended visa-free travel; at the same time, Wrocław became a bastion for anti-communist resistance. When a professor from the Dresden Technical University visited the sister school in Wrocław at the end of September 1980, he witnessed a student-wide strike (supported by most of the school's communist party members) that demanded higher pay, access to free media, free trade unions and condemnation of state corruption.[68] The culprits, according to Stasi spies in Wrocław, were delegates from Western institutions like the universities of Kiel, Stuttgart and Giessen, German Academic Exchange (DAAD) and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.[69] A Dresden delegation in October 1980

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[64]'Bericht über den Aufenthalt einer Studiendelegation der SED-Bezirksleitung Dresden in der Wojewodschaft Wroclaw in der Zeit vom 10.6. bis 14.6.1974', SHD 11857, Nr. IV C – 2/18/738, 10. For instance, local party leader Hans Hübner, born in Liegnitz, had become so trusted a party official that he went to the 1972 Munich Olympics as an East German representative. Feldwebel Leuschke, BV für Staatssicherheit Dresden, Leiter der Abteilung XX, 'Auskunftsbericht', 14 Feb. 1972, BStU MfS BV Dresden, AIM 3892/86 (Hübner, Hans), 4–14.

[65]'Material für die Beratung mit dem Sekretariat Wroclaw der PVAP', May 1973, SHD 11857, Nr. IV C – 2/18/737, 30.

[66]Sekretariat Dez. 1972 in Wroclaw, 'Information des Genossen Ludwik Drozdz über die Situation und die politische und wirtschaftliche Lage in der Wojewodschaft Wroclaw', SHD 11857, Nr. IV C – 2/18/737, 14–15.

[67]'Material für die Beratung mit dem Sekretariat Wroclaw der PVAP', May 1973, SHD 11857, Nr. IV C – 2/18/737, 31–3.

[68]Hippe, Leiter der Objektdienststelle TU/H, 'Information', Dresden, 8 Oct. 1980, BStU MfS HA XX/AKG 5618, 406–7. Similar information followed in Generalmajor Markert, Leiter der BV, an Gen. Modrow, 'Information über die Lage in der Wojewodschaft Wroclaw-VR Polen', 19 Dec. 1980, BStU MfS BV Dresden AKG PI 209/80, 1–5.

[69]BV Dresden Böhm an Gen. Modrow, 'Solidarność-Aktivitäten an der Universität Wrocław', 18 May 1983, BStU MfS BV Dresden AKG PI 134/83, 2.

was actually harassed: their first industrial tour was cancelled, the replacement could only be offered in Polish, their automobile was stopped three times by police who searched them for political tracts and their train was filled with Poles who had hidden East German marks inside candy packages while their children wore watches to be sold across the border. Three students, enrolled at Dresden's Technical University, apparently skipped classes so they could buy shoes, boots and expensive clothing they could sell back home.[70] After forcing all East German medical students in Szczecin to go home in autumn 1980, the Stasi advised bringing home the remaining 382 GDR citizens studying in Polish universities (74 of them in Wrocław), lest 'the constantly intensifying enemy pressure and the influence of counterrevolutionary tendencies leave negative consequences in individual GDR students'.[71]

By 1983, interchange picked up again under considerable party guidance, such as when a leading Wrocław party official visited Dresden with the goal of 'deepening co-operation between party organizations, state organs, social organizations and each district's industries and corporations'.[72] As Poles struggled to pay for goods ten times as expensive as in 1975, they hoped that a visit by Honecker might restore visa-free border traffic.[73] Under the auspices of the *Partnerschaft*, Dresden and Wrocław took measures that year for 'bilateral vacationer exchanges' under exhaustive state oversight that mandated the words 'vacationer exchange' written onto the traveller's passport.[74] Pressure for cross-border movement had reached such a point by 1988 that each regime had accepted 'the deployment of Polish workers in the GDR without valid [work] contracts', in addition to 10,000 commuters legally permitted to work in border districts.[75] By 1987, Polish students in Berlin overwhelmingly supported Solidarity, disregarded the communist party as inconsequential and regarded the Polish economic outlook as so hopeless that they desired to work in the 'Third World', rather than return to Poland.[76] By August 1989, a Wrocław delegation in Dresden for the GDR's 40th anniversary alarmed East German officials when they showed open sympathy for Solidarity, despair about the Polish economy and conviction that the communist monopoly on power had to end.[77]

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[70]BV Dresden Abteilung XV, 'Information über gewonnene Eindrücke während eines Aufenthaltes in der VR Polen vom 20.10.80–24.10.1980 sowie während der Betrauung von polnischen Studenten, wissenschaftlichen Mitarbeitern und Dozenten von der Universität Wrocław vom 14.11–16.11.1980 an der TU Dresden', 28 Nov. 1980, BStU MfS BV Dresden, Leiter der BV 10907, 83–4.

[71]'Vorschlag zur Zurückführung der in der VR Polen studierenden DDR-Bürger', BStU MfS HA II 38801, 52.

[72]'Städtepartnerschaft Dresden-Breslau – von der Gründung bis 2011', Jan. 2012.

[73]Gesprochen 'Robert', Oberleutnant Dieckmann, Abteilung II/6, 'Tonbandabschrift', Rostock, 25 Aug. 1983, BStU MfS HA II 38642, 88–90, at 89.

[74]Generalmajor Böhm, Leiter, BV für Staatssicherheit Dresden, 'Urlauberaustausch zwischen der DDR und der VR Polen', Dresden, 13 May 1983, BStU MfS BV Dresden Abt. XX 9236.2, 311–12.

[75]'Thesen zur politisch-operativen Lage in den Beziehungen/Verbindungen des Bezirkes Dresden nach der VR Polen', 24 Jun. 1988, BStU MfS BV Dresden AKG 10575, 1–16, at 4.

[76]*Ibid.*, 12.

[77]Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands BV Dresden, Parteiinternes Material, 'Bericht über den Besuch einer Delegation des Wojewodschaftskomitees Wrocław am 8. und 9. August 1989 im Bezirk Dresden', BStU MfS ZAIG 131176, 2–4.

Epilogue

Although throughout the Cold War East German authorities denounced West German *Patenschaften* for their official revanchist intentions, their own *Partnerschaften* were also mythologizing the past and present, here with emphasis on an ideological-socialist future. And although officially the end of communism meant that 'sister-city relations between Dresden and Wrocław [could] shape themselves free from ideological indoctrination of a party',[78] some narratives such as Dresden's all-encompassing victim trope have sustained continuity and even strengthened. Already in February 1990, Wrocław city president Stefan Skapski took part in the anniversary of the firebombing of Dresden.[79] Meanwhile, the *Partnerschaft* also conformed to serve the new prevailing rhetoric: European integration and understanding in the border region where reunified Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic meet.[80] Stories of Polish resistance to communism became a new mainstay for Wrocławian identity, to be shared with the sister city. The 1980s 'Orange Alternative' had lampooned tyranny when Wrocław residents had dressed up in dwarf costumes; this had not only been memorialized through the construction of over 200 bronze dwarves across Wrocław, but also through the gift of a bronze 'sister-city dwarf' (*Partnerschaftszwerg*) – complete with the Wrocław city coat of arms – for exhibition by the Dresden city hall in honour of the 55th anniversary of the city twinning in 2014.[81] Wrocław's new official identity trademarks it as a chameleon city that happens to change its identity every so many decades and unites German, Polish and Jewish heritage. In a typical report, the Dresden *Amtsblatt* celebrated Wrocław's 1000th anniversary in 2000 as an ancient Slavic city which, after a vibrant medieval history (with lengthy description), 'belonged to the German Reich until 1945' (barely expounded upon) before 'belonging again to the Polish state since the end of World War II', as if momentary possession by a medieval Polish duke could somehow be continuous with the post-war nation-state.[82] Although no longer officially a taboo, an official recounting of the sister city's history still failed to mention post-war ethnic cleansing. This relativizing of the caesura from 1938 to 1948 has also been enshrined in the sister city's post-Cold War parlance through exhibitions and cultural festivals, such as in official descriptions of Wrocław's 2016 status as European cultural capital.[83] Hence, it is questionable to what extent 'reconciliation' based upon explicit discussion of 'German crimes in World War II or the resettlement of the German population' has in fact come to dominate official discourse, even though such themes are no longer officially censured as under communism.[84]

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[78]'Städtepartnerschaft Dresden-Breslau – von der Gründung bis 2011', Jan. 2012.

[79]*Ibid.*

[80]West German *Partnerschaften* likewise attuned themselves to changed political realities after 1989, sometimes on the foundations of existing *Patenschaften*.

[81]'Ein Breslauer Zwerg für Dresden', www.dresden.de/de/leben/stadtportrait/europa/partner/01-zwerg.php, accessed 17 May 2018.

[82]'Odermetropole ist stolz auf ihre Geschichte', *Dresdner Amtsblatt*, 22 Jun. 2000, 1–2.

[83]'Breslau-Ausstellungen in den Museen der Stadt Dresden', www.dresden.de/de/leben/stadtportrait/europa/partner/Breslau-Ausstellungen.php, accessed 17 May 2018. The most influential articulation of this chameleon portrayal appeared in an historical textbook published in three languages and commissioned by the city of Wrocław: N. Davies and R. Moorhouse, *Microcosm: Portrait of a Central European City* (London, 2002).

[84]Pieper emphasizes 'reconciliation' discourse in *Parteiauftrag*, but this chiefly concerns Nazi crimes (355–6).

Regardless of the ongoing construction of new official narratives, the sister-city programme still allows former residents to interact with the spaces of the lost German East and witness the Polish spaces they have become. Since 1997, Wrocław University and the Technical University of Dresden have sustained a partnership that includes student exchanges and field trips, and high school students have taken part in shared trans-border summer programmes – all on the basis of collaboration that has existed between the Technical University of Dresden and Wrocław technical school since 1963.[85] To encourage further Saxon tourism, in November 1996 the city of Wrocław presented itself at Dresden's tourism conference.[86]

Though laden with a great deal of socialist rhetoric, the *Partnerschaft* programme unintentionally became a way for Germans and Poles to meet in the ethnically cleansed spaces of Wrocław, for German exiles from Breslau to encounter Polish delegations in their new area of settlement in Dresden and for old Breslauers (whose status as resettled people was officially censured in East Germany) to return 'home' to their city, witness what it had become and sometimes find a measure of closure after their loss. Though certainly the exchanges yielded their fair share of pain, angst and old hatreds, the twinning of Dresden with Wrocław nonetheless evinced potential to transcend contemporary rhetoric and compel Central Europeans to encounter, and possibly confront, the traumatic recent past.

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[85]'Die Entwicklung der Partnerschaftsbeziehungen zwischen Dresden und seinen Partnerstädten Leningrad, Wrocław, Ostrava', *c.* 1973, SDSC.

[86]'University of Wrocław', https://tu-dresden.de/gsw/internationales/partnerschaften/universitaet-breslau?set_language=en, accessed 17 May 2018.