

**Theatre Experts for the Third World:
East Germany's ITI and the 'development' of theatre in the Cold
War era**

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1 Introduction

1.1 International Exchange of Knowledge and Practice in Theatre Arts

The International Theatre Institute (ITI) was born out of a post-war desire to prevent future global conflict through cultural exchange and understanding between artists.

The Second World War had shaken the internationalist spirit of the interwar period. The League of Nations, the first intergovernmental organisation, had quite obviously failed in its goal to maintain world peace. Many non-governmental organisations meant to promote the international exchange of art, culture and science had either been dissolved with the outbreak of the war or effectively ceased their activities. This had also been the fate of the first international theatre organisation, the Société Universelles du Théâtre in Paris (SUDT), whose work had ended with the invasion of France by Nazi Germany.¹

But the internationalist ideals of the interwar period never disappeared, even throughout the horrors of the Second World War.² Some of the international organisations that still existed were revived, others dissolved and replaced. The United Nations (UN) was to continue where the League of Nations had failed. The League's advisory cultural organisation, the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, was succeeded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The ITI was established under the auspices of the UNESCO. It was designed after the model of the SUDT, with national branches in each member state, its work structured by committees, an annual congress, and an international festival.³

As Vincenzo Pavone has noted in his analysis of the UNESCO's response to globalisation, the UNESCO has since its founding been shaped by two competing ideologies and two conflicting conceptions of the organisation, one utopian and one pragmatic. This tension reflected the UNESCO's double constituency, the expert groups and the member states. As an affiliated NGO, the ITI can be counted as part of

¹ Canning, Charlotte. 2015. *On the performance front. US theatre and Internationalism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p.163

² Iriye, Akira. 2002. *Global Community: The Role of International Organisations in the Making of the Contemporary World*. Berkley: University of California Press, p.44

³ Canning. 2015. p. 168. and Iacob, Viviana. 2018. "Scenes of Cold War Diplomacy: Romania and the International Theater Institute, 1956-1969" In: *East Central Europe* 45. 184-214, p.187

the former camp. It is still, however, quite apparent, that it was also affected by this tension.

First, there was the global conception of UNESCO, represented by the Director-General, the Secretariat, and the NGOs. Its underlining philosophy was the ‘scientific humanism’ that J.B. Huxley had advocated for during his short term (1946–1948) as UNESCO’s first Director-General. This was a utopian vision of universalist reforms with the core belief that – through global advancements in knowledge and education – a peaceful global community could be established and the ideological conflict between communism and liberalism conciliated.⁴ The preamble to UNESCO’s constitution illustrates this mindset that fostered new efforts of international exchange. It stated, that “ignorance of each other’s ways and lives has been a common cause, throughout the history of mankind, of that suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world through which their differences have all too often broken into war.” Since the “great and terrible war” had been made possible by the “propagation, [...] through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races”, future military conflict could only be prevented through the “wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace.”⁵

The ITI shared the UNESCO’s internationalist ideals. Its purpose was, according to the charter, to “promote international exchange of knowledge and practice in theatre arts.”⁶ Playwright Maurice Kurtz, who initiated the foundation of the ITI, had announced its intentions to UNESCO Director-General Julian Huxley in this way: “I’ve just spent three years in the war. Now I’d like to spend three years working for peace. What can I do for Unesco and Theater?”⁷ In his opening address at the 1st ITI Congress in July 1948 in Prague, English writer and critic J. B. Priestley, one of the founders of ITI, also spoke to this mindset:

In a world threatened by gigantic conflicts, it might seem a small thing to establish an international theatre institute, but he did not agree with that point of view. Any international organization crossing frontiers was at least one thread in the fabric of a world society. The attempt to link theatres

⁴ Pavone, Vincenzo. 2007. “From intergovernmental to global: UNESCO’s response to globalization” In: *Review of International Organizations*, 2 (1), 77-95, p.78-79

⁵ UNESCO Digital Archive. Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

⁶ ITI. Protokolle 1. Charter of the ITI.

⁷ Kurtz, Maurice. 1983. “Creating the ITI” In: *International Theatre Institute 1948-1983*. 7-16. France: ITI, p.7

together and ensure that people enjoyed the best of the world's dramas showed a movement towards international understanding.⁸

He argued that theatre was an ideal tool to use in the fight against new global conflict because of its fundamentally communicative nature:

The particular nature of the theatre compelled those concerned with it to deal with real human beings concretely and intimately. The kind of monsters to be found in political speeches and articles had nothing to do with the theatre. From the theatre, people could learn how others were living, thinking and feeling. For success in the theatre, it was necessary to have knowledge of common human nature, to have sympathy with it and faith in it.⁹

For all the idealism voiced in these statements, the founders of the ITI were not ignorant of the threat that the new geopolitical tensions posed to the ITI. During the founding phase, they had already experienced the ways in which the Cold War would hinder the international exchange of theatre arts they wanted to achieve.

Second, there was the intergovernmental conception to the UNESCO that fed into the structures of the National Commissions, the General Conference and the Executive Board, all representatives of the member states. In this view, the UNESCO as a specialised agency of the UN should not be guided by any single philosophy. Instead, it was supposed to keep a neutral political profile to facilitate intergovernmental cooperation, establish only a minimum of ethical standard principles based on tolerance and cooperation, and primarily serve educational, medical, and technical aid.¹⁰ With the rise of the Cold War in the 1950s, this second vision of UNESCO was the one that prevailed. Despite their aspirations and hidden underneath this functionalist approach,¹¹ the UN, UNESCO and organisations founded under the UNESCO umbrella were *de facto* Western organisations in the postwar period. The UN headquarters were established in New York, the UNESCO moved from London to Paris. The United States were the largest contributor to the budget of the UNESCO and had the support of most member states. The intergovernmental conception of UNESCO was in accordance with US liberalism and had been favoured by the US delegates, including Director-General Luther Evans (1953–1958).¹²

⁸ UNESCO Digital Archive. Report on the First Congress of the International Theatre Institute (Prague 28 June to 3 July 1948). Paris. 1948/07/25, p.5

⁹ UNESCO Digital Archive. Report on the First Congress of the International Theatre Institute (Prague 28 June to 3 July 1948). Paris. 1948/07/25, p.5

¹⁰ Pavone. 2007. p.79-80

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.83

¹² *ibid.*, p.81

Since the UNESCO had played a key role in initiating the foundation of the ITI, the ITI adopted comparable structures. Just as UNESCO member states were represented by their national commissions, the ITI was made up of national centres. This decision codified that any participation of individual theatre artists would take place within the framework of national representation. Like its umbrella organisation, the ITI started as a mainly Western endeavour, initiated at UNESCO headquarters in Paris during a meeting of ‘theatre experts’ that were predominantly Western European. Consequently, the Western cultural and political supremacy and the notion of internationality held by these organisations was challenged twice, first by the socialist countries of the Eastern Bloc and then by the decolonising countries of the Global South.

While the Soviet Union (USSR) was a member, it initially disregarded the UN as a propaganda platform.¹³ The Soviet Union was similarly distrustful of the UNESCO, did not attend the founding conference and did not become a member.¹⁴ Its attitude toward the UNESCO was expressed as such:

Under the flag of cosmopolitanism, UNESCO preaches and defends the policy of American aspirants to World dominion. It serves to further the ideological expansion of dollar imperialism and shares actively in propaganda hostile to the Soviet Union and the People’s Democracies. In actual fact, this supposedly international agency is an auxiliary of the U.S. State Department.¹⁵

When Maurice Kurtz tried to invite Alexander Fadeyev of the Soviet Writers Union to initiate membership of the USSR in ITI, he was confronted with the same sentiment.¹⁶ At the initial meeting in Paris in 1947, it had been decided that Prague would be the meeting place for the 1st ITI Congress in 1948, where the organisation would be officially established. In early 1948 however, the communist party seized power in Czechoslovakia and turned the country into a Soviet satellite state. The initiators of the ITI briefly considered relocating the event, but then decided against it to prove the non-governmental character of their new organisation. The delegates of the US ITI centre still participated, albeit only as unofficial observers.¹⁷ After nine years of boycott, the

¹³ Garthoff, Raymond. 1994. *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, p.401

¹⁴ Armstrong, John A. 1954. “The Soviet Attitude Toward UNESCO.” In: *International Organization*. 8(2). 217–233, p. 217-8

¹⁵ Yevgenev, N. New Times. March 29, 1950. p.11-12, cited after *ibid.*, p.222

¹⁶ Canning. 2015. p.174; Iacob. 2018. p.188; Kurtz. 1983. p.7

¹⁷ Canning. 2015. p.175-176

Soviet Union joined the UNESCO in 1954 and became a member of ITI eleven years after its founding, at the 8th ITI Congress in Helsinki in 1959. Romania and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) also joined alongside it. By then, the Eastern Bloc¹⁸ was fully represented within the ITI.

The founders of the ITI did consider a neutral stance towards and an invitation of the countries of the Eastern Bloc in the face of rising geopolitical tensions a crucial expression of the ITI's international character. This shows that they initially still operated under the paradigm of a bipolar world, which was defined by affiliation to either the capitalist West or the socialist East. Next to this 'First World' and 'Second World', the existence of the 'Third World' was hardly acknowledged yet during the ITI's founding phase. This is illustrated by a conversation between Jean-Louis Barrault and J. B. Priestley at the theatre experts meeting. Given that there were only representatives from 12 countries present in Paris in 1947, Barrault had pointed out that the ITI could not exist "unless it embodied at least the necessary quorum of the nations of the world." Priestley had disagreed with Barrault, stating that "there were whole continents which had no national theatre." He therefore considered it "perfectly possible" for the ITI to consist "of 12 members only". Barrault then suggested "that a list might be drawn up of the countries having a true national theatre, so that the Institute should not run the risk of assuming the title 'international' without justification".¹⁹ When it came to the Executive Committee, the theatre experts discussed if they should propose the participants from China and Uruguay, Dr. Sie and H.E.J. Nogueira, as representatives of Asia and Latin America. However, they also acknowledged the practical obstacles that would likely prevent their actual participation.²⁰

This initial indifference towards the Global South changed with the accession of further centres. Above all, however, the wave of decolonisation from the 1960s onwards triggered a major shift in emphasis within international organisations. The UN and thus also UNESCO declared the 1960s the Decade of Development. After expectations were unfulfilled and successes failed to materialise, a second Decade of Development was added in 1970. After more and more decolonised countries joined

¹⁸ By the Eastern Bloc, I mean the socialist countries of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, that were part of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) and the Warsaw Pact: the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

¹⁹ UNESCO Digital Archive. *Summary report of the third meeting held at UNESCO House, 19 Avenue Kléber, Paris 16e, on Tuesday, 29th July 1947, at 3.15 p.m.* p.10

²⁰ *ibid.*, p.11-15

UNESCO, the organisation was increasingly shaped by the activism of these countries from the mid-1960s onwards. From the mid-1970s, UNESCO's focus shifted more and more towards development aid.²¹ As a UNESCO-affiliated NGO, support for Third World theatre became increasingly important within the ITI as well.

1.2 East German Socialist Experts in the Epistemic Community

The German Democratic Republic (GDR), joined the ITI at the Helsinki Congress in 1959. Despite being severely restricted in their mobility by Cold War circumstances, the East German ITI experts quickly became some of the most active participants in the organisation. After its dissolution, Manfred Linke, the secretary of the West German centre, appended a short five-page chapter on the GDR centre to the revised 1994 edition of his book describing the "aims and structures, achievements and tasks" of the ITI and the West German centre. He admitted that this space was not sufficient to give adequate credit to the work of the centre. This "task for the future" would require the meticulous screening of the centre's existing material, files, correspondence, and publications. Linke was, however, convinced of the critical role the East German centre had played within the ITI: "Das 1959 gegründete und zum 31.12.1990 aufgelöste Zentrum der DDR hat seit seiner Aufnahme in die Organisation deren Entwicklung wesentlich mitbestimmt."²²

Even a superficial glance seems to support Linke's claim. The East German centre was a permanent member of the ITI's ExCom since 1971, ran the secretariat of the Music Theatre Committee from 1969 and organised a large number of seminars and colloquia which supported the various ITI expert committees, and shaped the discourse on various theatre topics. In addition to music theatre, a major focus of the East German centre was support for theatre in the Third World. This 'theatrical development aid' took various forms: the organisation of events, the granting of scholarships to study theatre in the GDR, and the sending of directors such as Fritz Bennewitz to teach Brechtian methods in guest productions and seminars.

In this case study, I will examine how the members of the ITI centre of the GDR participated in the ITI's exchange of knowledge and theatre arts. My research into the

²¹ Pavone, Vincenzo. 2008. *From the Labyrinth of the World to the Paradise of the Heart. Science and Humanism in UNESCO's Approach to Globalization*. Lanham: Lexington, p.106

²² Linke, Manfred. 1994. *Das Internationale Theaterinstitut. Das Zentrum Bundesrepublik des Internationalen Theaterinstituts*. Berlin: Papyrus Druck. p.110

East German involvement in the ITI is part of the ERC project *Developing Theatre: Building Expert Networks for Theatre in Emerging Countries after 1945* that examines the complex processes that led to an institutionalisation of theatre in emerging nations. The study of different types of transnational interactions, such as the establishment of the theatre studies department at the university of Ibadan,²³ support of professional theatrical activity by private American philanthropic organisations,²⁴ Soviet and Eastern European engagement in cultural and theatrical activities in India,²⁵ and the professionalisation of theatre and building of theatre houses in the Arab world,²⁶ show that there was an understanding shared by private foundations, governments, communities and individuals of theatre as a tool of cultural development.

They can be seen as part of an epistemic community, “a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue area.”²⁷ The term was coined by the political scientist Peter M. Haas in the context of international relations, and research has focussed on epistemic communities that demand a high level of technical and scientific expertise, such as climate change or nuclear disarmament. Christopher Balme, however, argues that the concept can be adapted to describe how theatre artists, scholars, critics, and pedagogues organized themselves as such a community with the elements of professionalization, organizational structures, and transnational connectivity that distinguish scientific and technical epistemic

²³ Balme, Christopher. 2019. “Building theatrical epistemic communities in the Global South: Expert networks, philanthropy and theatre studies in Nigeria 1959-1969“ In: *Journal of Global Theatre History*. 3(2). 3-18.

²⁴ Leonhardt, Nic. 2019. “The Rockefeller Roundabout of Funding. Severino Montano and the Development of Theatre in the Philippines in the 1950s“ In: *Journal of Global Theatre History*. 3(2). 19-33.19-33

²⁵ Chakrabarti, Gautam. 2019. “From Moscow with Love: Soviet Cultural Politics across India in the Cold War”. In: Bethlehem, Louise. Dalamba, Lindelwa. *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies*. Special Issue. Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Taylor & Francis. 239-57

²⁶ Adwan, Ziad. 2016. “The Opera House in Damascus and the ‘State of Exception’ in Syria“ In: *New Theatre Quarterly* 32(3). 231-243.

———. 2016. “The Local Otherness: Theatre Houses in the United Arab Emirates“ In: *Arab Stages* 2(2).

———. 2019. “Imaginary Theatre Professionalising Theatre in the Levant 1940-1990” In: *The Journal of Global Theatre History*. 3(1). 19-37.

———. 2020. “The place of the Intellectuals’: The Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts in Damascus between dictatorship and the market” In: *Journal of Global Theatre History* 4(1). 37-54.

²⁷ Haas, Peter. 1992. “Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination” In: *International Organization*. 46(1). 1-35, p. 3.

communities.²⁸ They shared a common belief in the merit of enabling a professional theatre culture. Following this premise, the founding of the ITI as the successor to the SUDT was an important step in the institutionalisation of this transnational epistemic community. Always wanting to expand its global network of theatre experts, the ITI supported the establishment of other national or international organisations and committees and built and maintained contacts with theatre people around the world.

How this postwar epistemic community emerged is hard to track down, because it involves such a diverse group of actors working on different inter-, trans-, and national levels. Balme has traced its origins back to international movement of theatrical modernism, which argued for theatre as an art form of high cultural and public value. While it has been observed that crises often precede international regime creation, Haas has also noted that the extent to which the ideas of an epistemic community gain influence also depends on the extent to which they can integrate their ideas into important multilateral institutions.²⁹ The Second World War undoubtedly served as a strong moment of shock that had strengthened the need for transnational communication and the idea of theatre as an instrument for the good of humanity. This community could then build on its pre-war networks and thus embed itself in international organisations such as the UNESCO. The fact that powerful countries also recognised this belief in the value of theatre undoubtedly helped disseminate these ideas.

During the postwar period, the idea that theatre could play a significant role in the societal and political development was already being put into practice in occupied Germany. Culture and education were considered primary tools for the denazification of German society. During the military occupation of Germany after the end of the Second World War, both the Western Allies and the Soviet Union fostered the theatre in their respective occupation zones. This support was not purely altruistic, but a pointed effort in service of their foreign policy trying to integrate Germany into their respective cultural sphere. The Soviet support for the theatre was particularly intense, as they re-opened or established more than seventy theatres in 1945 alone. Thus, they

²⁸ Balme, Christopher. 2017. "Theatrical Institutions in Motion: Developing Theatre in the Postcolonial Era". In: *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*. 31(2). 125-140, p.130-1

²⁹ Haas, Peter M. 2014 "Ideas, experts and governance" In: *The role of 'experts' in international and European decision-making processes: advisors, decision makers or irrelevant actors?*, edited by Monika Ambrus, Karin Arts, Ellen Hey, and Helena Raulus. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 19-43, p.35

introduced the German public to Russian classics, new Soviet drama, the aesthetic of socialist realism and to the theories of Konstantin Stanislavski.³⁰ While the Americans struggled with the German system of state-funded theatre,³¹ they likewise tried to use the theatre to introduce Germans to the American way of life. Plays that were proposed as part of the re-education program conveyed an all-around positive image of America.³² They also organised lectures on US theatre and cultural exchange programmes where selected German experts of theatre management, scenic design, stage direction and theatre education were invited to the USA. After having been mostly isolated from foreign culture during the nazi regime, the German public had been quite hungry for these new theatrical impressions. They were also receptive to the idea that their own theatrical exports could help them rehabilitate themselves in the eyes of the international community³³ after the atrocities of the nazi regime: „Denn die Kulturleistung wird die einzige Sprache sein, in der wir Deutsche uns auf lange Zeit hin in der Welt wieder werden verständlich machen können, und mit der wir uns zukünftig der Familie der Völker von neuem wieder einzuordnen vermögen.“³⁴ Because of these promising early reactions in occupied Germany, the belief that supporting theatrical exchange could redirect and reintegrate a country into the international community was likely at least somewhat popular for those experts at the interface of theatre knowledge and cultural policy in the Allied countries. Incidentally, Maurice Kurtz himself, who initiated the founding of the ITI at the newly-founded UNESCO headquarters, had served as a civil affairs officer of the US forces in France during the war.

A frequent criticism of the concept of epistemic communities is that they neglect to consider interests other than professional expertise, such as personal or professional self-interest and domestic politics³⁵ and the role that domestic politics play in mediating

³⁰ Simhandl, Peter. 2007. *Theatergeschichte in einem Band*. Berlin: Henschel, p.262

³¹ Erken, Günther. 2014. *Theatergeschichte*. Stuttgart: Reclam, p.247-248

³² Brauneck, Manfred. 2012. *Europas Theater. 2500 Jahre Geschichte – Eine Einführung*. Reinbek: Rowohlt, p.467

³³ Wilke, Christiane. 1992. *Das Theater der großen Erwartungen. Wiederaufbau des Theaters 1945 – 1948 am Beispiel des Bayerischen Staatstheaters*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, p.22

³⁴ Dahlmann, Alfred. 1946. *Der Theater-Almanach 1946/1947. Kritisches Jahrbuch der Bühnenkunst*. München: Kurt Desch

³⁵ Krebs, Ronald R. 2001. “The Limits of Alliance: Conflict, Cooperation, and Collective Identity” In: *The Real and the Ideal*, edited by Anthony Lake and David Ochmanek. 207-235. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. 225-6.

transnational epistemic communities.³⁶ As Mai'a K. Davis Cross argues, the actors that comprise epistemic communities can also be members of government and state structures, and still exercise independent agency. This does not mean that the epistemic community is necessarily less influential, but may also allow it to have greater influence on state policy.³⁷

The way national interests and the values of the epistemic community interact is of undeniable importance when looking at the activities and internal dynamics of the ITI. Previous research on the ITI in different countries has confirmed that specific national interests have always shaped how transnational actors were able to engage with the ITI. Daniela Peslin-Ursu's book on the Theatre of Nations Festival shows how the festival helped to make various artists such as Brecht or Grotowski and theatre traditions such as the Peking Opera known to a global audience.³⁸ The US-American centre was the focus of Charlotte Canning's work, in which she examines how the political tensions of the post-war period preoccupied the founders of the ITI,³⁹ or how the 1967 Arab-Israeli War was debated at the ITI World Congress in New York.⁴⁰ Hanna Korsberg's article on the 8th World Congress in Helsinki illustrates how Cold War opposition influenced the artistic debate, and how for a non-aligned country like Finland the cooperation within the ITI was an important channel for internationalism.⁴¹ The involvement of Romanian theatre experts within the framework of the ITI has been analysed by Viviana Iacob. She shows that East European theatre practitioners were recognised by their Western peers and had a comparable role in shaping the ITI's community of knowledge.⁴² This research into the ITI reveals that the specific political and social conditions that existed in a country had a great influence on how and to what

³⁶ Risse-Kappen, Thomas. 1994. "Ideas Do Not Float Freely: Transnational Coalitions, Domestic Structures, and the End of the Cold War" In: *International Organization* 48, 185–214.

³⁷ Cross, Mai'a K. Davis. 2012. "Rethinking epistemic communities twenty years later" In: *Review of International Studies* Vol. 39/1 (January 2013). 137-160. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³⁸ Peslin-Ursu, Daniela. 2009. *Le Théâtre des Nations. Une aventure théâtrale à redécouvrir*. Paris: Harmattan.

³⁹ Canning. 2015.

⁴⁰ Canning, Charlotte. 2018. "If 'The World Was Ruled by Artist': The 1967 International Theatre Institute World Congress and Cold War Leadership". In: *Theatre research international* 43(2). 130-146. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴¹ Korsberg, Hanna. 2017. "Creating an International Community during the Cold War" In: *Theatre, Globalization and the Cold War*. edited by Balme, Christopher. Szymanski-Düll, Berenika. 151-164. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁴² Iacob, Viviana. 2018. p.4

purpose theatre people could engage in the ITI. This was particularly true of the theatre experts from the GDR and other socialist countries, whose mobility was restricted by the party state.

Another concept that's key to this case study and closely tied to the epistemic community is the central idea of experts. The fact that the initial ITI meeting in 1947 was called one of "theatre experts"⁴³ is notable but unsurprising and can easily be attributed to the scientifically-minded, global culture fostered at UNESCO. The expert was both modern and international. Through many scientific and technological breakthroughs of the 20th century, experts had gained a strong standing, with their expert knowledge being regarded as key to the many innovations of modernity.⁴⁴

The question of what makes an expert does not have an easy or agreed-upon answer. The topic of experts and expertise have been mostly analysed in relation to the natural sciences, with scientific expertise being perceived as objective and disinterested, often in opposition to political, financial, or other more selfish or irrational interests.⁴⁵ For my purposes, it is necessary broad and flexible framework able to account for the innate ambiguity of the term and to easily incorporate non-scientific types of expertise as well. As Stehr and Grundmann point out, that the term expert is often used synonymously both with specialist and with advisor or consultant,⁴⁶ points to a certain ambivalence of the expert status.

Knowledge or skill in a particular task or area is seemingly the most obvious characteristic of an expert, it alone is insufficient to describe them. To be granted the actual authority based on their expertise, experts must first be accepted as such. Kohlrausch, Steffen and Wiederkehr thus define experts as "professionally qualified individuals who were recognized as such by their peers and/or by a wider public". They emphasise that the status of the expert is not fixed but instead very dependent "on the

⁴³ UNESCO Digital Archive. *A Report on the Theatre Experts Meeting. Paris, 13 August 1947.* <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000141467?posInSet=20&queryId=N-EXPLORE-004e7f3d-409c-49d0-8579-027c71f3271f>

⁴⁴ Kohlrausch, Steffen and Wiederkehr even argue that the 20th century could be considered the century of the expert in: 2010. „Introduction“ In: *Expert Cultures in Central Eastern Europe. The Internationalization of Knowledge and the Transformation of Nation State since World War I*, edited by Martin Kohlrausch, Katrin Steffen and Stefan Wiederkehr. Osnabrück: fibre, 9-30, p.9

⁴⁵ Collins, Harry. Evans, Robert. 2007. *Rethinking Expertise*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

⁴⁶ Stehr, Nico. Grundmann, Reiner. 2011. *Experts. The Knowledge and Power of Expertise*. London: Routledge, p.10

currently dominant economic, social and political circumstances” and “always a result of cultural ascriptions and communicative negotiations.”⁴⁷ Eyal and Medvetz also argue for a relational understanding of expertise as a “historically specific type of performance aimed at linking scientific knowledge with matters of public concern.” Their definition accounts for not only the advanced knowledge and skill of the expert performer, but also for tools, mentors, and other intermediaries as well as a public venue and a critical audience to recognise the authority of the expert.⁴⁸ It is also crucial to examine the expert in their relationship to decision-making bodies. Experts do not only hold knowledge; they purposefully transfer and apply it by acting as advisors and mediators to create certainty in decision-making.⁴⁹ As Eyal and Medvetz state, “expertise is a phenomenon of the interface between specialized (professional, technical, scientific, bureaucratic, or even “experience-based”) knowledge and (political, legal) decision-making.”⁵⁰

While there were no formal criteria for the “theatre experts” meeting in 1947, the biographical notes on the members attending the international theatre meeting provide some indication: Almost all the experts present had some professional background in theatre. Many of them were actors or theatre directors, others were playwrights. Many of them already filled important positions in national theatre organisations. Llewellyn Rees, for example, was the general secretary of the British Actors Equity Association, secretary of the London Theatre Council and Provincial Theatre Council, and a member of the Arts Council of Great Britain. Rosamond Gilder was the editor-in-chief of *Theatre Arts* and the secretary of the American National Theatre and Academy.⁵¹ They were already part of various networks of theatre professionals and often already working at the interface of theatre arts and theatre policy in their respective countries.

Most studies about expertise are primarily concerned with the often-tense relationship between expertise and democracy and the role of experts in public debate and policy-making. The issue of experts is approached with the assumption that the

⁴⁷ Kohlrausch, Steffen. *Wiederkehr*. 2010. p.10

⁴⁸ Eyal, Gild. Medvetz, Thomas. 2023. “Introduction” In: *The Oxford Handbook of Expertise and Democratic Politics*, edited by Gild Eyal and Thomas Medvetz. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.4

⁴⁹ Stehr, Reiner. 2011. p.39-60

⁵⁰ Eyal, Medvetz. 2023. p.5

⁵¹ UNESCO Digital Archive. *Biographical notes on Members attending the International Theatre Meeting, July 28th - August 1st, 1947, UNESCO House, Paris*. 1947.

recognition of expertise is one of the important “checks and balances” of a functioning liberal democracy, because it supposedly prevents governments from making arbitrary decisions. That this is not necessarily the case becomes clear when taking into consideration the existence of experts in more illiberal systems. The Soviet Union and most of the socialist states of Eastern Europe considered scientific and technical knowledge to be vital elements of the industrial and economic development they underwent after 1918. They thus valued and funded academic institutions and experts, and placed high expectations on them.⁵²

It does mean, however, that the requirements for an expert from a socialist country were more specific. I therefore follow the definition of the term ‘state socialist expert’ by the research project *Turning Global Socialist Experts during the Cold War (1960-1980s)*, according to which the individuals referred to as such needed to fulfil three conditions:

First, they belong to state institutions and professional bodies which the party-state designed to be responsible for the administration and policy-making in a certain field/subject. Second, they employ specialized languages that are standardized via scientific publications at home and abroad. Third, they participate in a national and international dialogue, which was promoted by different tools of intellectual exchange (journals, volumes, conferences), with their peers from other countries.

These criteria alone are not necessarily unique to state socialist experts but shared by many of their colleagues in more liberal systems. At the junction of knowledge and decision-making it is not unusual for expert to be part of state or governmental bodies. What fundamentally distinguished them from other experts in international organisations is that they were “formally agents of planned, ideologically conditioned knowledge inextricably tied to a project of societal change delineated by a particular form of party-state.”⁵³ This partiality is seemingly at odds with the assumption of expertise being objective and disinterested.

Kohlrausch, Steffen and Wiederkehr however argue against the dichotomy between national and international space, instead proposing that they are closely intertwined. Working in institutional and organisational structures often confined

⁵² Kohlrausch, Steffen. Wiederkehr. 2010. p.20

⁵³ Iacob, Bogdan C. Dobos, Corina. Grosescu, Raluca. Iacob, Viviana. Pasca, Vlad. 2018. “State Socialist Experts in Transnational Perspective. East European Circulation of Knowledge during the Cold War (1950s-1980s): Introduction to the Thematic Issue” In: *State Socialist Experts in Transnational Perspective. East European Circulation of Knowledge during the Cold War. East Central Europe* Vol 45. 145-159, p.147

within national borders experts had to observe both state structure and state control while also needing to remain on par with international standards.:

The willingness to sacrifice the interests of science and expertise for the interests of the nation could collide with the necessity of transnational personal contacts and international collaboration. Experts relied on a complex relationship between national and international affiliations, which they were well aware of and often intentionally employed. Thus, internationalism, understood as a framework of a universal understanding of knowledge, went hand in hand with nationalism. Internationalism was not a counterforce to nationalism, but effectively channelled and facilitated it.⁵⁴

Balancing both the requirements of their international peers and the party-state becomes a walk on a tightrope necessarily to remain part of the epistemic community.

How the goal of the epistemic community of theatre experts to promote theatre as a medium of cultural development interacted with the goal of the GDR state to use culture as a tool of foreign representation and the East German support for the Global South as an asset of diplomatic relations is thus a deciding factor to consider when analysing the work of the GDR centre of ITI.

1.3 Overview and Archival Sources

To understand the international activities of the East German theatre experts, it is important to first determine the national context in which the ITI centre of the GDR emerged and operated. Chapter 2 traces the history of the founding of the East German ITI Centre and its admission to the ITI. The fact that this history cannot be told independently of the history of the West German centre already shows that the inner-German rivalry was a defining element of both German centres. East German theatre people had already established contacts with the ITI community through the ITI's Theatre of Nations Festival in Paris before joining the ITI despite the precarious situation of the GDR. The East German guest performances provided a significant contribution to international theatre, most notably among them those of Bertolt Brecht's Berliner Ensemble, which helped to popularise Brecht around the world. The actual foundation and acceptance of the ITI Centre must be understood in the context of the inter-German conflict. Behind the scenes of the World Congress in Helsinki, ITI's idealistic vision clashed with the reality of the Cold War: The West German Centre not only strongly opposed the admission of East Germany as a new ITI member, but also

⁵⁴ Kohlrausch. Steffen. *Wiederkehr*. 2010, p.22

used diplomatic channels in the attempt to prevent it. Acting against the non-political nature of ITI, the two German Centres acted in line with their countries' respective foreign policy towards the other Germany. The confrontation in Helsinki was therefore not only inevitable, but also indicative of how the inter-German rivalry would determine their involvement in the ITI in the following decades. It illustrates the inherent tension between the national interests of the member states and the shared goals of the epistemic community.

Then, in Chapter 3 I look at the structures of the ITI Centre to determine what kind of experts were promoted through them. The national centres were very diverse in their structure and organisation. The East German ITI was unusual among them in this respect because it very much restricted who could meaningfully participate in the work of the centre. This was done because the GDR ITI very deliberately built up a small group of experts to participate in the ITI. In order to determine the focus of the ITI Centre's work, it is also necessary to examine its relationship with the state authorities as well as with other theatre organisations. Just as important in this regard is the system of travel cadres through which the work of East German theatre experts was supervised by the state.

With the structures that both facilitated and restricted the work of the East German ITI experts thoroughly established, I then focus on the different ways of theatrical exchange they promoted. Chapter 4 will examine how the East German centre used the ITI network to establish relations to theatre artists in the Global South. In the early years, the possibilities were still very limited, as travel bans prevented the Centre from participating in many ITI events. From the mid-1960s onwards, the East German ITI experts were able to greatly expand their contacts and establish a more regular exchange. Of particular importance was the Venezuelan centre, with which the ITI centre established a partnership and laid down the terms of the theatrical exchange in a bilateral friendship agreement. While such exchange agreements, which the East German ITI members also negotiated with other centres in the Global South, were not long lasting, they kicked off the ITI centre's scholarship programme, in which theatre artists from the Global South were given the opportunity to intern at GDR theatres. The ITI Centre devised multi-part programmes for the scholarship holders in order to both provide a representative picture of theatre in East Germany and to take individual interests into account.

In Chapter 5, I look at the East German theatre directors that were sent abroad as experts to stage guest productions in countries of the Global South. Fritz Bennewitz stands out among them. He first became involved with the ITI centre in the early 1960s and was built up to become one of its quintessential theatre experts. Through contacts negotiated by the ITI centre, Bennewitz was first sent to India in 1970, which kickstarted his career as a theatre director in South and Southeast Asia. This chapter aims to complement the existing research on Bennewitz's career by providing insight into how he was built-up as an expert and the circumstances that enabled it. In addition, I also try to demonstrate how Bennewitz's approach to his international productions, which Rolf Rohmer defined as intercultural theatre,⁵⁵ was inspired by the East German discourses on the interpretation of the classics in which Bennewitz participated as a member of the Shakespeare Society and director at the National Theatre in Weimar. Even though Bennewitz was the best-known East German theatre director, he was far from the only one. A comparison with the work of other directors should shed light on whether they employed a common method.

Chapter 6 examines the structures built up within the ITI to support theatre in the Global South. When the ITI began to shift away from its Euro-American focus and tried to recruit theatre artists from the decolonising countries for the ITI network, it soon reached its financial boundaries. To overcome them, the ITI promoted regional associations in the 1960s, such as the Latin American Theatre Institute and the Arab Theatre Committee. In the 1970s, the Committee for Third World Theatre was built on the contacts that the ITI had gained in this way. Before and after its founding, the Committee for Third World Theatre was the battleground for various visions of how best to support theatre in the Global South. This struggle was waged among both the committee members and its consultants, which included Ellen Stewart of La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club and Fritz Bennewitz. Because of the relationships that the East German ITI experts had built up through exchange programmes, scholarships and Fritz Bennewitz's work, they had achieved significant influence on the committee. Allied with some like-minded theatre experts in the committee, they tried to shape it according to their ideas of anti-imperialist solidarity between socialist and non-aligned states. The Committee illustrated how the epistemic community splintered in the 1970s,

⁵⁵ Rohmer, Rolf. 2011. "Annäherungen an den Interkulturalismus mit Brecht: Fritz Bennewitz' Theaterarbeit in Asien" In: *Brecht in/and Asia. The Brecht Yearbook 36*, edited by Markus Wessendorf. 291-300. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press

with a growing disappointment in the ideas of developmentalism and the results of ITI's previous endeavours.

Various seminars, colloquia and workshops hosted by the East German ITI centre are the topic of Chapter 7. These were either exclusively for theatre people from the Global South or at least regarded them as a key audience. The first and most influential was the Brecht Dialogue in 1968, co-organised with the Berliner Ensemble, intended to showcase and reinforce the East German Brecht expertise. To the GDR ITI the Brecht Dialogue was especially important because it was able to consolidate its relationships with the invited guests and because of the feedback from participants from the Global South allowed the ITI Centre to pinpoint their wishes and interests. The Brecht Dialogue was followed by a series of events that the East German ITI Centre organised for theatre people from developing countries from 1976 to 1982. These seminars were, in a sense, the culmination of the East German Centre's support for theatre in the Global South. The experience that the East German ITI experts had gained through their contacts with partners from developing countries, their participation in numerous ITI events on Third World theatre and their involvement in the Committee for Third World Theatre, and the travels of GDR theatre directors could be applied to put together a programme that was both tailored to the needs of the participants and in line with foreign policy objectives. The last series of events were workshops on Brechtian theatre directing, that ran from 1985 to 1988 and responded to the demand for a practical focus. However, the later iterations of these workshops also showed how the ITI Centre's efforts to train theatre practitioners from the Global South were increasingly impeded by the deteriorating financial situation of the GDR.

This research is based on the material on the East German ITI centre found in several archives. Some of the documents of the former GDR Centre can be found in the archive of the current ITI Germany. While this is a living archive, a large part of it is historical in character. The way the files are organised seems to reflect the way they were originally compiled. There is no systematic separation between the historical and current holdings, nor between the files of the West and East German centres.

A second part of the archival records can be found in the archives of the former GDR Ministry of Culture, which are now in the German Federal Archives. This holding of the ITI Centre (BArch DR107) comprises 109 folders. It does not noticeably differ in content from the files in the archive of ITI Germany. Why the archive material was divided is unclear. From the description of the holdings in the Federal Archives, it can

be concluded that the division happened during the *Wende*, the time of the dissolution of the GDR and reunification with the FRG:

Der Bestand [...] wurde dem Bundesarchiv im August 1997 vom Vorsitzenden des ‚Arbeitskreises Geschichtsräume‘, Klaus Dieter Jurk, übergeben, der die in der Wendezeit zur Vernichtung vorgesehenen Unterlagen nach dem Hinweis eines befreundeten Fuhrunternehmers vor dem Verlust bewahrt und zunächst in seiner Wohnung lagerte.⁵⁶

Both archive holdings are incomplete even beyond their division into two archives. The reason for these gaps cannot be determined. However, it is conspicuous, for example, that in the series on “Relations with individual states” it is precisely the correspondence files with the FRG and the Soviet Union that are missing. Such a gap at a politically sensitive point must be considered when looking at the rest of the files.⁵⁷ It should be pointed out, however, that the existing files of the GDR Centre also contain extensive material substantiating the state influence on the ITI Centre.

Another important source are the documents of the Ministry of Culture itself (BArch DR1). In the files of the State Secretaries, the Performing Arts Department, International Relations Department and the UNESCO/ International Organisation Working Group, there are over 50 folders that also contain documents on the ITI. These archival holdings not only demonstrate the proximity of the GDR Centre to the state authorities, but also provide a useful supplement. Since copies of many minutes and reports were sent to the Ministry and kept there, it is possible to fill some of the gaps found in the ITI Centre's holdings. For example, the founding history of the Centre described in Chapter 2 can be traced almost exclusively through the Ministry's holdings, while only the agenda, minutes and charter of the founding meeting can be found in the ITI Germany archive.

The archival materials of the ITI Centre of the GDR are mostly in German. Due to the limited knowledge of English of some members of the Centre, correspondences with foreign contacts were mostly translated. In these cases, archive files often contain only the German translations of both incoming and outgoing letters, but not the

⁵⁶ BArch DR 107/Inventory. p.VI

⁵⁷ That the destruction of GDR file material was a common problem during the *Wende* is shown by the well-known example of files from the Ministry of State Security. See: Buchholz, Matthias. 2003. “Anmerkungen zur Problematik der ‚DDR-Archive““ In: *Bilanz und Perspektiven der DDR-Forschung*, edited by Rainer Eppelmann, Bernd Faulenbach, and Ulrich Mählert. 383-390. Paderborn, Wien, München, Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh.

originals. I have translated citations in the text; free-standing quotes have been left untranslated.

The files from the partial holdings of the FRG Centre were also consulted to supplement the files of the GDR Centre. These provide some important additional information, especially with regard to the ITI's efforts concerning the Third World. In other cases, they also offer a counterpoint and provide missing nuances to the often strongly political slant of the narrative found in official GDR documents.

Since the ITI Centre of the GDR was part of an international network and most of its activities and correspondence took place within it, the perspective that these archive holdings can provide on many of the international activities of the ITI is naturally limited. This work can therefore not claim to be able to provide a complete account of events. Within a network whose nodes were spread across over 70 centres and many more individuals and other theatre organisations, this is an impossible task. Another point to consider is that, since much of the material is found in state or state-adjacent archive holdings, the material found in them favours the perspective of national interest, while the members of the ITI centre of the GDR were not just state actors, but acted both in professional self-interest and as members of an epistemic community to support theatrical exchange. This was however, because of the nature of the GDR party-state, only ever possible by dressing up their plans in the official ideological language. I aim to be mindful of this ambivalent position and not to reduce the activities of the East German ITI experts to the execution of GDR foreign cultural policy, but nevertheless to acknowledge that these activities were made possible only because they served the interests of the regime.

2 Tensions Between the National and International - The Founding History of the East German ITI Centre

Since the UNESCO had played a key role in initiating the foundation of the ITI, the ITI adopted comparable structures. Just as UNESCO member states were represented by their national commissions, the ITI was made up of national centres. Regarding the national centres, the charter of the ITI specified:

- 1) The Institute shall invite each country to establish a national centre representative of that country's theatrical art, to assist in carrying out the function of the Institute. Each National Centre will be known as (name of the country) Centre of the INTERNATIONAL THEATRE INSTITUTE.
- 2) A Centre may be composed of sub-centres or branches, for reasons of regional convenience or professional needs. But the Institute will recognise no more than one Centre in each country.⁵⁸

While UNESCO's constitution spoke of member *states*, the ITI charter used the less precise and arguably softer term *country* (*pays* in the French version). Whether or not this was an intentional decision to emphasise the non-political nature of the organisation, the ITI was very much aware that a truly international exchange of theatre arts and knowledge had to navigate the political realities of the post-war period.

At the meeting in Paris in 1947, the theatre experts already debated over whether former axis powers such as Germany or Japan should hypothetically be admitted into the ITI.⁵⁹ Uruguayan drama critic and UNESCO delegate J. Nogueira argued that according to the draft of the ITI charter, "theatre was the expression of all humanity", and that no country could therefore be excluded. French dramatist Amand Salacrou responded that the fact that neither Germany or Japan had a central government at the time allowed the experts to postpone the issue. The "insuperable diplomatic and financial difficulties involved in the formation of centres" made it impossible "for the time to invite those countries."⁶⁰

During the 9th session of the ITI's ExCom in 1951, the delegates resumed discussing this question. As Charlotte Canning notes, this debate highlighted the tensions between the international character of the ITI and the structure of national centres. Once again, the delegates avoided a definitive ruling and considered making

⁵⁸ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Charter of the ITI*, p.1.

⁵⁹ UNESCO Digital Archive. Summary report of the fourth meeting held at UNESCO House, 19 Avenue Kléber, Paris 16e, on Thursday, 31st July 1947, at 10 a.m., p.3

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.4

the decision dependent on the UN or UNESCO membership of the countries concerned. During that debate, the members of the ITI did not specify the German state in question.⁶¹ Most likely they were thinking of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), as the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was hardly recognised as a legitimate country anywhere in the world. More importantly, the lack of distinction or even acknowledgement of a second German state demonstrated that, while aware of the inherent conflict between national centres in an international organisation, the theatre experts of the ITI were only taking into account Germany's recent history, but not yet its division and the ways in which it would interfere with the ITI's affairs.

The FRG joined UNESCO in 1951, and therefore met the conditions for ITI membership. The GDR was finally able to join UNESCO only after diplomatic recognition in the early 1970s, but was admitted into ITI much earlier in 1959. The founding history of the East German centre of the ITI serves as a notable example of how political tension impacted the work of the ITI. It cannot be told without the history of the West German centre, as both centres reflected the principles of their respective country's foreign policy and carefully considered the potential representation of the theatre of the other German state in the ITI.⁶² The fact that they are so inextricably linked to each other already indicates that national interest did play a significant role in ITI's international endeavours.

2.1 Sole representation in the ITI – the West German centre

It was the West German theatre professionals who first tried to overcome the reservations of the ITI members towards Germany to be accepted into the ITI's community. In 1953, two West German observers attended the 5th World Congress of the ITI in Den Haag, each representing one of the largest West German theatre

⁶¹ Canning. 2015. p.170-171

⁶² The founding history of the East and West German centres is also the subject of an unpublished Magister thesis by Grit Schreiber. In it, she examines the founding of the two German centres and the admission of the East German centre in the context of theatre in divided Germany and divided Berlin of the 1950s. With regard to the founding of the East German centre, Schreiber draws only on the centre's holdings, which are sparse in this regard, and does not take into account the more detailed files of the Ministry of Culture, which document both the preparations for the founding of the centre and the reactions of the GDR's ITI members and cultural officials in the resulting conflict. (Schreiber, Grit. 2007. *Zur Geschichte des Internationalen Theaterinstituts: Die Gründung der Zentren BRD und DDR. Theater innerhalb des Wechselverhältnisses von Kultur und Politik in den 1960er Jahren* Magister thesis. FU Berlin.)

organizations: Theatre director Hans Schweikart was there at the behalf of the Deutsche Bühnenverein (DBV), the association of theatre employers. Albert Steffahn was general secretary of the Gewerkschaft Kunst, the worker's union of artists, of which the Gewerkschaft Deutscher Bühnenangehöriger (GDBA), the union of theatre employees, was part of. The fact that the congress was held in a neighbouring state facilitated their visit to the Congress.⁶³

According to the report on the ITI Congress in the GDBA's own magazine *Die Bühnengenossenschaft*, the two observers "deliberately held back in the first days of the conference, all the more so as most of the delegates as well as the chairs of the individual working committees were quite reserved towards them." The article does not outright identify the reason for this guarded attitude, which likely related to the unease with which ITI delegates had discussed the possibility of a German membership before. On the last day of the Congress Steffahn made a statement about the importance of theatre in educating the German youth in the post-war years, likely referring to the role of theatre in the re-education programmes. He then expressed his hope for West Germany to soon become a member of the ITI. The applause that followed this statement was interpreted as a sign of approval and an invitation to establish a German centre.⁶⁴

On January 25th in 1954 a preliminary working committee for a West German ITI centre met for the first time at the Pressehaus in Cologne. The three people responsible for that meeting were Franz Joseph Scheffels, retired ministry official and executive director of the DBV, Rudolf Boden, syndic lawyer of the GDBA, and theatre technician Walter Unruh. They were joined by Ingvelde Müller-Geleng, the German correspondent of the ITI journal *World Theatre/ Le Théâtre dans le Monde*. Together, they drafted a charter, discussed the centre's budget and suggested a list of possible members.⁶⁵ The intention of joining the ITI was first announced to the Dutch centre which had hosted the 5th World Congress.⁶⁶ The inaugural meeting of the West German ITI centre was held more than a year later on June 21st 1955. Boden and Müller attended the 6th ITI World Congress in Dubrovnik. They were joined by Carl Werckshagen, dramaturge and undersecretary of the West Berlin Senate. At the Congress, they

⁶³ ITI. Protokolle 1. 1955/05/26. Letter from Unruh to Scheffels.

⁶⁴ "Kongreß des ITI" in: *Die Bühnengenossenschaft*. 1953 (5), p.118

⁶⁵ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Tagung des vorbereitenden Arbeitsausschusses des Deutschen Centre des ITI am 25. Januar 1954 in Köln im Pressehaus*.

⁶⁶ ITI. Protokolle 1. 1954/02/22. Letter from Bruijin to Unruh.

announced the founding of a German centre to the ITI community. Its admission into the organization was, however, postponed to the following Congress in Athens in 1957,⁶⁷ when the West German centre finally became an official member of the ITI.

This founding phase was strongly marked by disagreements about the actual importance and tasks of the centre, especially about its connection to both the already existing theatre organisations and state institutions. In both cases, the relationship was largely defined by financial dependencies. The involvement of the DBV and the GDBA was undoubtedly crucial to the centre's creation. Both organizations had been originally founded in the 19th century and had been re-established in the post-war period under the supervision of the theatre officers of the allied military governments after having been dissolved during the Nazi regime. In the early post-war years, a time of unemployment, material need, and uncertainties, both organisations played an important role in creating new legal bases⁶⁸ and stabilizing the West German theatre.⁶⁹ But as an employer's association and an employee's co-operative their functions were clearly defined by and limited to the West German theatre system and its legal foundations, and thus mostly tied to a national level.⁷⁰ The origin and nature of both organizations' interest in the ITI therefore is puzzling. Their involvement and how it would determine the structure and workings of the new ITI centre was a disputed issue. Unruh reminded Scheffels that the centre was not meant to be another office that mainly worked with the public authorities, which was not how the ITI headquarters in Paris operated either:

Es soll in Deutschland ein Zentrum aktiv am Theater schaffender, qualifizierter und international wirkender Kräfte geschaffen werden, die den kulturellen Austausch zu realisieren und zu fördern verstehen und gewillt sind, und zwar gerade ohne Bindung zu Behörden oder Organisationen, wohl aber mit deren Unterstützung, kurz ein Sammelpunkt zur Ausstrahlung des deutschen Theaters nach dem Ausland und ein Treffpunkt und eine Auskunftsstelle für das Ausland.⁷¹

⁶⁷ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll über Sitzung des geschäftsführenden Ausschusses am 22.11.1955 im Sitzungszimmer des Deutschen Bühnenvereins.*

⁶⁸ Rübel, Joachim. 1992. *Geschichte der Genossenschaft Deutscher Bühnenangehöriger.* Hamburg: Bühnenschriften-Vertriebs-GmbH, p.277-295

⁶⁹ Rischbieter, Henning. 1999. *Durch den Eisernen Vorhang. Theater im geteilten Deutschland 1945 bis 1990.* Berlin: Propyläen-Verl., p.10

⁷⁰ The GDBA of the western occupation zones split from the GDBA in the Soviet zone, that got turned into the Gewerkschaft Kunst in the Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, the sole national trade union centre of the GDR, and likewise considered their work a continuation of the traditions of the GDBA. See: Rübel. 1992.

⁷¹ ITI. Protokolle 1. 1954/03/17. Letter from Unruh to Boden.

The invitation to the first general meeting sent out to the individual members of the West German ITI centre seems to echo his sentiment:

Es liegt aber im Sinne des internationalen Zusammenschlusses und entspricht unserer Auffassung, dass die Beziehungen zum Theater des Auslands nicht so sehr durch Organisationen, sondern wesentlich durch Persönlichkeiten bestimmt werden sollen. So haben wir unsere Gründungsarbeit, von unseren Organisationen beauftragt, nur als Vorarbeit betrachtet und laden herzlichst dazu ein, an der weiteren Gestaltung und Erfüllung der Aufgaben tatkräftig mitzuarbeiten.⁷²

Theatre director Carl Ebert was elected as the centre's first president. He had emigrated from Germany when the Nazis rose to power in 1933. In England he had helped create the Glyndebourne Festival Opera in 1934 with fellow German emigrant Fritz Busch and remained its artistic director until 1959. In Turkey, he supported the foundation of the opera and drama school of the Ankara Conservatory. From 1948 to 1954 Ebert headed the opera department of the University of Southern California. His opposition to Nazism and international theatre experiences made Ebert a suitable theatre personality and figurehead for West German representation in the ITI. Despite that, the importance of the theatre organisations would remain and even be consolidated by the new centre's charter. It ranked cooperate members before individual members and granted them two votes instead of one,⁷³ which during decision making significantly shifted the balance in their favour. Of the centre's executive board, five of nine members had to be representatives of theatre organisations.⁷⁴ The draft of the charter even contained a section which determined that the board would have to be alternatingly led by representatives of the DBV and GDBA.⁷⁵ Representatives of the two organizations, *Kammersänger* John Gläser of the GDBA and Will Küper, the executive director of the DBV from 1956 to 1960,⁷⁶ were elected as vice presidents to guarantee both organizations an equally important influence on the committee. Others who supported the leading role of theatre organizations in the West German ITI advocated for the inclusion of more groups apart from the DBV and GDBA. Friedrich Schultze of the Dramaturgische Gesellschaft contacted the newly founded ITI and suggested various organizations of theatre publishers, critics, authors and historians who were

⁷² ITI. Protokolle 1. 1956/08/23. Invitation to first general meeting.

⁷³ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Deutsche Sektion des Internationalen Theater-Instituts*, p.1

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p.3

⁷⁵ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Draft of the Charter*.

⁷⁶ Rübel. 1992. p.278

interested in joining the new centre, and even offered to take over most of the administrative duties⁷⁷. Boden initially objected to this “inflation” of interest groups, arguing that most did not represent the German theatre to the degree that the DBV and GDBA did. After a discussion, the board members concluded that a larger number of organisations would also lead to a larger number of “personalities” involved in the centre and was therefore encouraged, while DBV and GDBA would still receive “special consideration”.⁷⁸

The relationship between the new West German ITI centre and the authorities was ambivalent. As an *Eingetragener Verein* (e.V.), the centre was a private and non-profit legal entity without inherent ties or obligations to state institutions. Nonetheless, those responsible for the creation of the new ITI centre sought the advice and involvement of the authorities from the very beginning. The draft of the charter and the results of the first meeting of the working committee were sent both to the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the German UNESCO commission for comment.⁷⁹ Officials from the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs also attended the first meeting of the executive board on November 22nd 1955.⁸⁰

The ITI centre voluntarily involved the authorities in its affairs because it needed state funding. The officials of neither ministry were initially willing to make binding commitments on their financial support. To secure state funding, the members of the board therefore presented them with a relationship between the centre and the ministries, that not only demonstrated the importance of financial support, but also introduced a decidedly political aspect to the ITI centre. They argued that earlier assurances from both ministries had been crucial to the decision to found the ITI centre, because neither the theatre organisations nor the individual members would be able to finance the centre without state funding. Additionally, they used ITI’s UNESCO affiliation to declare financial support of the centre a state duty: “Dies sei keine Privatangelegenheit der Verbände und Personen, sondern eine ausgesprochene

⁷⁷ ITI. Protokolle 1. 1956/04/14. Letter from Schultze to Scheffels.

⁷⁸ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll über Sitzung des geschäftsführenden Ausschusses am 22.11.1955, Sitzungszimmer des Deutschen Bühnenvereins.*

⁷⁹ ITI. Protokolle 1. 1954/03/10. Copy of letter from Gussone to Boden. ITI. Protokolle 1. 1954/03/08. Letter from Scheffels to Boden.

⁸⁰ Since the federated states were sovereign in regard to cultural affairs, there was no federal legislation and not one central cultural institution in the FRG. This is the reason for the large number of state institutions involved with the ITI centre.

deutsche Angelegenheit. Die Beteiligung der Unesco sei Sache der Bundesrepublik". They argued that the ITI offered foreign representation, albeit one that required distance from official policy:

Wenn für die Zusammenarbeit innerhalb der einzelnen Sektionen der Unesco mit gutem Grund Persönlichkeiten und Verbände und nicht Behördendienststellen und Ämter herausgestellt würden, so hätten die initiativ beteiligten Dienststellen das doch gerade gewünscht.⁸¹

This argument encapsulated how the structure of the ITI and the responsibility of the centres to acquire their own funding made them susceptible to political influence. The founders of the West German centre saw its financial support as dependent on its usefulness as a tool of foreign representation, and were willing to present it as such towards state officials. The press release of the German UNESCO Commission therefore stated that the centre had been founded "in agreement with the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs."⁸²

Echoing the ITI charter, the charter of the West German centre stated that its aim was to "strengthen cooperation between national and international theatre organisations" and "to cultivate the exchange of knowledge and practice of theatre as an art form and of the persons and groups of persons involved in it, in particular to promote the international exchange of news, experiences, opinions and persons".⁸³ According to the press release of the German UNESCO Commission, the centre's aim was to connect the German theatre life with the ITI in Paris.⁸⁴ The motivation to join the ITI, however, remained surprisingly vague. The driving forces behind the creation of the ITI centre were two organisations whose reach was inherently limited to the legal framework of theatre in the FRG. DBV and GDBA had very little to gain from an international theatre community, apart from the effects of whatever undefined benefit the ITI would have on the German theatre as a whole. Since none of the founders were actual theatre artists, they themselves had only minor interest in the possibilities of artistic exchange. Unruh, who as a theatre architect and technician was closest to actual theatre practice and was also the one most involved in international theatre events and

⁸¹ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll über Sitzung des geschäftsführenden Ausschusses am 22.11.1955 im Sitzungszimmer des Deutschen Bühnenvereins.*

⁸² ITI. Protokolle 1. 1955/06/21. *Pressenotiz der Deutschen UNESCO-Kommission Nr. 117*

⁸³ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Satzung der Deutschen Sektion des ITI [1955].*

⁸⁴ ITI. Protokolle 1. 1955/06/21. *Pressenotiz der Deutschen UNESCO-Kommission Nr. 117.*

organizations,⁸⁵ claimed: “[Die] rein theatermäßigen Leistungen des ITI ermutigen z.Zt. kaum und sind unbefriedigend [...]”.⁸⁶ Even the members themselves seemed to have trouble identifying the use of the ITI and their new centre. Ebert addressed this problem, stating: "Es besteht kein Zweifel daran, dass die grossen Bühnen und die Prominenz der deutschen Regisseure und Darsteller auch ohne Einschaltung einer Organisation Deutschland im Ausland repräsentieren könnten."⁸⁷ At the time of the creation of the West German ITI centre, the West German theatre had indeed long re-established their own contacts abroad and did not need the ITI as a facilitator of guest performances and other exchanges. Ebert came to the conclusion, that the purpose of the ITI centre would be to enrich the theatre of West Germany with foreign ideas rather than exporting German theatre: “Bei der Vielgestaltigkeit unseres Bühnenwesens kommt es aber darauf an, dass auch bereits der Nachwuchs und die wertvollen Kräfte des weitverzweigten deutschen Theaters rechtzeitig mit den Werten des Auslandes konfrontiert werden.”⁸⁸ West Germany had joined the ITI without the parties involved having a firm understanding of the benefits of this membership. Contact with the ITI headquarters in Paris or other national centres was in the beginning therefore limited mostly to an administrative minimum. The ITI membership seemed to be regarded as an almost obligatory part of foreign representation with little intrinsic merit.

Only in regards to East Germany did the founders of the West German ITI take a determined stance. Unruh considered it the most important reason for a West German membership in the ITI:

[D]agegen scheint es mir erhöht an Bedeutung zu gewinnen, daß der zunehmend östlichen Kulturpropaganda eine westdeutsche Informationsstelle für Theaterwesen entgegengesetzt wird. Man sollte deshalb nicht warten, bis ein deutsches ITI-Büro in der DDR gegründet wird. Dann wären wir wieder einmal überrundet.⁸⁹

Even if the West German centre was independent from state authorities, it had been imagined in the context of the inter-German conflict even by its founders from the very beginning.

⁸⁵ Unruh later became the first president of the International Organisation of Scenographers, Theatre Architects and Technicians (OISTAT), that was founded with the ITI's support in 1968.

⁸⁶ ITI. Protokolle 1. 1955/05/26. Letter from Unruh to Scheffels.

⁸⁷ ITI. Protokolle 1. 1959/05/04. *Protokoll der 13. Vorstandssitzung*.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ ITI. Protokolle 1. 1955/05/26. Letter from Unruh to Scheffels.

In this context, the choice to establish the office of the new centre in West Berlin is noteworthy. While the preliminary meetings were held in Cologne in the premises of the DBV, the founding members agreed that the office of the new ITI centre was to be in West Berlin. West Berlin had an ambiguous legal status: It was aligned with the FRG but not formally a part of it and was only represented by federal institutions to a limited degree, while its occupation continued and the western Allies remained the ultimate authorities.⁹⁰ The affiliation of West-Berlin with the FRG was a major point of contention for both the Allied Powers and the two German states and earned the city huge symbolic significance during the Cold War. Through the Berlin blockade and later the Berlin Wall, the Soviets and later the GDR made West Berlin an isolated enclave and hindered travel from West Berlin into and through the Eastern Bloc. The Western Allies and later the FRG in turn expended great effort to support West Berlin in this hostile environment.

The Senate of Berlin had expressed special interest in the ITI centre and was therefore willing to subsidise it. In the Cold War context, placing the West German office of an international UNESCO-affiliated organisation like the ITI in the diplomatically precarious territory of West Berlin could have been understood as a political declaration of the alignment of West Berlin with the FRG with the implied support of an international community. It would also help promote and support the West-Berlin theatre by generating and channelling international interest. The founders of the new ITI centre acknowledged the importance of the Berlin theatre. Scheffels noted that foreign visitors naturally often expressed the strong wish “to visit Berlin as either the principal destination or the conclusion of a visit to Germany”.⁹¹ But it was not just the West Berlin theatre that the FRG ITI wanted to facilitate access to. Scheffels also recognized that foreign interest was not limited to or even mainly aimed towards the theatres of West Berlin.

Wir halten es auch aus dem Grund für richtig, Berlin eine besondere Funktion hierbei zu geben, weil gerade dort man ungleich besser als in Hamburg oder Bonn oder Köln oder sonstwo in der Bundesrepublik den ausländischen Besuchern Winke geben kann, wie sie die östliche Kulturfassade[sic], die sie möglicherweise auch sehen wollen, in unserem Sinne sehen sollten.⁹²

⁹⁰ Zivier, Ernst R. 1987. *Der Rechtsstatus des Landes Berlin*. 4th ed. Berlin: Berlin Verlag.

⁹¹ ITI. Protokolle 1. 1954/03/08. Letter from Scheffels to Boden.

⁹² *ibid.*

The ITI centre would serve as a contact and source of information for foreign visitors interested in German theatre. With the office located in West Berlin, it would be able to control access to the East German theatre and undermine the GDR's cultural propaganda. Of course, the new centre would have only been able to fulfil this task if West Germany would remain the only German member of the ITI.

The founders and early members of the West German ITI had clearly intended their centre to be the sole representative of German theatre in the ITI. They named their centre the "Deutsche Sektion des ITI" and applied for ITI membership under that name, not specifically as the West German or FRG representative.⁹³ Since the ITI saw no issue with this, it was also simply called the "German Centre" in ITI publications. This attitude of the West German centre closely reflected the FRG's approach to the inter-German conflict. The so called *Alleinvertretungsanspruch* was the most important principle of the FRG's stance concerning the Intra-German question until the late 1960s. On October 21st 1949, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer claimed this sole right of representation of Germany for the FRG in his address to the newly elected West German parliament.⁹⁴ His statement was in accordance with the Reunifications Clause of the new Basic Law, which made the pursuit of German unification a constitutional prerogative. This claim was supported by the Western Allies and confirmed in 1955 in the Paris Agreements, when the occupation of West Germany formally ended and FRG gained full control over its foreign affairs.⁹⁵

Since the members of the German ITI intended to establish their centre as the sole representative of German theatre in accordance with the FRG's foreign policy, it was imperative to figure out how they would handle the East German theatre. The documents from the early years of the FRG centre make it obvious that the board members were reluctant to approach the subject: In early 1957, the ITI office was contacted by the Department of German Theatre History of the Academy of Arts in East Berlin to inquire if and to what degree they could contribute to the newly founded ITI centre. This question triggered a "lively" discussion during the 3rd board meeting of the

⁹³ Despite this, I will refer to the two German ITI centres as the West German/ FRG and East German/ GDR centre to avoid confusion.

⁹⁴ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik (eds.). 1987. *Dokumente zur Berlin-Frage / 1: 1944 – 1966*. München: Oldenbourg, p.145

⁹⁵ Grewe, Wilhelm. 2003. "Deutschlandvertrag" In: Timmermann, Heiner. *Deutschlandvertrag und Pariser Verträge. Im Dreieck von Kaltem Krieg, deutscher Frage und europäischer Sicherheit*. 75-82. Münster: Lit Verlag, p.78f.

West German centre. They sought the advice of Herbert von Buttlar, general secretary of the Academy of Arts in West Berlin, who was faced with a similar question, to ask for his assessment and his experiences.⁹⁶ In his answer to the ITI, Buttlar commented positively on the initiated contacts with his East Berlin colleagues. He even mentioned the possibility of joint projects whose success he had no reason to doubt. Despite this positive feedback, the West German ITI board opted for a more hesitant approach. They responded to the East German request as follows: “Wir sind gerne bereit, auf Anfragen Auskunft zu erteilen, wie wir unsererseits gern bereits sind, Sie in Anspruch zu nehmen.”⁹⁷ Apart from the mere exchange of information, they didn’t offer East German theatre experts any prospect of further participation and expressed little interest in cooperation. While claiming the sole representation of German theatre, they were unwilling to represent the East German theatre in the international theatre community, instead attempting to cut them off from it. Several members pointed out this contradiction. During the General Assembly in 1957, the overwhelming majority of members recognized that the FRG ITI as the only German representation could not disregard East German theatre completely.⁹⁸ Composer Werner Egk deemed contact with the East German theatre necessary⁹⁹ and Schultze presented several options for this cooperation, none of which were pursued.¹⁰⁰

The board members knew that their strategy could be undermined by the creation of a separate East German ITI centre. They repeatedly discussed this danger during almost every board meeting in the first years of the centre’s existence. Carl Werckshagen, who as a former undersecretary of the West Berlin Senate was focussed on the political implications of the ITI membership, advised not to allude to the division of Germany vis-à-vis ITI headquarters, as not to give cause to the admission of the GDR. He was adamant that the FRG ITI should pursue the West German claim to sole representation in the field of theatre: “Die legale Vertretung des deutschen Theaters gegenüber dem Ausland müsse allein die Bundesrepublik und Westberlin bleiben”.¹⁰¹

Similar cases in other international organizations convinced the West German

⁹⁶ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll der 3. Vorstandssitzung vom 18.2.1957.*

⁹⁷ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll der 4. Vorstandssitzung vom 24.4.1957.*

⁹⁸ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll der Mitgliederversammlung am 30.4.1957.*

⁹⁹ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll der 7. Vorstandssitzung am 15.1.1958.*

¹⁰⁰ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll der 8. Vorstandssitzung am 21.3.1958.*

¹⁰¹ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll der 2. Vorstandssitzung am 12.12.1956.*

ITI of the urgency of this threat. Theatre scholar Hans Knudsen¹⁰² attended the Venice conference of the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR) in 1957 and reported to the ITI centre that Hugo Fetting of the East Berlin Academy of Arts had been elected to the IFTR's executive committee as the only German representative.¹⁰³ A communication from the general secretary of the German UNESCO Commission informed the board members that the General Conference of the International Association of Art in Dubrovnik, had decided to call upon the GDR to form a separate section.¹⁰⁴ It therefore seemed likely that the GDR would also try to become a member of the ITI.

The members of the executive board of their own accord turned to various government offices for arguments against a second ITI centre in East Germany and for instructions on what to do in case of an East German membership application. They asked the German UNESCO-Commission for a statement¹⁰⁵ and met with officials of the Foreign Office and the Ministry for All-German Affairs to discuss the eventuality.¹⁰⁶ The main argument against a separate GDR centre that they settled upon was based on Article II of the ITI charter, which stated that the ITI would "recognise no more than one centre in each country."¹⁰⁷ The members of the West German ITI argued that since one German centre already existed and the ITI only allowed one centre to represent each country, a second German centre would have been a breach of the ITI charter. Scheffels emphasised "that the 1956 application to the ITI was not for the Federal Republic but for Germany."¹⁰⁸ By accepting their centre as the "German Section" instead of a specifically West German member, the ITI had in their opinion also accepted the general presumption of the *Alleinvertretungsanspruch* and the rejection of the GDR as a separate political entity. In May 1958 Ebert met with ITI Secretary General Jean Darcante in Paris to explain the West German viewpoint on this matter. He asked for the FRG centre to be notified if the GDR were to apply for ITI

¹⁰² Hans Knudsen had been a staunch supporter of the Nazi regime. He was one of the 88 writers and poets to sign the *Gelöbnis treuster Gefolgschaft* in 1933, a declaration of loyalty to Adolf Hitler, and was also editor of several theatre journals published by the regime.

¹⁰³ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll der 5. Vorstandssitzung am 13.9.1957.*

¹⁰⁴ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll der 6. Vorstandssitzung am 7.11.1957.*

¹⁰⁵ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll der 6. Vorstandssitzung am 7.11.1957.*

¹⁰⁶ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll der 7. Vorstandssitzung am 15.1.1958*

¹⁰⁷ *The Charter of the I.T.I.*, p.1.

¹⁰⁸ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll der 8. Vorstandssitzung am 21.3.1958*

membership, so they could help to navigate the political aspects of this issue.¹⁰⁹ After Darcante agreed to this, the board members felt reassured in their position and adequately prepared to not be surprised by the issue of an East German ITI centre.

2.2 The GDR's Quest for Diplomatic Recognition – the East German Centre

The groundwork and foundation of the East German ITI centre was informed by this West German position. The main goal of the GDR's foreign policy during that time was to break through the isolation caused by the FRG's *Alleinvertretungsanspruch* to gain international recognition and legitimacy as a sovereign state. Even after the USSR had declared the GDRs sovereignty, it was not accepted by large parts of the international community. Because of the support for the FRG from the Western Allies, the external image of the GDR had suffered immensely, and only worsened after the popular uprising of 1953. Despite its name, the German Democratic Republic generally was "perceived as neither German, nor democratic and definitely not as a republic",¹¹⁰ but was instead seen as a Soviet puppet. Since the GDR's sovereignty was not recognized by almost any country outside of the Eastern bloc, international relations were difficult to establish. Thus, unable to participate in global politics, the GDR sought other less political channels to improve on its image. International success in the fields of sport and culture was presumed to benefit the GDR's pursuit of diplomatic recognition in the long term.

The theatre was one such opportunity to present the GDR as a country that valued and supported high culture. In this, they continued the strategy applied by the Soviets in occupied Germany, that had likewise portrayed their high-culture background and played into European biases to portray the Americans in contrast as "dull and aggressive."¹¹¹ The Berliner Ensemble (BE), the theatre company of playwright Bertolt Brecht, played a central role in this endeavour. It was excessively sent on foreign tours since its founding in accordance with Brecht's own wishes.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll der 9. Vorstandssitzung am 3.9.1957.*

¹¹⁰ Winrow, Garth H. 1990. *The foreign policy of the GDR in Africa.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹¹¹ Gienow-Hecht, Jessica C. E. 2010. "Culture and the Cold War in Europe" In: *Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume 1: Origins.*, edited by Melvyn P. Leffler Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.404

¹¹² Barnett, David. 2017. "The Politics of an International Reputation: The Berliner Ensemble as a GDR Theatre on Tour" In: *Theatre, Globalization and the Cold War*, edited by Christopher Balme and Berenika Szymanski-Düll. 59-72. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, p.59

These tours often proved difficult or were prevented entirely because East German theatres were often refused entry and performance opportunities in other West European countries due to West German pressure.¹¹³ Brecht's heavily censored statements about the popular uprising of 1953 that seemingly supported the SED's actions caused Western audiences to become wary of Brecht and even led to boycotts of his plays in West Germany.¹¹⁴

The breakthrough finally came in Paris at the International Festival of Dramatic Arts in 1954 and brought East German theatre into contact not only with an international audience but also with the ITI. This international theatre festival had been created by Aman-Maistre Julien, director of the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt, and Claude Planson. It was supported by the UNESCO, the ITI and the French Ministry of Culture. In 1957, the festival was renamed to Theatre of Nations and was continued until 1972, when the festival was revalued and restarted as an itinerate festival in 1975. While the importance of the Theatre of Nations in Paris dwindled in its later years, its first seasons in the 1950s were hugely influential. Through the festival, many noteworthy foreign theatre troupes like the Piccolo Teatro di Milano directed by Giorgio Strehler in 1954 or Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop in 1955 were introduced to the Paris audience and – through the ITI's involvement – to an emerging international community of theatre artists. The Theatre of Nations was arguably the ITI's largest and most important theatrical endeavour. As Manfred Linke put it: “Die Ausstrahlung, die vom Theater der Nationen auf die ästhetische Entwicklung der Theaterkulturen ausging, kann gar nicht überschätzt werden.”¹¹⁵

Like for many others, the festival also served this role as a gateway to an international audience for the East German theatre. The BE performed *Mother Courage* at the International Festival of Dramatic Arts during its inaugural season.¹¹⁶ Brecht's realistic-political theatre thrilled critics, who described the innovation of this staging style and the unfamiliar way of setting and lighting under the slogan of the ‘*révolution brechtienne*’.¹¹⁷ The critical and audience acclaim managed to overcome the built-up

¹¹³ *ibid*, p.60

¹¹⁴ Rischbieter. 1999. p.50

¹¹⁵ Linke. 1994. p.19

¹¹⁶ Peslin-Ursu. 2009. p.32-34

¹¹⁷ Hüfner, Agnes. 1968. *Brecht in Frankreich. 1930-1963. Verbreitung, Aufnahme, Wirkung*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, p.50

reservations against Brecht and the East German theatre.¹¹⁸ While the first guest performance was still relatively poorly attended despite its triumphant reception, the BE's return in the next festival season in 1955 with its production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*¹¹⁹ saw full audiences at every performance. Brecht himself gave several interviews.¹²⁰ The guest performance also influenced French directors, who both saw the performance and were able to make personal contact with him, and helped to popularise Brecht outside Paris as well.¹²¹ In April 1957, just a few months after Brecht's death, the BE returned to Paris for the now renamed Theatre of Nations.¹²² The festival opened with the BE's new production of *Life of Galileo*, as well as the already familiar *Mother Courage*.¹²³ This was then followed by the (West German) Schauspielhaus Bochum's performance of *The Threepenny Opera*, so that "the festival was largely devoted to Brecht." There was also an international commemoration of Brecht conducted by Julien. Besides Bernard Dort and Morvan Lebesque, ITI Secretary General Jean Darcante also gave a speech.¹²⁴

The BE came to the Theatre of Nations in Paris for the last time in 1960, performing new productions of *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* and *The Mother* in addition to the already familiar productions of *Courage* and *Galileo*.¹²⁵ The visit was more elaborate than ever, which led some critics to speak of Brecht's 'apotheosis'. Helene Weigel and other members of the troupe gave several interviews, and in the foyer of the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt there was an exhibition on the BE's working methods and history.¹²⁶ But while the *Ui* production was enthusiastically received, both press and audience were rather negative about *The Mother*,¹²⁷ a play they largely considered a piece of socialist propaganda.¹²⁸ As Agnes Hübner notes, the growing criticism of Brecht was not only a backlash against the earlier enthusiasm and dogmatism, but also "coincide[d] with the emancipation of French drama, which - without denying Brecht's importance for its development - demand[ed] its own

¹¹⁸ Barnett. 2017. p.62

¹¹⁹ Aslan. 2009. p.45-46

¹²⁰ Hübner. 1968. p.62

¹²¹ *ibid.*, p.73-74

¹²² Aslan. 2009. p.72-73

¹²³ Peslin-Ursu. 2009. p.247

¹²⁴ Hübner. 1968. p.102

¹²⁵ Aslan, 2009. p.128-131

¹²⁶ Hübner. 1968. p.154

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, p.155

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, p.165, Peslin-Ursu. 2009. p.258

standards".¹²⁹

It is not certain to what extent this shift in opinion influenced the fact that 1960 was the BE's last guest performance at the Theatre of Nations.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the festival played an enormously important role in making both Brecht's plays and methods and the BE known worldwide. Furthermore, the success in Paris opened up further guest performance opportunities for the BE like a three-week residency at the Palace Theatre in London 1956.¹³¹ Considering the huge success of their initial performance in Paris, it is unsurprising that the GDR attached special importance to the Theatre of Nations and extensively supported further appearances by East German theatres at these events.

Until 1960, the GDR continued to send theatre troupes to Paris. Other GDR theatres introduced the international audience to other facets of East German theatre: The Komische Oper was notably featured several times, with *The Cunning Little Vixen* in 1957, and *The Tales of Hoffmann* and *Albert Herring* in 1959, all directed by Walter Felsenstein.¹³² Felsenstein's opera productions were innovative because he tried to approach opera by dramatic standards and treat text and music as equal. Additionally, the Deutsches Theater performed *Intrigue and Love* in 1956 and the Opernhaus Leipzig *The Condemnation of Lucullus* in 1958.¹³³ The East German theatres earned several of the festival's awards: In 1957 and 1960, the BE received the Critics' Award, the Komische Oper got the festival's challenge trophy and actor Ekkehard Schall was awarded for his portrayal of Arturo Ui.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, p.153

¹³⁰ Werner Hecht later cited the fact that the Allied Travel Office (ATO) forbade citizens of the GDR to enter NATO countries from 1961 to 1964 as a reason why the Berliner Ensemble did not perform at the Theatre of Nations again. (*ibid.*, p.165). It is true that there were repeated cases where the delayed or refused issuing of a visa by the ATO made it impossible to travel to many Western countries. This happened especially often in the cultural sphere, where the ATO was most suspicious of propaganda. The Berliner Ensemble was affected by this practice in 1963, when the ATO prohibited the troupe to visit London for a guest performance. Smith, James. 2006. "Brecht, the Berliner Ensemble, and the British Government". In: *New Theatre Quarterly*, 22(4), 307-323, p.316). The total ban had, however, only come into effect in 1961 as a reaction to the building of the Berlin Wall in August. The Theatre of Nations took place months before that in the spring. This becomes clear, among other things, from the fact that the East German director Fritz Bennewitz was still able to undertake a study trip to the UK, organised and financed by the ITI, without any problems during the same period.

¹³¹ Barnett. 2017. p.63

¹³² Aslan. 2009. p.113

¹³³ *ibid.*, p.95-96

¹³⁴ BArch DR1/13626. *Notiz über DDR-Beteiligung am Theater der Nationen.*

As an accompanying programme to the festival, the French ITI organised conferences with the theatre personalities invited to the Theatre of Nations, who were interviewed about their working methods or more general aspects of their profession. As Odette Aslan notes, some of these conferences also had a diplomatic dimension. In 1959, for example, there was a conference about the Deutsche Oper in West Berlin, that, in addition to artistic directors Julien, Carl Ebert and Günther Rennert, also featured the West Berlin Senator Joachim Tiburtius.¹³⁵ There were frequent conferences on Brecht's work and method, e.g. *Le Théâtre de Bertolt Brecht. Sa manière de travailler* in 1957, *Brecht et l'Opera* in 1958, and *Bertolt Brecht et les thèmes historiques* in 1960.¹³⁶ Similarly, Felsenstein's productions were also the subject of such conferences.¹³⁷ These events of the French centre thus provided further opportunity for East German theatre artists to talk about their methods.

Through the guest performances at the Theatre of Nations East German theatre artists and the GDR cultural officials that were facilitating their trips were brought into contact with the ITI. It is unclear when exactly the GDR became aware of the ITI. The earliest documents about the ITI found in the archive of the Ministry of Culture (MfK) are an excerpt on the ITI from the *Yearbook of International Organizations 1954-1955*¹³⁸ and a press release about the first General Assembly of the newly founded FRG centre and its decision to relocate its office to West Berlin.¹³⁹ This suggests that both the existence of the ITI and the West German centre were known to GDR cultural policy-makers for several years before they attempted to gain membership themselves.

Most likely their interest in the ITI was sparked by the BE's first performances in Paris. Since the Theatre of Nations had proven itself to be a useful stage for the foreign cultural representation of the GDR, the ITI was considered an attractive opportunity to achieve further international recognition in the field of culture. Officials from the MfK and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MfAA) considered an East German ITI membership especially advantageous to their foreign cultural politics because of its affiliation with UNESCO.¹⁴⁰ The UNESCO was one of the organizations inaccessible

¹³⁵ Aslan. 2009. p.221

¹³⁶ See Peslin-Ursu. 2009. p.245-260

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, p.364-369

¹³⁸ BArch DR1/20438. 1954/01/27. Copy: *Auszug aus dem Jahrbuch der Internationalen Organisationen 1954-1955: Internationales Theaterinstitut.*

¹³⁹ BArch DR1/20438. *Information: Westberlin Sitz der Deutschen ITI-Sektion.*

¹⁴⁰ BArch DR1/20438. 1958/11/24. Letter from Zachmann.

to the GDR due to the *Alleinvertretungsanspruch* and the lack of international diplomatic recognition. While the FRG was represented in the UNESCO since 1951, the GDR had been denied membership in 1955. The GDR regarded UNESCO primarily as an important tool for cultural-political representation and continued working towards a UNESCO membership after their first rejection. Similar to their strategy concerning the ITI, they hoped that joining international organisations adjacent to UNESCO would create precedence, normalize their presence in these communities and thereby help them attain admission eventually. To the Central Committee of the SED (ZK) the MfK explained its reasoning: “Die Aufnahme in diese wichtige Organisation ist für die gesamte Zusammenarbeit mit der UNESCO von grosser Bedeutung.“¹⁴¹

Additionally, the ministry officials believed that an ITI membership would provide “favourable opportunities to expand or establish cultural cooperation with a number of states.“¹⁴² Without the option of maintaining cultural relations through official, diplomatic channels, the GDR followed the example of the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries and established a large number of friendship societies and other supposedly non-political connections with other countries. They believed that access to the ITI community would allow them to identify new potential contacts and to expand this system.

While the ITI was considered to be very useful, the ministry officials did not consider their acceptance into the organisation easily achievable. The fact that the GDR was not a member of UNESCO was considered a possible argument against their ITI membership. They were also undoubtedly aware of the political intention behind the designation of the West German centre as the “German Section” and the relocation of its office to West-Berlin. Since the FRG had often successfully asserted its claim to sole representation, the East Germans recognised the “one centre in each country”-rule of the ITI as a potential obstacle for an GDR independent membership. Based on these experiences, they anticipated West German resistance to their plans:

Da die westdeutschen Stellen in den letzten Monaten alle versuchen, um selbstständige Mitgliedschaften der DDR in internationalen Organisationen zu verhindern bzw. schon bestehende Mitgliedschaften der DDR durch gesamtdeutsche zu ersetzen, macht dies gegenwärtig eine besonders sorgfältige Vorbereitung auf die Mitgliedschaft im ITI notwendig.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ BArch DR1/20438. 1959/03/31. Letter from Uszkoreit.

¹⁴² *ibid.*

¹⁴³ *ibid.*

With these potential hurdles identified, the East Germans were determined that a rejection of their membership application had to be prevented at all costs, because it would create an unfavourable precedent for cultural organisations under the UNESCO umbrella. The attitude of the international theatre community toward East Germany was therefore closely monitored to assess and improve the chances of success.

After their success at the Theatre of Nations in Paris, the GDR took cautious first steps towards an ITI membership. During a visit to Athens in 1957, theatre agent Erwin Luck of the Berliner Theater- und Konzert-Agentur had a conversation with members of the Greek ITI centre and arranged for an East German observer to be invited to the 7th ITI Congress.¹⁴⁴ Joachim Tenschert, editor of the magazine *Theater der Zeit*, was chosen to go to Athens,¹⁴⁵ but his travel documents weren't approved by the responsible authorities in time.¹⁴⁶ After this first attempt to send an East German delegation to an ITI Congress had failed, East German theatre artists and ministry officials began to hint at their interest in establishing their own ITI centre to other ITI members and asked them for help. Maurice Huisman, the president of the Belgian ITI, had conversations with representatives of the DT and MfK he considered "extremely interesting"¹⁴⁷. He was told that the GDR "is ready to join the I.T.I. and to establish a German centre in Berlin". Afterwards he wrote to both the Secretary General André Josset and ITI President Milan Bogdanović to express his support for an East German ITI centre: "L'activité théâtrale en Allemagne de l'Est est remarquable pour le moment. La participation de certaines de ses compagnies au Théâtre des Nations justifie, je crois, pleinement son entrée dans l'I.T.I. [...]"¹⁴⁸ Delegates of the French and UK centres were also supportive¹⁴⁹. Only Pieter de Brauw of the Dutch centre was more ambivalent in his response. He welcomed the inclusion of East German theatre, but was wary of the political conflict that a second German centre would invite:

Ich würde bedauern wenn politische Fragen sich in unsere Gespräche und Kongresse hineinmischen würden. Die Tatsache dass es zwei Deutsche Centren geben würde, würde unvermeidlich zu politischen Problemen führen, deren Lösung das Internationale Theater Institut überhaupt nicht gewachsen ist.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁴ BArch DR1/20438. 1957/04/09. Letter from ITI Greece.

¹⁴⁵ BArch DR1/20438. 1957/06/03. Letter to Luck.

¹⁴⁶ BArch DR1/20438. 1957/07/02. Letter from Paeuscher.

¹⁴⁷ BArch DR1/20438. 1957/10/12. Letter from Huisman to Josset.

¹⁴⁸ BArch DR1/20438. 1957/10/12. Letter from Huisman to Bogdanovic.

¹⁴⁹ BArch DR1/20438. 1959/11/06. File Note.

¹⁵⁰ BArch DR107/50. 1959/04/24. Letter from de Brauw.

The largely positive response from ITI members showed how well the East German theatre had established itself at the Theatre of Nations as a valuable artistic addition to the international theatre community.

One reason for the increased efforts of the GDR to be present in the cultural spheres of Western Europe was the upcoming Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers in 1959, where the former Allied Powers met to discuss the question of West Berlin and German reunification once again. East and West Germans were allowed to participate as observers. While the meetings would ultimately end without any agreement reached, the GDR considered their possible impact to be significant in the run-up. In preparation for the conference, the GDR planned for a huge display of East German culture including a book expo, art and photography exhibitions¹⁵¹ and, because of the success of *Mother Courage* at the Theatre of Nations in Paris, a Brecht matinee on July 20th 1959.¹⁵² Successes in the cultural field, such as admission to the ITI shortly before the conference, would supposedly demonstrate to the Western powers the accepted presence of the GDR in international communities and support the position of the Soviets and East Germans during the talks.

In the run-up to the founding of the centre and the application for membership of the ITI, the 1959 season of the Theatre of Nations was also of particular importance. It offered a last major opportunity for the East German theatre to present itself to an international audience before the World Congress. Irene Gysi from the Cultural Relations Department at the MfK, who accompanied the Komische Oper to Paris, noticed a great interest in the guest performance. Therefore, with the help of the Theatre of Nations and the Association des Echanges franco-allemands,¹⁵³ she spontaneously organised a large reception in the foyer of the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt in the evening after the performance. Together with Planson she drew up a list of important politicians, artists and other personalities to invite to the premiere of *The Tales of Hoffmann* on

¹⁵¹ BArch DR1/7790. 1959/04/24. Memo to Neukranz.

¹⁵² BArch DR1/7790. 1959/06/24. *Aktennotiz über eine Besprechung im Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten betreffend Kulturveranstaltungen während der 2. Sitzungsperiode der Außenminister-Konferenz in Genf.*

¹⁵³ The EFA was an organisation which nominally aimed to promote exchanges between France and both German nations, but, because of the political and artistic interests of its French founders that were close to the PCF, was in fact primarily interested in contact with the GDR. The EFA organised trips and exchanges to the GDR and tried to gain sympathy in France for the diplomatic recognition of the GDR.

May 4th 1959 and the reception afterwards on behalf of Walter Felsenstein.¹⁵⁴ Gysi was very satisfied with the course of the premiere, both with the pompous framing of the performance by a parade of the Republican Guard who formed a guard from the entrance to the box doors and the enthusiastic reception by the audience. Among the guests, apart from famous playwrights such as Ionescu and Camus, actors, composers, painters and a number of figures of the “so-called Parisian society”,¹⁵⁵ were eleven ambassadors and cultural attachés and a number of French politicians and diplomats, including some important civil servants from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The following day, Walter Felsenstein held a press conference, which, along with excerpts from the performances and other interviews, was also broadcast by French radio.¹⁵⁶ The premiere, reception and press coverage were regarded by the GDR and its French allies as a cultural-political success, a “battle won in preparation for the Foreign Ministers’ Conference in Geneva.”¹⁵⁷ It also confirmed the ITI community’s favourable stance towards the East German theatre, and the GDR’s chance of success for admission to the ITI.

While theatre artists and the MfK were using their cultural relations to the ITI centres in Western Europe to convince them to endorse the inclusion of an East German centre, the MfAA through their embassies contacted the authorities in Hungary and Poland, the two Eastern Bloc countries that were already part of the ITI and at the time part of the ExCom to inform them of the GDR’s intentions, obtain details of the current composition of the Executive Committee and to ask for their help.¹⁵⁸ The Hungarian authorities responded to this request by assuring their support and providing both an overview of the current set-up of the ExCom and an assessment of the attitude of the ExCom members towards a GDR membership:¹⁵⁹ They also mentioned that the current ITI president, the Yugoslav writer, critic and theatre manager Milan Bogdanović, had been a resistance fighter during the Second World War. This was regarded as indicative of his stance towards the matter, presumably because it would lead him to support the anti-fascist GDR over the ‘revanchist’ FRG. Vice President Rosamond Gilder was

¹⁵⁴ BArch DR1/7790. *Bericht über Gastspiel beim Theater der Nationen, 27.4-9.5.1959.* p.1

¹⁵⁵ BArch DR1/7790. *Liste derjenigen Persönlichkeiten, die der Premiere von ‚Hoffmanns Erzählungen‘ und anschliessendem Empfang am 4.5.59 beigewohnt haben.*

¹⁵⁶ BArch DR1/7790. *Bericht über Gastspiel beim Theater der Nationen, 27.4-9.5.1959.* p.4

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p.3

¹⁵⁸ BArch DR1/20438. 1958/11/24. Letter from Zachmann.

¹⁵⁹ BArch DR1/20438. 1959/03/13. Letter from Kiermeier.

reported to have been “well-disposed” towards the Hungarian delegates. The Hungarian experience was that ITI generally stayed away from political discussions and tried to keep its activities to theatrical issues. The fact that Hungary was accepted as an ITI member in 1957 so shortly after the Hungarian Uprising in 1956 was considered evidence of this.¹⁶⁰ This information suggested that a GDR membership application would find favourable conditions.

The planning for an ITI centre began in earnest in late 1958. A first charter for the new GDR ITI was drafted by the MfK on October 21st 1958. On November 7th 1958, there was a meeting with officials from the MfAA to discuss the foreign policy issues of the matter.¹⁶¹ On January 15th 1959 the proposal for an ITI centre was submitted to Deputy Minister Erich Wendt and was expected to be discussed and adopted soon.¹⁶² On March 31st 1959, the ZK was asked for final approval.¹⁶³

The GDR centre of the ITI was undoubtedly initiated and organized at the MfK. Irene Gysi of the Cultural Relations Department played the central role in this process. She had coordinated the attempted visit to the World Congress in Athens, had been present for the conversation with Huisman the year before and had organized East German visits to the Theatre of Nations festival, so she already handled the contact with other GDR institutions regarding ITI-related affairs. On the side of the theatre artists, Wolfgang Langhoff, the artistic director of the DT, and his administrative director Walter Kohls were primarily involved in the founding of the ITI centre. The representatives of the DT had been the ones to discuss future GDR participation in the ITI with Huisman in 1957¹⁶⁴, so the DT was likely already intended to play a significant role in the new ITI centre at the time. They were also involved during the preparatory phase or at least informed about progress: Langhoff was presented with and approved of the draft statutes in December 1959¹⁶⁵.

The founding meeting was originally planned for April 7th 1959, but was then postponed and instead held on May 12th, only three weeks before the 8th ITI World Congress. Invitations to the inaugural meeting were sent out by Kurt Bork, head of the Performing Arts Department of the MfK, to the artistic directors of important East

¹⁶⁰ BArch DR1/20438. Translated copy: Letter from Hungary.

¹⁶¹ BArch DR1/20438. 1958/11/24. Letter from Zachmann.

¹⁶² BArch DR1/20438. 1959/01/15. Letter to Wendt.

¹⁶³ BArch DR1/20438. 1959/03/31. Letter from Uszkoreit.

¹⁶⁴ BArch DR1/20438. 1957/10/12. Letter from Huisman to Bogdanovic.

¹⁶⁵ BArch DR1/20438. 1958/12/08. Letter from Kohls.

German theatres. In that letter they were informed of the MfK's decision to create an ITI centre. It had also already been decided that Langhoff would be appointed as president, Walter Kohls as secretary and Rainer as director. The wording of the letter also makes it clear that attendance at the meeting and participation in the new ITI centre was considered mandatory:

Ich bitte Sie, Ihre Einverständniserklärung zur Mitarbeit im ‚Zentrum DDR des ITI‘ und die Bestätigung Ihrer Teilnahme an der Gründungsversammlung an den Sekretär des ‚Zentrums DDR des ITI‘, Herrn Walter Kohls, zu richten.¹⁶⁶

It is also noteworthy that the inaugural meeting of the GDR centre took place on May 12th 1959 in the evening after that year's *Intendantentagung*.¹⁶⁷ The *Intendantentagung* was an annual conference of all artistic directors of East German theatres that had been started in 1948 at Langhoff's suggestion and was effectively used as a tool to align the East German theatre with the current cultural policies of the SED. Having the ITI meeting take place after the *Intendantentagung* guaranteed the presence of all the artistic directors without any significant additional effort, but also immediately associated the new centre with cultural policy objectives. Accordingly, most of the representatives and directors of the important theatres were in attendance. Of the 32 theatre personalities invited, 28 took part in the meeting, among them the artistic directors of the largest and most important theatres in the GDR, the Berlin 'special class', the A-category (Dresden, Leipzig, Karl-Marx-Stadt, Weimar, Magdeburg, Schwerin, Rostock) and some other municipal or regional theatres. There were also representatives of the Academy of Arts, Leipzig Theatre Academy, Humbolt University and the Gewerkschaft Kunst, and the three ministry officials whose departments were involved in the preparation of the centre and who were primarily concerned with the work of the ITI: Kurt Bork from the Performing Arts Department, Hans-Rainer John from the Theatre Section and Irene Gysi from Cultural Relations.

The charter of the new ITI centre was presented to the attendees who then unanimously voted for the creation of a GDR ITI and elected first the directorate [*Direktorium*] and then the president, secretary, and director. Since the latter had already been chosen by the MfK prior to the meeting, it can be assumed that the former was also predetermined. In addition to Langhoff and Kohl, Helene Weigel of the BE,

¹⁶⁶ BArch DR1/20438. Draft: Invitation from Bork.

¹⁶⁷ ITI. Kohls, Walter. 1962. *Entwurf: Drei Jahre Mitarbeit im Internationalen Theaterinstitut*. p 1

Max Burghardt of the Deutsche Staatsoper, Walter Felsenstein of the Komische Oper, Karl Kayser of the Städtische Bühnen Leipzig and Hanns Anselm Perten of the Volkstheater Rostock were elected to the board of directors. This meant that all the GDR theatres, which had performed at the Theatre of Nations in the 1950s and were therefore known to the international community of the ITI, were represented in a leading position in the new centre. This decision was most likely deliberate to improve the chances of their ITI membership application being accepted by referring to the East German theatres' success at the Theatre of Nations and promising the continued contribution of those theatres to ITI efforts. At the end of the two-hour meeting, five delegates were nominated for the ITI World Congress in Helsinki.¹⁶⁸

Since the ITI World Congress was only three weeks away, the GDR centre had to arrange their admission into the ITI immediately. Their membership application was sent both to Paris and Helsinki and the GDR trade office, the *de facto*-embassy of the GDR in Helsinki, was informed of their participation in the Congress and asked to prepare their stay.¹⁶⁹

2.3 The Inter-German Conflict at the World Congress in Helsinki

Considering the conflicting cultural policy intentions of the FRG and GDR, which motivated the founding of both German ITI centres, it is hardly surprising that this conflict had a significant impact on their work in the ITI. This is already evident in the events at the ITI World Congress in Helsinki concerning the admission of the GDR centre into the international organisation, which was the first meeting of the two centres.

The 8th World Congress 1959 in Helsinki, ten years after its founding, was an important milestone in the early history of the ITI and is usually considered to be the event where the ITI's idea of an international community of theatre experts first became fully realized. In her paper on the Helsinki Congress, Hanna Korsberg shows that whereas earlier congresses had been mostly preoccupied with administrative matters, the keynote address by Eugène Ionesco on the congress topic 'Avant-garde tendencies in the theatre of today' launched a lively discussion about artistic questions in theatre. One of the main reasons for this heated debate was the now stronger presence of delegates from socialist countries who vehemently opposed Ionesco's ideas about

¹⁶⁸ ITI. Drucksachen. *Beschlussprotokoll der Gründungsversammlung*.

¹⁶⁹ BArch DR1/20438. 1959/05/13. Letter to Nestler.

artistic truth and freedom and his work as a Theatre of the Absurd playwright and argued for socialist realism instead.¹⁷⁰ While Poland and Czechoslovakia had originally been the only Eastern Bloc states that were founding members of ITI and represented in the organization from the very beginning, this quickly changed in the second half of the 1950s: Hungary joined in 1957, Bulgaria in 1958 and the USSR, Romania and the GDR in 1959 at the Helsinki Congress. The admission of these new member states shifted the balance of the ITI artistically, as the three-day-long discussion about avant-garde demonstrated. This change of balance was considered another success of the Helsinki Congress, another step towards a truly international community. Many of the accounts of the Congress either did not know or chose not to acknowledge that this realization of ITI's vision did not happen smoothly or without political interference.

The GDR centre had been founded so shortly before the World Congress (1st-6th June 1959), that ITI Secretary General Jean Darcante was informed of it only on May 22nd. The official application letter arrived in Paris after Darcante had already left for Finland, but a second back-up letter arrived in Helsinki on May 29th. During the last meeting of the ITI's outgoing Executive Committee before the official start of the Congress on June 1st, the membership applications of the USSR, Romania and the GDR were voted upon and all accepted.

The FRG ITI sent four delegates, Werckshagen, Scheffels, Unruh and Müller. Ebert was unable to attend because of other commitments and was therefore represented by Vice President Werckshagen of the DBV. The West German ITI had been aware of the East German interest in ITI and already knew about the new GDR centre and the observers they were planning to send to the Congress, but not about the membership application. Müller had already written to the Culture Department of the Foreign Office and asked for advice, but had not yet received an answer before leaving for Helsinki.¹⁷¹ Since Darcante had assured Ebert that he would inform the FRG centre about such developments beforehand, they saw no reason to assume otherwise. After the opening ceremony, Darcante invited the FRG delegates to a private conversation with himself and UNESCO representative Michel Dard to inform them of the ExCom's decision to admit the GDR centre. The surprised FRG delegates voiced their disapproval, but were told that the ITI and UNESCO did not share their concerns. Confronted with his unkept

¹⁷⁰ See: Korsberg. 2017. p.151-163

¹⁷¹ ITI. Protokolle 1. 1959/07/25. Letter to the Culture Department of the Foreign Office.

promise to the absent Ebert, Darcante expressed his regrets but explained that any actual discussion of the topic would have been impossible in this short timeframe. When Müller reminded them of the “one centre per country”-rule, Dard explained that they did not consider the GDR’s admission a breach of the ITI charter and cited other international organisations as examples of a similar approach. He also clarified that his approval of the ExCom’s decision was solely concerned with the artistic issue and not a political endorsement. Darcante likewise argued that “the theatres in the ‘GDR’ could not be ignored in the ITI”.¹⁷²

The FRG delegation was aware that the GDR’s admission was presented to them as a *fait accompli* “which a protest could no longer change”.¹⁷³ For the remaining time of the Congress, the delegates struggled to adequately respond to this unexpected turn of events. After having been informed of the ITI’s decision, Ebert sent a telegram to his delegation, mistakenly assuming that the ITI intended to change the ‘one centre per country’-rule in its charter to allow for a second German centre.¹⁷⁴ Since nobody had even attempted to make changes to the charter or shown concern about the admission of a GDR centre of ITI being a breach of regulations, their main argument had been taken from them and they were unsure on how to proceed. Undeterred by Darcante’s assertions, the members of the delegation were not prepared to simply accept the situation and saw the need for further action. On June 2nd, they informed the Federal German trade office, the FRG state representative in Helsinki, who in turn contacted the Foreign Office about the events. After having consulted with the Foreign Office and having discussed the matter with the French ambassador in Helsinki, the West German diplomats advised the delegation to formally protest the admission of the GDR. At the General Assembly on June 3rd, when the new ITI members were announced to the Congress, the FRG delegates therefore voiced their protest which was noted in the Congress protocol:

La delegation de la République Fédérale de l’Allemagne a fait observer qu’elle se réservait tout commentaire quant à la représentation d’un Centre de la République Démocratique de l’Allemagne, du fait qu’elle n’en avait pas été informée à temps.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² ITI. ExCom *Vorläufiger Bericht*. p.1

¹⁷³ ITI. ExCom 1956/06/18. *Bericht*, p.1

¹⁷⁴ Ebert, Carl. Telegraph. cited in: *ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ ITI. ExCom *Institut International du Theatre. 8e Congrès. Rapport du Comité General*. p.4

Both Darcante and the new president of the ITI, Vincenzo Torraca, agreed to discuss the matter with Ebert in person at a later date.¹⁷⁶

Apart from the admission of the East German centre, the congress had not been unsuccessful for the West German delegation either. Despite Ebert's absence, he was elected to the ExCom as the representative of the FRG centre and the colloquium on theatre architecture planned by Unruh for 1960 in West Berlin was approved.

The GDR centre sent five delegates to Helsinki: Langhoff, Kohls, John, Herbert Ihering (theatre critic and secretary of the Performing Arts Section of the Academy of Arts) and Paul Herbert Freyer (artistic director of the municipal theatre in Karl-Marx-Stadt). They themselves were not present for any of the discussions about the legitimacy of their new ITI membership and nothing in their report about the Congress' proceedings suggest that they were even aware of them. Instead, they heavily used their visit to the Congress to promote the GDR and East German theatre: On June 4th, after the GDR had been officially announced as a new ITI member, the delegates held a press conference and received a lot of media interest. On June 5th they hosted a reception at the GDR trade office. This event was attended by ITI President Bogdanovic, General Secretary Darcante and various members of the English, French, Dutch, Norwegian, Soviet, Polish, Hungarian, Romanian and Bulgarian delegations as well as public figures from Finland and was therefore considered a great success by the East German diplomats.¹⁷⁷

Despite the effort made by the West German delegates to prevent or reverse the admission of the GDR centre, there is no evidence that they ever sought direct conflict with their East German colleagues. The reports of both sides only mention casual interactions between the two German delegations. According to Werckshagen, the West German delegates simply asked the East Germans about the founding date of their centre, presumably to confirm Darcante's statements.¹⁷⁸ In her report of the Helsinki Congress for *Die Bühnengenossenschaft*, Müller did not mention the conflict behind the scenes but focussed instead on the artistic divide between East and West apparent in the discussion about the nature of the avant-garde, thereby describing the contributions "of the Soviet Union and its satellites" as "frighteningly uniform".¹⁷⁹ In

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p.3

¹⁷⁷ BArch DR1/20438. 1959/06/30. *Bericht der Handelsvertretung*.

¹⁷⁸ ITI. ExCom 1956/06/18. *Bericht*. p.3

¹⁷⁹ Müller, Ingvelde. 1959. „Eindrücke vom VIII. ITI-Kongreß in Helsinki“ In: *Die Bühnengenossenschaft*, No 5/59. 180 -182

the *Tagesspiegel*, she called the admission of a GDR centre controversial, but omitted the involvement of her delegation and instead painted a more conciliatory image of cultural exchange:

Nach der umstrittenen Zulassung eines "DDR-Zentrums", der Aufnahme der Sowjetunion und Rumäniens sowie der Wiederanerkennung eines Centres von Nationalchina, das vorübergehend geschlossen war, hat sich das Spannungsfeld von Ost-West-Auseinandersetzungen noch verbreitert. Sogar in der offiziellen Schlußsitzung brachen die Gegensätze auf. Indessen, man hört einander noch zu und informiert sich durch die Publikationen des ITI über Stücke und Inszenierungen in beiden Hemisphären.¹⁸⁰

The East German *Theaterdienst* only briefly mentioned the "pleasant contacts"¹⁸¹ between the two delegations but otherwise focused on relaying the debate about the avant-garde and refuting Ionesco's points. The same is true of the report in the *Berliner Zeitung* called *DDR Theater international anerkannt*, which, while viewing the acceptance of the GDR centre primarily in terms of its cultural-political significance, made no mention whatsoever of the FRG or the West German delegation:

Die Aufnahme, keine bloße Formalität, unterstreicht nicht nur die wachsende internationale Anerkennung der DDR. Sie erleichtert auch wesentlich die Kulturarbeit im Ausland, die durch zahlreiche Gastspiele von Theatern der DDR über Werden und Wachsen unserer sozialistischen Theaterarbeit Kunde gibt.¹⁸²

If the East German ITI members or the ministry officials had been aware of the events behind the scenes in Helsinki at the time, it can be reasonably assumed that this victory against the Federal Republic in the inter-German conflict would not have gone unmentioned in the reporting. In even stronger contrast to the backstage proceedings was the depiction of the meeting of East and West German congress participants in the Finnish press. The Swedish-language newspaper *Hufvudstadsbladet* framed the meeting of Werckshagen and Jhering as follows:

Die politische Spaltung verhindert jedoch nicht, dass beide gute Freunde sind, und weil sie solche sind, lassen sie sich zusammen photographieren. Es ist ein Dekument[sic] über die Kunst, die alle Grenzen beseitigt. Und es ist wahr. Beide, Werckshagen und Jhering[sic], sind ebenso begeisterte Anhänger der wirklichen Kunst.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Müller-Karwehl, Ingvelde. 1959/06/17. "Eindrücke vom VIII. ITI-Kongreß in Helsinki." In: *Der Tagesspiegel*. Berlin.

¹⁸¹ J.R. 1959/06/28. „VIII. Kongreß des Internationalen Theaterinstituts“ In: *Theaterdienst*. 26(14/4). Berlin, p.5

¹⁸² Bronnen, Arnolt. 1959/06/12. "DDR Theater international anerkannt" in: *Berliner Zeitung*.

¹⁸³ ITI. I.T.I. Head Office. Vom 1.9.1966 bis 31.12.1973. German translation of Swedish-language newspaper article from *Hufvudstadsbladet* 1959/06/06.

The ITI Congress was, as Hanna Korsberg argues, an important event for Finland, which in the post-war period was slow to return to the international community because of its geopolitical position and the delicate balance between the Cold War powers.¹⁸⁴ Accordingly the presence and seemingly peaceful interactions between delegates from East and West Germany was used to demonstrate the positive impact of both the ITI in general and the Helsinki Congress specifically in the struggle for international peace and understanding between the East and West. The puzzling lack of hostility in these encounters serves as a noteworthy contrast to the conflict behind the scenes and makes it clear the issue of the two German centres was solely a political one.

With the matter not yet resolved after the end of the Congress, the ITI conceded to the FRG centre another discussion of the question of the two German centres at the next session of the ITI's Executive Committee in November 1959 in Paris, this time with Ebert present. This gave the FRG centre just under half a year to prepare and rethink their approach. The focus on the "one centre in each country"-rule was still considered to be the most feasible strategy. It masked what was a purely political conflict and therefore unwanted in the non-political ITI and seemingly shifted the discussion to a question of legality.

They approached both federal bodies and the UNESCO to get a clearer picture of the situation and their options, and received notably differing answers. First, they notified the German UNESCO-Commission of the events¹⁸⁵ and asked for information on similar cases of GDR participation in other international organisations.¹⁸⁶ Then they visited the UNESCO headquarters in Paris for a discussion with Dard's German colleague, Rudolf Salat, who clarified that the UNESCO had no authority to deal with ITI's internal affairs and did neither endorse nor object to the membership of a GDR centre. He declined to make a statement on the question, but left the members of the FRG ITI with the impression that he personally was not convinced by the validity of their argument.¹⁸⁷

Representatives from both the Foreign Office and the Federal Ministry of All-German Affairs were invited to the next meeting of the executive board of the FRG centre after the Helsinki Congress. The Foreign Office believed that the FRG would

¹⁸⁴ Korsberg. 2017. p.152-153

¹⁸⁵ ITI. ExCom 1959/06/19. Letter from Müller to Fleischhauer.

¹⁸⁶ Germany. ExCom. 1959/06/24. Airmail letter from Müller to Fleischhauer

¹⁸⁷ ITI. Protokolle 1. 1959/08/11. Letter from Werckshagen to Ebert, p.3

likely succeed if they demanded a revision of the decision, given that the statutory situation obviously favoured the FRG centre and the ExCom was composed of predominantly Western members. From the perspective of the state officials and diplomats, who were not concerned with the ITI's non-political nature, this issue presented itself as one of many examples where the FRG's claim to sole representation was contested by the GDR. Accordingly, they expected it to be treated the same by other members of the ExCom of the ITI, a majority of whom were representatives of other Western countries and therefore considered natural allies. The board members however believed that even if the charter favoured their standpoint, the ExCom would not revoke the decision but argue with a different interpretation of Article II of the ITI charter. They were also convinced that any attempt to exert diplomatic influence on the representatives of the Western countries on the ExCom would also fail.¹⁸⁸ It is noteworthy that despite their indignation about Darcante's conduct, the board members were quite realistic about the ITI's most likely approach of the situation and their chances of success in this matter, but nevertheless decided to continue their opposition to the admission of the East German centre.

There were also more conciliatory voices, but these were largely ignored in the discussion. Unlike the other board members, Schultze saw no reason to object to the existence of an East German ITI. He had previously pointed out the possibility of peaceful cooperation with an East German centre in the past and even suggested a few options to do so.¹⁸⁹ In his opinion, the creation of a separate GDR centre was the necessary consequence and ultimately preferable option after the FRG ITI had rejected any inclusion of the East German theatre in their own activities.¹⁹⁰

Ich bin auch nicht der Meinung, dass einer Zusammenarbeit oder zumindest einer Tolerierung der Aufnahme eines DDR Zentrums sachliche Gründe entgegenstehen müssen. Ich darf daran erinnern, dass die beiden Akademien der Künste in West- und Ostberlin auf das angenehmste und fruchtbarste zusammenarbeiten.¹⁹¹

All present agreed that threatening to leave the ITI in protest was not an option, since that would allow the GDR to exert their influence unchallenged. Ultimately, the board members decided to officially dispute the GDR's acceptance and call for a review and

¹⁸⁸ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll der 14. Vorstandssitzung am 3.7.1959*, p.3

¹⁸⁹ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll der 8. Vorstandssitzung am 21.3.1958*.

¹⁹⁰ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll der 14. Vorstandssitzung am 3.7.1959*, p.2

¹⁹¹ ITI. Protokolle 1. 1959/06/27. Letter from Schultze to Ebert

possibly a reversal of the Executive Committee's decision.¹⁹² This course of action was approved by the General Assembly of the FRG centre on October 9th.¹⁹³ Ebert then wrote to Darcante and Torraca to inform them of this intent.¹⁹⁴

On July 6th 1959, the Foreign Office wrote to the FRG embassies in Chile, France, Greece, Italy, Japan, UK and USA¹⁹⁵ – all 'friendly' countries currently represented in the ITI's ExCom – to explain the situation and urge them to influence the ITI representatives via their governments to get them to support the West German centre in this matter.

Bekanntlich legen wir den grössten Wert darauf, dass die SBZ nach Möglichkeit von allen internationalen Organisationen ferngehalten wird. Es besteht deshalb ein grosses Interesse daran, dass die Aufnahme der SBZ in das ITI wieder rückgängig gemacht wird. Daher wird gebeten, auf geeignetem Wege zu versuchen, bei der dortigen Regierung zu erreichen, dass sie auf ihre Vertreter im Exekutiv-Ausschuß dahingehend einwirkt, dass dem zu stellenden Antrag der deutschen Sektion entsprochen wird.¹⁹⁶

This attempt of diplomatic intervention was unsuccessful and did not go unnoticed by the ITI. Darcante was informed by the British centre about this action of the West German government and contacted the French Ministry of Culture to find out that it had also received a message.¹⁹⁷ He then sent a confidential note to the members of the ExCom and a copy to Ebert. In it, he described the proceedings before and during the Helsinki Congress from his point of view and defended himself against what he believed to be personal accusations against him. Darcante reexplained that he had neither had previous contact with the East German centre nor the opportunity to inform Ebert of developments in advance, because of the short time available.¹⁹⁸ He also denied that his failure to keep his promise to Ebert truly was the primary cause for the escalation of the conflict:

Au demeurant, j'aimerais comprendre en quoi le fait d'être informé le 24 mai aurait permis au Centre Allemand de changer le fond de sa position. S'il est hostile à collaborer avec les hommes de théâtre de l'Est, on aura peine à croire que c'est seulement parce qu'il n'a pas été informé huit jours plus tôt.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹² ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll der 14. Vorstandssitzung am 3.7.1959*, p.3

¹⁹³ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll der Mitgliederversammlung am 6.10.1959*, p.2

¹⁹⁴ ITI. ExCom 1959/10/12. Letter from Ebert to Torraca.

¹⁹⁵ ITI. ExCom 1960/02/04. Letter from the Foreign Office.

¹⁹⁶ ITI. ExCom 1959/08/06. Copy of the Demarche. p.2-3

¹⁹⁷ ITI. ExCom 1959/10/13. Letter from Darcante to Ebert.

¹⁹⁸ ITI. ExCom Darcante, Jean. *Note confidentielle aux membres du Comité Exécutif*, p.1-2

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p.1

Whether the board members knew about the diplomatic intervention is hard to ascertain. They strongly denied that they had been notified of it. Ebert considered “this action of the Federal Government to be unfortunate”, as it would “undoubtedly provoke the protest of the other members of the Executive Committee” and subject the FRG centre “to the suspicion that we are being controlled by the authorities.”²⁰⁰ He declared: “Die Einflussnahme politischer Stellen auf die Arbeiten des ITI sollte grundsätzlich ausgeschlossen sein.”²⁰¹ The other members of the board shared his assessment and advised him to distance himself from the action of the FRG government in the ExCom. Schultze was especially adamant that the ITI centre did not want to work under state supervision and control.²⁰²

Only after Darcante’s confidential letter was the GDR ITI made aware of what was happening by Polish representative Bohdan Korzeniewski, who currently was the only member of the ExCom from another Eastern Bloc country.²⁰³ On October 30th the GDR centre met with members of the MfK and the MfAA to work out counter-arguments and counter-measures to prevent the exclusion of their centre. A letter of protest signed by Langhoff, Felsenstein, Weigel and Burghardt was immediately sent to Darcante and the ExCom. In this letter, they emphasised the connection between their ITI centre and the East German theatres:

Nous ne parlons pas seulement dans notre propre nom mais également comme représentants de 76 Théâtres en République Démocratique Allemande parmi lesquelles se trouvent des ensembles aussi éminents que le Deutsche Staatsoper, le Komische Oper, le Deutsche Theater et le Berliner Ensemble.²⁰⁴

Considering the importance that the guest performances of these theatres at the Theatre of Nations had in persuading the ITI of the necessity of the GDR membership in the first place, this reminder suggested that excluding the East German ITI would also lead to a break with the East German theatre.

Langhoff returned early from a visit to Hamburg and travelled to Warsaw at short notice²⁰⁵ to meet with Korzeniewski. He explained the matter from the East German perspective, provided Korzeniewski with extensive material compiled by the

²⁰⁰ ITI. ExCom 1959/10/21. Letter from Müller-Geleng to Ebert.

²⁰¹ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Protokoll der ausserordentlichen Vorstandssitzung am 5.11.1959.*

²⁰² ITI. Protokolle 1. *Vorläufiges Protokoll der Vorstandssitzung am 5.11.1959.*

²⁰³ BArch DR1/20438. 1959/10/31. *Aktenvermerk.*

²⁰⁴ BArch DR1/20438. 1959/11/02. Protest letter to Darcante.

²⁰⁵ BArch DR1/20438. 1959/11/03. *Aktenvermerk.*

East German Ministries²⁰⁶ and authorized him to speak to the ExCom on behalf of the GDR centre.²⁰⁷ Both Langhoff and Korzeniewski agreed that the West German ITI was unlikely to be successful. They were confident of the support of the British and French representatives who had been among those strongly in favour of an East German ITI centre in the first place.²⁰⁸ Despite this, the East Germans were alarmed that an exclusion of their ITI centre could “damage the international reputation of the GDR” and thus have “an unfavourable repercussion on the GDR's relations with UNESCO.”²⁰⁹ Korzeniewski was accordingly instructed to prevent the topic from being added to the agenda or, if necessary, to postpone the discussion.

While arguing from opposite points of view, the East and West Germans notably agreed on the political interpretation of a GDR membership in the ITI. For both sides, the admission of the East German centre had additional significance which went far beyond the work of the ITI and was interpreted as indicative of the GDR's future international relations.

“Sollte der westdeutsche Protest, der auf diplomatischem Wege eingeleitet wurde, eine Niederlage erleiden, dann wird damit ein Präzedenzfall zu Gunsten der DDR für andere internationale Organisationen geschaffen werden.”²¹⁰

The MfK and MfAA had accurately identified Article II/2 as the basis of the West German argument. This strategy was easy to predict since the FRG centre acted in accordance with the West German foreign policy.²¹¹ Their response was similarly based on political arguments: They blamed the Western Allies and their rejection of the Soviet and East German proposals for the continued separation of Germany and substantiated the GDR's sovereignty with both their membership in other international organisations and their equal presence at the Geneva Conference.²¹² Like their West German rivals, they based their arguments on the legality and accordance to the ITI charter. Instead of focussing on Article II/2 and its “one centre in each country”-rule, they argued that since the admission of the GDR centre had been unanimously determined by the

²⁰⁶ BArch DR1/20438. 1959/11/03. *Mitgliedschaft des Zentrums der DDR des Internationalen Theater-Instituts im ITI.*

²⁰⁷ BArch DR1/20438. 1959/11/06. *Aktennotiz*, p.4

²⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p.2

²⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p.3

²¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.4

²¹¹ BArch DR1/20438. 1959/11/03. *Mitgliedschaft des Zentrums der DDR des Internationalen Theater-Instituts im ITI*, p.1

²¹² *ibid.*, p.1-2

ExCom in accordance with Article II/4, their membership had become legally valid immediately and could not simply be revoked. According to Article II/3-b, a three-quarters majority in the General Assembly at the next Congress would be needed to exclude an ITI centre.²¹³ Such an exclusion would also require the member centre to have acted contrary to the statutes.²¹⁴

Both centres thus refused to consider reconciliation or cooperation within the ITI or to separate their work from their country's foreign politics. The idea of a pan-German centre, which was discussed as an apparent compromise, was rejected by both centres. They cited not only the different legal and economic bases of the theatre systems, but also ideological incompatibility. The MfK claimed:

Ein weiteres Hindernis für eine derartige Zusammenarbeit besteht vor allem in der Abneigung unserer Wissenschaftler und Künstler sich mit der Entwicklung Westdeutschlands, die insbesondere durch Atomaufrüstung und Revanchismus gekennzeichnet ist, durch eine gesamtdeutsche Mitgliedschaft zu identifizieren.²¹⁵

Similarly, Ebert called the members of the GDR ITI “not freely elected representatives, but party functionaries“.²¹⁶ Both sides framed their colleagues from the other German ITI not as artists but as political agents.

These legal and political arguments never appealed to the ITI's global vision to facilitate the international exchange of theatre art. The GDR strategy did, for example, not address how the separation of Germany affected German theatre or how East German artists and audiences would be denied access to foreign theatre by a joint or an exclusively West German ITI centre. The artistic qualities of East German theatre were only mentioned as a bargaining chip. Since they knew that the ITI's interest in East German theatre was largely based on the TdN performances, they subsequently threatened to withhold future participation:

In diesem Fall würde sich beispielsweise kein Theater der DDR an dem Festival des Theatre des Nations beteiligen. Das hat eine große Bedeutung, wenn man bedenkt, daß viele französische Kulturschaffende darauf hinweisen, daß es gegenwärtig unmöglich wäre, dieses Festival ohne eine Beteiligung der Komischen Oper oder des Berliner Ensembles durchzuführen.²¹⁷

²¹³ ITI. Protokolle 1. *Charter of the ITI*.

²¹⁴ BArch DR1/20438. 1959/11/03. *Mitgliedschaft des Zentrums der DDR des Internationalen Theater-Instituts im ITI*, p.3

²¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.5

²¹⁶ ITI. ExCom 1956/06/18. *Bericht*, p.2

²¹⁷ BArch DR1/20438. 1959/11/06. *Aktennotiz*, p.3

With their similar but conflicting attitudes, the two German centres stood in marked contrast to the stance taken by Darcante and at least a majority of the ExCom at the time. Contrary to the two German centres, which interpreted the GDR's membership as an act of political recognition, the ITI tried to avoid this dimension of the conflict by completely denying a political interpretation of this decision. When the question of the legitimacy of the GDR's admission into ITI was discussed, the ExCom members emphasised the artistic rather than political considerations of their decision in Helsinki. They assured Ebert that the admission of the GDR was not prompted by political interests, but the wish to enable a significant part of European theatre to participate in the ITI.²¹⁸

The ExCom was for the most part unwilling to get involved in the political level of the conflict. Members from Western countries were in favour of the East German membership even if the GDR had been diplomatically rejected by their governments. Contrary to the strategic considerations of the Foreign Office, the way that the FRG centre had handled the issue was not met with approval from the other Western delegates either. Rosamond Gilder of the US centre – who Canning calls a “committed internationalist”²¹⁹ and who had been heavily involved with the inception and foundation of the ITI – voiced this sentiment most clearly in a letter to Ebert:

I am sure you know that everyone in the ITI is chiefly concerned with fostering international understanding and good will, as well as promoting “knowledge and practice in theatre arts” as our charter indicates. When we founded the ITI twelve years ago, it was our hope that all theatre people everywhere would join in the difficult and essential task of uniting the disunited world through the medium of the arts – ignoring, as much as possible, political differences and temporary, artificial barriers. We are all good friends in the theatre and I hope this problem can be solved in this light as I know you of all people would wish it to be.²²⁰

Torraca stated that to date there had been “no attempt by political bodies to interfere in the work of the ITI to date” and that he was “determined to firmly reject any such attempt in this case as well as in the future.”²²¹ The demarche of the FRG's Foreign Office was clearly considered a new and more drastic step of attempted state influence on the ITI.

²¹⁸ ITI. 1959/11/20. *Vertraulicher Bericht über die Sitzung des Exekutiv-Komitees des ITI in Paris am 10. und 11. November 1959 im Haus der Unesco*, p.2

²¹⁹ Canning. 2015. p.171

²²⁰ ITI. ExCom 1959/10/22. Letter from Gilder to Ebert.

²²¹ ITI. ExCom 1959/11/25. *Vertraulicher Bericht über Exkom-Sitzung*.

The debate during the ExCom session on November 10th 1959²²² led to the conclusions that both the East and West German participants had already anticipated. Both Ebert's reiteration of his centre's arguments and the ITI's stance had remained unchanged since Helsinki. While Korzeniewski repeatedly challenged the West German perspective²²³ with the arguments provided to him by the GDR,²²⁴ his support for the East German centre was ultimately superfluous. In his introductory statement President Torraca was already clear that the ExCom would not revoke the admission of the GDR centre, as such a decision was reserved to the supreme authority of the Congress. He stressed "that a retroactive repeal of the decision would have disastrous consequences for the whole institution and would mean the dissolution of the hard won international union of theatre." He therefore appealed to the FRG centre to withdraw their demands.²²⁵ While the ExCom was unwilling to revise their previous decision to accept the GDR membership, it acknowledged the ambiguity of the term 'country'/'pays' in Article II/2 and addressed the legal question by proposing a change to the ITI's charter to clarify the definition of country not as a political but merely a geographical distinction. Additionally, it put forth a resolution stating this intention:

Le Comité Exécutif [...] estime que l'admission d'un Centre ne peut jamais être considérée comme un acte politique ni impliquer la reconnaissance d'un état où un Centre est situé géographiquement, cette reconnaissance ne pouvant être qu'un acte d'état et non celui d'une organisation non-gouvernementale déclaré que l'admission, par exemple, du Centre de l'Allemagne de l'Est n'est, par conséquent, que la reconnaissance de l'importance d'un théâtre situé dans une région géographique déterminée, ceci étant conforme à la volonté permanente de l' I.T.I., de donner à toutes le expressions du Théâtre toutes les possibilités de rapprochement et de collaboration.²²⁶

This resolution clearly reaffirmed the non-political nature of ITI. It also offered a compromise: The GDR was allowed to stay and participate on the ITI's international stage while the FRG's claim to sole diplomatic representation of Germany was formally also left intact.

²²² ITI. ExCom *Excerpt. Comité Exécutif. 30e Session. 2ème Séance*, p.1-2

²²³ BArch DR1/20438. 1959/12/08. Note about a conversation with Prof. Dr. Korzeniewski.

²²⁴ "Dem Argument des polnischen Komitee-Mitgliedes Bohdan Korzeniewski, dass durch einen Mehrheitsbeschluss ohne weiteres ein rechtsgültiges Vorgehen gewährleistet wäre, wurde von deutscher Seite entgegengehalten, dass auch einer Mehrheit ein Irrtum hinsichtlich verbindlicher Bestimmungen der Satzung unterlaufen kann." ITI. ExCom 1959/11/25. *Vertraulicher Bericht über Exkom-Sitzung*.

²²⁵ ITI. ExCom *Excerpt. Comité Exécutif. 30e Session. 2ème Séance*, p.2

²²⁶ *ibid.*, p.3

2.4 The ITI as a Cold War Institution

The question of the GDR centre's legitimacy was thus settled. Nevertheless, the incident had revealed the ITI's political dimension. The intentional and financial ties of the national centres to the authorities often made them susceptible to state influence. There was an inherent tension between the system of national centres and the epistemic beliefs that had led to ITI's founding. The old internationalist ideals of the interwar period and the post-war utopian visions were challenged by Cold War thinking caused by the dependencies of the divided world that theatre artists found themselves in. As with the UNESCO it was impossible for an international organisation like ITI to be unaffected by geopolitical conflict and to maintain a truly non-political stance despite its best effort to do so. While the conflict of the two German centres after the Helsinki Congress was one of the most noteworthy examples of a clash between the ITI's vision with the realities of intergovernmental conflict in early ITI history, it was also not a one-off challenge. It can instead be understood as an impetus or an indication that the ITI would subsequently have to deal more with the influences of the Cold War on its organisation, both in terms of the inter-German conflict and in the larger Cold War context.

The East and West German involvement with ITI had gained a decidedly political and antagonistic component that adhered to both centres in the long term. The ITI continuously tried to keep a balance between their national interests to allow for the participation of both sides. At first, the FRG centre insisted on a permanent seat in the ExCom to confirm the West German claim to sole representation. While the ITI agreed to this demand initially, the preferential treatment of the FRG did not meet with the approval of the ITI delegates. When the West German representatives boycotted the Warsaw Congress in 1963, they were thus not re-elected. Subsequently, Darcante tried to instead guarantee equal treatment and equal representation of both German centres. In preparation for the Tel Aviv Congress in 1965, Darcante and the two German centres reached a "gentlemen's agreement" that East and West Germany would alternately be represented in the ExCom.²²⁷ The FRG centre was designated as the first beneficiary of this agreement and was accordingly placed on the list of recommendations and elected to the ExCom in Tel Aviv.²²⁸ At the World Congress in New York in 1967, the

²²⁷ ITI. Direktorium 1965-1972. *Ergebnisprotokoll der Direktoriumssitzung am 11.4.1965*. p.1

²²⁸ In their report on the Congress the delegates of the GDR centre expressed their opinion that the FRG was only elected because they were on the list of suggested candidates. They still

GDR centre was nominated and elected to the ExCom for the first time. However, the “gentlemen’s agreement” did not last longer than this first alternation. In November 1968, the West German centre wrote to the East German centre to remind him of the agreement and to make sure the GDR delegation would support the election of a West German representative.²²⁹ After officials from the MfK and MfAA had discussed the further cause of action, the GDR centre replied several months later:

Unsere Meinung ist, daß das seinerzeit besprochene Agreement nicht mehr notwendig und der in den letzten Jahren stattgefundenen Entwicklung auch nicht mehr angemessen ist. Diese Art von “Geheimpakt“ zwischen zwei völlig autonomen Zentren widerspricht letztendlich dem Geist der iTi-Charta [...]. Im übrigen steht einer Kandidatur des Zentrums der Bundesrepublik für die nächste Wahlperiode unseres Erachtens nicht entgegen.²³⁰

The FRG centre strongly objected to this East German interpretation of the agreement. The centre’s new president Kurt Raeck cancelled his participation in the Congress to avoid contact with the East German delegation.²³¹ Darcante was notably frustrated by the East German attempt to thwart the political balance he had tried to achieve through this “gentleman’s agreement”:

“Ich bin nicht in der Lage, diesbezüglich zu intervenieren, nichtsdestoweniger – und in dem Maße, in dem ich beständig in die Probleme, die die beiden deutschen Zentren betreffen, verwickelt bin, erlaube ich mir, ganz persönlich, zu beklagen, daß dieses Abkommen vom ostdeutschen Zentrum in dem gleichen Moment gekündigt wird, wo es aufhört, daraus Nutzen zu ziehen.“²³²

The GDR centre assessed the ITI’s disapproval and decided against standing as candidate.²³³ When, due to a general change in the election procedure, the FRG centre was not elected to the ExCom, Darcante intervened by nominating Ivan Nagel, West German theatre director, dramaturge and critic, who was then co-opted at the next ExCom meeting.²³⁴ This illustrates how carefully the ITI considered international politics and national interests that endangered its theatrical exchange. At the next World

decided against opposing the list to guarantee their own place in the ExCom at the next Congress. BArch DR1/13619. *Report. XI. Weltkongreß des ITI in Tel Aviv, 20.-27.6.1965*, p.10

²²⁹ ITI. TfA. 1968/11/1. Letter from Schultze to Kohls.

²³⁰ ITI. TfA. 1969/04/29. Letter from Kohls to Schultze.

²³¹ ITI. TfA. 1969/06/03. Letter from Raeck to Felsenstein.

²³² BArch DR1/23732. 1969/05/22. Translated letter from Darcante to Kohls.

²³³ BArch DR1/8852. 1969/07/01. *Bericht über den 18. Weltkongress des ITI in Budapest, 1969*.

²³⁴ With its rejection of the agreement, the GDR centre contributed significantly to a change of personnel in the FRG centre. The aged board of the FRG centre had already decided to build up younger theatre people as leaders in their centre. When Raeck cancelled his participation in the Congress, due to the East German breach of promise, Nagel was introduced as his successor.

Congress in London, the GDR successfully stood for election and Nagel was co-opted again. Since then, both German centres were permanent members of the ExCom throughout the 1970s and 80s. When the GDR received international recognition in the early 1970s through the Four-Power-Agreement of 1971, the Basic Treaty between East and West Germany in 1972, and the admission into the UN in 1973, the conflict with the FRG centre lost much of its urgency. The change of personnel in the FRG centre when Nagel and Joachim Werner Preuß took over, also relaxed the strained relationship. Nagel immediately adopted a different tone, writing to his East German counterpart Felsenstein to “express the hope that the cooperation between our two centres will be close and friendly.”²³⁵

Despite this, the inter-German relations still determined the limits and possibilities set for the East German centre of the ITI. To this effect, the GDR ITI tried to prevent the FRG centre from hosting the ITI’s World Congress in West Berlin in 1975.²³⁶ West German activities in ITI also remained a crucial reference point for the work of the East German centre. The performance of both German centres at the ExCom elections was considered indicative of their comparative international standing.²³⁷

With the admission of most of the Eastern bloc countries in the late 1950s, the balance in ITI shifted significantly. The ITI’s composition now reflected the global division of the Cold War more closely, though the Global South was still underrepresented. And while the Western representatives in the ExCom had proven unwilling to let the political allegiances of their respective countries dictate their theatre exchange, the ITI members from the Eastern Bloc were forced to accept the political framework that allowed them to participate in the ITI’s international community of theatre experts. After initial attempts at coordination,²³⁸ the ITI centres of the socialist

²³⁵ ITI. TfA. 1971/02/15. Letter from Nagel to Felsenstein.

²³⁶ BArch DR1/13619. 1973/03/21. *Information zur beabsichtigten Durchführung des XVI. Kongresses des ITI 1975 in Westberlin.*

²³⁷ Especially in the beginning, this comparison was still very favourable for the GDR. The fact that the East German centre was initially elected with far more votes can be attributed both to its significantly stronger activity in the ITI but also to the tactical voting of the socialist centres. It is only in the 1980s that the votes received by the two German centres began to converge, until the West German centre gained a slight lead in the end.

²³⁸ Some examples that involved the GDR centre: In February 1961, Piotr Dimitroff of the Bulgarian ITI contacted the other national centres of the Eastern Bloc to discuss the subject of the World Congress in Vienna. He also mentioned that the Czechoslovak centre had proposed a meeting of the ITI delegates of the socialist countries. He was convinced “that a joint preparation, a prior exchange of opinions and a specification of positions and views on a number

countries intensified their contacts in preparation for the World Congress in Warsaw in 1963. In January 1963, an East German representative met with colleagues from the Soviet, Polish, Hungarian and Bulgarian ITI centres, Soviet theatre professionals and the Soviet Minister of Culture Yekaterina Furtseva. The aim of the talks was to achieve a coordinated approach of the socialist countries:

Genossin Furzewa betonte einleitend, dass der Zusammenkunft der sozialistischen Länder auf dem Gebiet der Kunst grosse Bedeutung zukommt. Die Kunst kommt dahin, wo die Politiker nicht kämen. Es sei deshalb von grosser Wichtigkeit, sowohl die Zusammenarbeit untereinander zu verstärken als auch eine gemeinsame Linie für die Arbeit innerhalb des ITI zu erarbeiten. Der Arbeit des ITI müsse grosse Wichtigkeit beigemessen werden, da es darauf ankomme, unsere sozialistische Linie innerhalb dieser Organisation durchzusetzen.²³⁹

Furtseva criticised the poor coordination and lack of communication between the ITI centres of the Soviet bloc,²⁴⁰ which urgently needed improvement to support the cultural Cold War: “Unsere Aufgabe in der Unesco (ITI) ist es, unsere Ideale im Kampf gegen die des Westens durchzusetzen.”²⁴¹ The Eastern bloc theatre artists discussed possibilities to improve their cooperation,²⁴² while Furtseva announced that she would also turn to the culture ministers of the socialist countries with these issues.²⁴³ From then on, the ITI delegates of the Eastern bloc began meeting at more regular intervals, both before the World Congresses and the ExCom meetings, to coordinate their stance concerning ITI’s internal affairs. The level of cooperation differed, and was also very sensitive to political tensions within the Eastern bloc.²⁴⁴ In general, the coordination

of important questions concerning the theatre would bring the delegates of our countries a greater opportunity to raise and discuss the problems more deeply and extensively, to defend the correct positions of our art more justifiably and vigorously.” (BArch DR107/48. 1961/02/16. Translated letter from Pjotr Dimitroff to the East German ITI.) Shortly before the Congress in Vienna, a member of the GDR Embassy in Budapest consulted with Ferenc Hónt from the Hungarian ITI centre. Hónt addressed the cooperation of the socialist centres, noting that “proper systematic cooperation has not yet been achieved.” He brought up several examples of how the socialist centres could cooperate, for example, in publications on the role of important playwrights such as Shakespeare or Molière in their respective countries. (BArch DR1/20438. 1961/04/11. Excerpt of file note from the embassy in Budapest.)

²³⁹ BArch DR1/20493. *Bericht über Besprechung mit Kulturministerin Furzewa am 22.1.63*, p.1

²⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.1

²⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.2

²⁴² BArch DR1/20493. 1963/01/22. *Bericht über die Besprechung in der BTO*.

²⁴³ BArch DR1/20493. *Bericht über Besprechung mit Kulturministerin Furzewa am 22.1.63*, p.2

²⁴⁴ The meetings of socialist ITI delegates broke off again in the late 1960s. One of the reasons for this was likely the Prague Spring, which was ended by the invasion of the Warsaw Five and caused considerable tension in the Socialist bloc. The fact that the CSSR centre had sent a telegram to the ITI to protest the invasion and had not received support from the other socialist

and tactical voting of the socialist countries allowed them to gain significant influence in the ITI's various bodies.

The role that the East German ITI played vis-à-vis the other members from socialist ITI centres corresponded to the position that the GDR often took in the Eastern bloc as well. The GDR's foreign policy was very dependent on the Soviet Union, and has often been regarded as merely an extension of Soviet interests. In the Cold War struggle the GDR was the most important Soviet outpost in Central Europe.²⁴⁵ As a small country positioned at the front lines of the Cold War, the GDR also relied on Soviet backing and thus was eager to show its loyalty.²⁴⁶ When the GDR was not yet diplomatically recognised by most countries outside of the Eastern Bloc, it often had to rely on the support of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe to conduct their foreign affairs.²⁴⁷ The East German ITI experts thus stressed the importance of a unified front and criticised when delegates from other socialist states stepped out of line politically or artistically.²⁴⁸

ITI members likely hampered cooperation to a significant degree. At the time, the GDR centre only offered a vague comment: "Die Kooperation zwischen den sozialistischen Bruderzentren, die sich in der Vergangenheit ausgezeichnet bewährte, gestaltet sich im Augenblick nicht mehr ganz so einfach und selbstverständlich, was natürlich mit der allgemeinen politischen Situation zusammenhängt." (BArch DR1/8852. 1968/08/15. *Gedanken zur künftigen Arbeit unseres Zentrums im Internationalen Theaterinstitut*, p.2) Years later Kohls suggested that there were "certain difficulties at the beginning of the 1970s, due to the Prague events." (BArch DR1/22797. 1975/06/07. *Bericht über den XVI. Weltkongreß des Internationalen Theaterinstituts in Berlin (West) vom 1.-6.6 1975*. p.19) Afterwards, a more regular exchange began to take place again. This was presumably favoured by the need to prepare for the Moscow and West Berlin World Congresses together, in one case to support the Soviet Union's cultural-political representation, in the other to ward off West German encroachments on the West Berlin question.

²⁴⁵ Cieslik, Thomas. 2005. "Die DDR – nur ein Spielball der Sowjetunion? Analyse der internationalen Beziehungen zwischen Ostberlin und Moskau." In: Timmermann, Heiner (pub.). *Die DDR in Europa – zwischen Isolation und Öffnung*. 100-115. Münster: Lit Verlag, p.101

²⁴⁶ Schulz, Brigitte H. 1995. *Development policy in the Cold War era. The Two Germanies and Sub-Saharan Africa, 1960-1985*. Münster: Lit Verlag, p.8

²⁴⁷ Horstheimer, Carel. 2005. „Ostdeutsche Ohnmacht und widerwillige Hilfe durch Bruderstaaten. Die Anerkennungspolitik der DDR 1949-1973“ In: Timmermann, Heiner. *Die DDR in Europa – zwischen Isolation und Öffnung*. 69-88. Münster: Lit Verlag

²⁴⁸ As a vivid example of how critical the ITI centre delegates were of their socialist allies is this excerpt from their report on the 1965 World Congress in Tel Aviv: "Prof. Korziewski[sic] (Polen) verfocht wie üblich eine sehr persönliche, von Eitelkeit bestimmte Linie (er wollte partout nicht aus dem Exekutivkomitee herausgehen!), ausgenommen einige gute Vorschläge, die uns objektiv zugute kamen. Rumänien marschierte ebenfalls meist nach eigener Marschrouten, suchte sich in vielen Fragen erfolgreich westlichen Meinungen anzupassen. Die CSSR hatte unverständlicherweise den auf solchem Parkett völlig unerfahrenen Regisseur Radok geschickt, dem ich persönlich Nachhilfe-Unterricht im Abstimmen geben musste, - und die Delegation der UdSSR [...] war so – gelinde gesagt –

Despite this dependency and display of loyalty, the GDR did not enact its foreign policy only as a Soviet satellite,²⁴⁹ but often pursued its own interests, which did not necessarily match the concerns of their allies.²⁵⁰ The East German politicians however did not try to assert its interests against the resistance of the Soviet Union. Instead, they presented themselves as model students concerned with Eastern Bloc unity, and framed their own national interests like their conflict with the FRG²⁵¹ and gaining international recognition²⁵² in this context. Thus, delegates from the other socialist countries would sometimes protest the discrimination of East German members or support them in preventing ITI events to be held in West Berlin.

As in the case of the two German centres, the ITI had to seek equal treatment and ensure political balance between the two sides in the larger global conflict. In accordance with John Mathiason's observation concerning the dual nature of international secretariats,²⁵³ the ITI General Secretariat in Paris performed different functions to navigate between the sides of the Cold War conflict and prevent them from disrupting the work of the organisation. On the one hand, it acted as a neutral service provider that preserved order within the organisation by observing the rules of the charter in the midst of the conflicting positions of the national centres. Additionally, however, Darcante acted also as a diplomat who needed to negotiate a compromise that would encourage both sides to cooperate with the ITI, while trying to avoid conflict that would disrupt the work of the organisation: World Congresses, for example, were held alternately in the West and the East²⁵⁴. Some inherently political issues like national sovereignty, travel restrictions and government persecution of dissenting theatre artists

überaltert zusammengesetzt, hatte solche Verständnisschwierigkeiten (ein eigener Dolmetscher war mitgekommen!), dass ein wendiges Auftreten und eine zielbewusste Führung unserer Gruppe von dieser Seite nicht zu erwarten waren.“ (BArch DR1/13619. 1965/07/14. *Report. XI. Weltkongress des ITI in Tel Aviv, 20.-27.6.1965*, p.13)

²⁴⁹ Radu, Michel. 1981. “East vs. South. The neglected side of the international system” In: Radu, Michel. *Eastern Europe and the Third World. East vs. South*. 3-51. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, p.13

²⁵⁰ Lamm, Hans Siegfried. Kupper, Siegfried. 1976. *DDR und Dritte Welt*. München: Oldenbourg Verlag, p.50

²⁵¹ Kregel, Bernd. 1979. *Außenpolitik und Systemstabilisierung in der DDR*. Opladen: Leske Verlag + Budruch GmbH, p.70

²⁵² Horstheimer. 2005, p.79

²⁵³ I follow John Mathiason's analysis of the functions of international secretariats. See: Mathiason, John. 2011. “International Secretariats: Diplomats or Civil Servants?” In: *The New Dynamics of Multilateralism*, edited by James P. Muldoon, JoAnn Fagot Aviel, Richard Reitano, and Earl Sullivan. 237-247. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.

²⁵⁴ For example, New York in 1967, Budapest in 1969, London in 1971, Moscow in 1973, West Berlin in 1975, Stockholm in 1977, Sofia in 1979, Madrid in 1981, East Berlin in 1983.

repeatedly impacted ITI's work and forced the organisation to confront the conflicting political and ideological attitudes of its member states. In some instances, political division led to boycotts of events and projects and severely hindered the ITI's theatrical exchange. In others, ITI's insistence on the equal treatment of its member centres helped to overcome these obstacles. During the 1960s, for example, the representatives of the Eastern bloc had demanded that ITI events would only be held in countries that would grant visas to all delegates. The ITI General Assembly approved this proposal at the 1965 World Congress in Tel Aviv. Initially, this problem mainly affected the GDR, because East German citizens were routinely banned from entering NATO states. This arrangement ensured, for example, the participation of the East German delegation at the World Congress in New York in 1967. Theatre artists from countries like Israel or South Korea, however, who were not recognised by the socialist states, also benefited from the same regulations in return. After threats by the ITI to otherwise cancel the World Congress in Moscow, a South Korean artist was thus issued a visa for the Soviet Union for the first time in 1973.²⁵⁵ While the foreign policy interests of member states were often an obstacle, the ITI was also able to use its status as a platform of foreign cultural representation to overcome such diplomatic hurdles.

²⁵⁵ ITI. ITI-Weltkongresse. 1973/07/31. *Bericht über den XV. Weltkongreß des Internationalen Theaterinstituts in Moskau vom 27.Mai bis 1.Juni 1973*, p.5-6

3 Theatre Experts and State Control - Structure and Members of the East German ITI Centre

The International Theatre Institute (ITI) made only few specifications towards the structure or financial model of its members' centres. The charter of the ITI did not set any further conditions regarding the nature of the national centres than those stipulated in Article II. While it was emphasised that the ITI was an “independent” organisation,²⁵⁶ state influence was not limited by the charter in any specific way. As a result, the member centres were structured very differently in each country. The different legal, financial and political conditions determined what shape each centre would take. In many cases, the ITI centre was linked to another theatre organisation.²⁵⁷ These structures had significant impact on the way in which the different national centres conducted their business.

This chapter examines the various domestic structures that created, prioritised and constrained the East German theatre experts. This includes the structures of the ITI centre itself, which determined the relations of the centre with the East German theatres and theatre artists, and also in which ways they could be involved in the work of the ITI. The theatre people who were selected to take on important positions in the ITI centre as experts and representatives of GDR theatre were carefully chosen to meet the specific requirements. The multifaceted integration of the centre into the state administration defined the framework and focus of the ITI centre's activities. The system of the travel cadres set the members of the centre apart from other East German theatre artists as a privileged group of state socialist experts and attempted to control the ways in which they could move on the ITI's international stage.

3.1 ITI Membership and the East German Theatres

The structure of the GDR centre of the ITI was unusual, especially in regards to its members. The centre did not allow individual memberships for theatre professionals interested in the work of the ITI. Instead, it only counted the East German theatre institutions as cooperative members. The first charter of the GDR centre stated that the

²⁵⁶ UNESCO Digital Archive. Final draft ITI charter, p.1

²⁵⁷ The US centre, for example, was linked to the American National Theatre and Academy. The Austrian centre cooperated with the Gesellschaft für Musiktheater, which represented Austria in the music and dance committees of the ITI.

“excellent” theatres of the GDR could be members of the ITI centre.²⁵⁸ This initially meant the largest and most important East German theatres, those that were categorised as ‘special class’ and ‘A class’ in the state budget for culture, and received the largest share of funds.²⁵⁹ In 1963, a few years after the founding of the ITI centre, the directorate (*Direktorium*) decided with approval of the Ministry of Culture (MfK) to also admit smaller municipal or regional theatres from the B and C categories.²⁶⁰ Additionally, other theatre-related institutions were members of the centre as well, such as the Theatre Academy Leipzig, the Theatre History Section of the East Berlin Academy of Arts and the Theatre Sector of the MfK.²⁶¹ All these member institutions were represented in the ITI centre by a member of staff. In the case of the theatres this was usually their artistic director, or a representative appointed by them. Membership fees were paid by the theatre itself regardless of changes of personnel.

According to the first charter of the GDR ITI, the members were responsible for the general direction of the centre. It was their duty to decide on amendments to the charter, to determine the principles of the centre’s activities, to elect the directorate and to decide on the membership fees. To that purpose, they were to meet annually at the General Assembly, where the staff of the ITI centre would inform them about the centre’s activities. However, it is doubtful to what extent the members of the centre fulfilled these responsibilities and what agency they possessed. The archive material suggests that the influence they had was very limited:

Membership in the ITI was not based on interest or choice, but was considered compulsory. The wording of the invitation letter to the founding meeting suggested that the participation of the invited artistic directors was simply assumed. The charter theoretically allowed the theatres to withdraw their membership.²⁶² That this was not considered an actual option becomes clear in an exchange of letters between the centre and the municipal theatre of Zwickau. Zwickau’s departing artistic director informed the ITI that his time in the ITI would end with his retirement, and that the Zwickau theatre had decided against continuing its membership.²⁶³ In his reply, the ITI centre

²⁵⁸ ITI. Dir. *Statut DDR ITI 1959*, p.1-2

²⁵⁹ Hasche, Christa. Schölling, Traute. Fiebach, Joachim. 1994. *Theater in der DDR. Chronik und Positionen*. Berlin: Henschel Verlag, p.197

²⁶⁰ BArch DR/107/58. 1963/12/19. Letter to Beinemann.

²⁶¹ BArch DR1/20438. Draft: Invitation from Bork, p.1

²⁶² ITI. Dir. *Statut DDR ITI 1959*, p.2

²⁶³ BArch DR107/59. 1969/01/30. Letter from Schatte.

pointed out that “such a case has never occurred before in our republic and Zwickau would thus be the first theatre to announce its disinterest in the international obligations of our theatrical work by withdrawing.”²⁶⁴ While not completely denying the possibility of withdrawal, the centre exerted considerable pressure by referring to the theatre’s duties and to how all theatres in the GDR were members. The theatre of Zwickau relented: “Selbstverständlich werden wir uns als Theater Zwickau der institutionellen Zugehörigkeit zum iTi nicht entziehen.”²⁶⁵

The regular member theatres appeared generally uninformed about the activities of the ITI centre. They were first notified about the creation of an East German ITI centre through the invitation letter to the founding meeting. This letter contained some basic information about the ITI and presented the theatre directors with a *fait accompli* regarding the forthcoming founding of the centre: It had already been decided who would be appointed president, secretary, and managing director of the centre, who would be a member of the directorate, and which East German theatres would be the centre’s members.²⁶⁶ The date of the founding meeting had been deliberately set for the evening after the *Intendantentagung* because this guaranteed the presence of all the theatre directors without any additional effort on their part to attend. The *Intendantentagung* played a significant role for national theatre policy and all artistic directors of East German theatres were supposed to attend. Linking the founding meeting to the *Intendantentagung* led to greater participation and implied more interest from East German theatre professionals than could have existed given the lack of knowledge about the plans regarding the centre. In a later review of the founding meeting at the first General Assembly in 1962, Walter Kohls openly admitted that most of the artistic directors present had no prior knowledge whatsoever about the ITI or the centre they unanimously voted to establish.²⁶⁷ This indicates that the vote at the founding meeting was merely a formality and that the influence of the members was far less than the charter suggested.

Contrary to the specification in the charter that the General Assembly would meet “at least once a year”²⁶⁸, it was held only three times during the first 15 years of

²⁶⁴ BArch DR107/59. 1969/02/06. Letter to Schatte.

²⁶⁵ BArch DR107/59. 1969/02/13. Letter from Kretschmer.

²⁶⁶ BArch DR1/20438. Draft: Invitation from Bork.

²⁶⁷ ITI. Kohls, Walter. 1962. *Entwurf: Drei Jahre Mitarbeit im Internationalen Theaterinstitut*.

p.1

²⁶⁸ ITI. Dir. *Statut DDR ITI 1959*. p.3

the centre's existence: on October 14th 1962,²⁶⁹ on March 2nd 1971²⁷⁰ and on December 2nd 1975.²⁷¹ While the frequency of meetings increased slightly after that, this extreme irregularity casts additional doubt on the actual significance of the General Assembly and the importance of the member theatres in the ITI centre.

On the few occasions that the representatives of the member theatres were informed about the activities of the ITI centre and able to voice their criticisms and suggestions, the lack of involvement was repeatedly brought up. At the first General Assembly in 1962, Kohls admitted that some members occasionally complained how little was publicly known about the centre's work.²⁷² In the following discussion, it became obvious that the members were unsure about the centre's areas of responsibility: Wolfgang Heinz of the Volksbühne Berlin asked that the ITI centre intercede on behalf of the East German theatres with Western authors and publishers who, especially after the building of the Berlin Wall, refused to make their plays available in the GDR.²⁷³ Armin-Gerd Kuckhoff from the Theatre Academy Leipzig suggested that the theatres could support the directorate in working groups and collect material for occasions like the Shakespeare Year 1964 or Stanislavski's 100th birthday.²⁷⁴ Rudi Kostka from the theatre in Radebeul also raised the possibility that the theatres could help the ITI centre to gather information. He criticised that members would "notice too little of the work of the centre."²⁷⁵ To their comments and requests the members of the directorate and MfK replied that the centre should not be given tasks "inside of the GDR"²⁷⁶ but should fulfil "foreign policy task."²⁷⁷

At the second General Assembly in 1971, there was another talk about a stronger involvement of the members in the work of the ITI centre. As part of this discussion, it was proposed that the centre could take on tasks as an "information and documentation centre for the GDR theatres." Once again, such domestic duties were rejected, as they

²⁶⁹ BArch DR1/8718. *Bericht über die Generalversammlung des Zentrums DDR des ITI am 14. Oktober 1962.*

²⁷⁰ BArch DR1/8853. 1971/03/02. *Stichpunkt-Protokoll Generalversammlung.*

²⁷¹ BArch DR1/17543. *ITI, Zentrum DDR, Arbeitsbericht 1971-1975.*

²⁷² ITI. Kohls, Walter. 1962. *Drei Jahre Mitarbeit im Internationalen Theaterinstitut.*

²⁷³ BArch DR1/8718. *Bericht über die Generalversammlung des Zentrums DDR des ITI am 14. Oktober 1962*, p.2

²⁷⁴ *ibid.* p.4

²⁷⁵ *ibid.* p.4

²⁷⁶ *ibid.* p.3

²⁷⁷ *ibid.* p.4

did not correspond to the centre's remit.²⁷⁸ In 1979 the Theatre Section of the MfK noted the issue to their colleagues at the International Relations Department:

Die internationale Arbeit hat nicht immer genügende nationale Basis. [...] Häufig fehlt auch die nötige Breite, die im nationalen Bereich die Einbeziehung vieler Theaterleute in Problemdiskussionen und -darstellungen ermöglicht.²⁷⁹

The role that the members could play in the work of the ITI evidently remained very limited throughout the existence of the East German centre.

The archive holdings of the GDR centre of the ITI contain almost no regular correspondence between the centre and the GDR theatres about the ITI's work apart from administrative matters.²⁸⁰ This suggests that the scope of the East German theatres' participation was compulsory membership and payment of fees. The rather negligent attitude towards the municipal and regional member theatres was indicative of the fact that the ITI centre of the GDR had always primarily been a tool of foreign representation. The GDR ITI was geared towards exporting its own theatrical goods in service of foreign policy. Facilitating contact between smaller East German theatres and the international theatre community was considered less useful in that regard and only undertaken in few cases. Informing the East German theatres about the work of the ITI centre likewise contributed little to the GDR's foreign representation and therefore remained low priority.

3.2 Theatre Experts in the ITI centre

In contrast, the larger theatres that already had gained an international reputation received more attention from the ITI centre, since their productions could be presented as the artistic flagships of GDR culture. Looking at the directorate of the GDR ITI helps to identify the criteria used to select 'theatre experts' for the work in the ITI. The directorate was chosen from the most renowned theatre professionals of the GDR, in particular the artistic directors of the largest East German theatres and important personalities of the East German theatre academies. Naturally, these institutions were better informed and more involved in the centre's activities through their representatives

²⁷⁸ BArch DR1/8853. 1971/03/02. *Stichpunkt-Protokoll Generalversammlung.*

²⁷⁹ BArch DR1/10608. 1979/08/24. Message to Tautz.

²⁸⁰ BArch DR107/58 and DR107/59.

The first directorate in particular was very impressive. It was composed of the artistic directors of all the major Berlin theatres (Helene Weigel of the Berliner Ensemble, Wolfgang Langhoff of the Deutsches Theater, Max Burghardt of the Staatsoper and Walter Felsenstein of the Komische Oper), in addition to Karl Kayser and Hanns Anselm Perten, the general directors of the theatres in Leipzig and Rostock. Most of these theatres had performed at the Theatre of Nations and were therefore known to the ITI community. However, it soon became clear that this initial line-up was mainly designed to impress the ITI world organisation. Members of the directorate were not initially expected to contribute much to the work of the centre aside from their fame. Their appointment was not necessarily based on the interest of the chosen theatre artists, some of which decidedly rejected the call to become ITI experts. In the first three years after the founding of the ITI centre, Weigel and Perten did not attend a single directorate meeting even once.²⁸¹

Even those that were genuinely interested were designated to a minor role. This was likely a side effect of the fact that the ITI was strongly focussed on the Deutsches Theater (DT) in its first years. The centre's president and secretary, Langhoff and Kohls, were long-time colleagues that shared a workplace. They were therefore able to conduct most of the ITI's affairs without involving the directorate. This routine drew some heavy criticism from those members of the directorate genuinely interested in the work of the ITI, especially Felsenstein. He threatened that he would withdraw from the ITI directorate as well as from the presidium of the Academy of Arts if the work was not made more "collective" in the future.²⁸² Deputy Minister Bork assured him that he shared his concerns and that he would try to correct this situation.²⁸³

The initial irrelevance of the directorate changed after that. Langhoff's death moved the focus away from the DT and artistic directors that had been appointed to the directorate despite their lack of interest were excluded. At the 1962 General Assembly, for example, Weigel and Perten were removed from the directorate.²⁸⁴ In the case of the prestigious theatres that were considered important figureheads for East German theatre abroad and therefore needed to be represented in the directorate, other staff

²⁸¹ BArch DR1/8718. *Bericht über die Generalversammlung des Zentrums DDR des ITI am 14. Oktober 1962*, p.2

²⁸² BArch DR1/8718. 1965/02/15. Letter from Felsenstein to Bork.

²⁸³ BArch DR1/8718. 1965/02/22. Letter from Bork to Felsenstein.

²⁸⁴ BArch DR1/8718. *Bericht über die Generalversammlung des Zentrums DDR des ITI am 14. Oktober 1962*, p.6

members were chosen to deputise for the busy artistic directors: one example being the Berliner Ensemble's (BE) dramaturge Joachim Tenschert being accepted to replace Helene Weigel. With these changes, the directorate became more relevant and efficient. As stipulated by the centre's charter, it was supposed to meet at least quarterly.²⁸⁵ In stark contrast to the General Assembly, the directorate met very regularly, often five or six times a year between 1960 and 1980. Initially limited to seven members, the number was gradually increased to fifteen. Once they were elected to the ITI, the participation of theatre personalities in the directorate was also no longer exclusively linked to them representing a specific theatre. Artists such as Ruth Berghaus, Joachim Tenschert and Gerhard Wolfram remained members of the directorate even after changing workplaces.

However, because of the stipulations of the charter that did not allow individual members, the GDR ITI remained an organisation of almost exclusively artistic directors. Other theatre artists like actors, singers, dancers, or musicians, but also playwrights or composers, could not be part of the ITI centre, which was not the case for the ITI world organisation. Secretary-General Jean Darcante remarked on this unusual structure of the GDR centre in a letter in 1966:

Eine Sache überrascht mich ein wenig bei Ihrem Direktorium: es wimmelt von hervorragenden Intendanten, aber wo werden z.B. die Autoren, die Bühnenbildner vertreten? (Die Schauspieler von Ihnen, nehme ich an).²⁸⁶ Aber vielleicht gibt es noch einen erweiterten Organismus?²⁸⁷

The GDR ITI attempted to assuage Darcante's confusion about the underrepresentation of other theatre artists by explaining the structure of the GDR centre as follows:

Das hat seine Ursache in der Struktur unseres nationalen Zentrums. Mitglieder unseres Zentrums sind die einzelnen Theater unserer Republik in der Person ihrer Intendanten. Alle Schauspieler, Sänger, Bühnenbildner und andere Mitarbeiter an den Theatern werden durch die Intendanten über die Aufgaben unseres Instituts unterrichtet. Die Theaterautoren sind auf diese Weise nicht organisatorisch mit unserem Zentrum verbunden. Das ist sicher ein Mangel, dem wir in Zukunft auf irgendeine Weise abhelfen müssen.²⁸⁸

They claimed that theatre performers and designers were not excluded by this system, but able to participate in the ITI through their theatres. There is little in the archive

²⁸⁵ ITI. Dir. *Statut DDR ITI 1959*, p.3

²⁸⁶ Contrary to what Darcante suggests here, Ebermann was a music theatre dramaturge and translator, not an actor.

²⁸⁷ BArch DR107/61. 1966/02/02. Letter from Darcante to Ebermann.

²⁸⁸ BArch DR107/61. 1966/03/17. Letter from Ebermann to Darcante.

holdings of the GDR ITI to suggest that this was indeed the case. Even when the directorate was expanded and its criteria broadened slightly, the theatres were still represented only by directors and dramaturges. While other theatre professionals were chosen to participate in various ITI events, there are no instances of theatres contacting the centre on behalf of their artists, or any detailed correspondence between the ITI and theatre artists. Even if other East German theatre professionals were able to attend ITI events and benefit from the work of the centre, they likely had no significant options to shape the way the centre operated.

Compared to other theatre artists, East German artistic directors were more strongly obligated to cultural politics. They had a decisive role when it came to implementing the policies laid down by the MfK and the SED on the stage. Since they therefore needed to be ideologically reliable, they were heavily supervised. Party membership was compulsory to hold the position of artistic director in most cases, and many also held offices in other political and cultural organisations.²⁸⁹ As they already were under careful political scrutiny and held an authoritative position that necessitated them to mediate between theatre art and cultural policy, artistic directors were ideal to receive the ITI expert status.

This was especially important with regards to the presidents of the centre, who were the most visible figureheads of East German theatre to the ITI community. In their cases, their respective appointments can be explained both by current cultural policy objectives and personal interest. While there are no documents in either the ITI's or the MfK's archive holdings that trace the decision-making process, it is likely that these theatre artists were chosen to work in the ITI centre with these factors in mind.

With Wolfgang Langhoff as president and his deputy Walter Kohls as secretary, the ITI centre's leadership positions at the time of its founding were strongly centred on the DT. Of all the East German theatre practitioners, only Langhoff and Kohls had demonstrably been involved in the planning of the centre. While much of the related planning and communication took place in the MfK, Kohls and Langhoff were informed of all important steps and consulted to read and sign off on the draft charter.²⁹⁰ The first office of the centre was Kohls' workplace at the DT and the daily business of the ITI was conducted by him in addition to his work at the DT. It was only when Kohls

²⁸⁹ Hasche. Schölling. Fiebach. 1994. p.246

²⁹⁰ BArch DR1/20438. 1958/12/08. Letter from Kohls.

could no longer manage the ITI-related tasks on the side and on his own that the centre was given its own office space and a larger staff.

This focus on the DT was most likely a focus on Wolfgang Langhoff. Langhoff had already been a theatre director during the Weimar Republic, where he had been involved with the communist party and agitprop theatre. After his torture and imprisonment by the Nazis, he had fled to Switzerland, and returned to Berlin from his exile after the war to become one of the most influential theatre artists of the post-war period in the GDR. He was appointed artistic director of the DT in 1947,²⁹¹ which at the time was considered the GDR's 'state theatre'. Langhoff also played a crucial role in the development of the GDR's cultural-political institutions. In 1948, he had suggested the establishment of the *Intendantentagung*.²⁹² He was also chairman of the Office for Theatre Affairs, the central management of theatre affairs in the Soviet occupation zone.²⁹³

As artistic director of the DT, Langhoff was expected to stage productions that were exemplary of the GDR's artistic dogma. He thus became entangled in the *Formalismusstreit*, the debate about realism and formalism in art that occupied East German theatre in the 1950s, in which Stanislavski's thesis on empathy and Brecht's thesis on *Verfremdung* were treated as irreconcilable opposites. Whereas Brecht and the BE were often criticised in this controversy for their formalistic tendencies, Langhoff, who took his cue from Stanislavski, was proclaimed a figurehead of GDR theatre. At the first and only German Stanislavski Conference, which was convened in 1953 to introduce East German theatre practitioners to the theatrical form of socialist realism based on Stanislavski's teachings, Wolfgang Langhoff gave the keynote lecture on 'Die Darstellung der Wahrheit auf der Bühne mit Hilfe der Methode Stanislawskis'. In his closing words, he emphasised the differences between Stanislavski's method and Brecht's theories from the *Short Organon*.²⁹⁴ On this basis, Brecht and Langhoff were portrayed as the two opposing pillars of East German theatre in the 1950s. This narrative at the time overlooked that Langhoff was also inspired by Brecht's theories

²⁹¹ Hasche. Schölling. Fiebach. 1994. p.13

²⁹² *ibid.* p.14

²⁹³ Rischbieter. 1999. p.65

²⁹⁴ For a detailed discussion of the continuities and ruptures in the early phase of GDR theatre, especially the treatment of both Brecht and Langhoff, see: Stuber, Petra. 1998. *Spielräume und Grenzen. Studien zum DDR-Theater*. Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag.

and synthesised them with those of Stanislavski in his later work.²⁹⁵ The high expectations placed on him ultimately led to repeated criticism of Langhoff by cultural officials and in the SED press. In 1963 he resigned from his position as artistic director of the DT after renewed controversy.²⁹⁶

Although Langhoff later fell out of favour with party authorities, he was still considered a suitable candidate for the presidency of the East German ITI centre in the late 1950s. He had arguably already served as a ‘theatre expert’ in early postwar Germany. Returning to the Soviet occupation zone to the DT, he had been an ambassador for Stanislavski and the aesthetic of socialist realism. In the previous ten years, he had proven himself a committed cultural politician through his participation in various cultural institutions of the GDR. While Brecht’s works and the BE attracted the greatest interest from foreign audiences, they were still controversial in the GDR due to accusations of ‘formalism’. The DT, on the other hand, was supposed to be a pioneer and figurehead of the new socialist theatre art. Langhoff’s deference to Stanislavski corresponded with the official artistic dogma, and was therefore also compatible with the cultural policy of the GDR’s political allies, especially the Soviet Union’s. Langhoff proved his political suitability as president of the ITI centre during his first appearance on the ITI stage at the World Congress in Helsinki. In the discussion on avant-garde theatre, in which the delegates from socialist countries argued unanimously against the theses of Eugene Ionesco and his absurdist theatre,²⁹⁷ Langhoff, as perhaps the most prominent representative of the Stanislavski method in East German theatre, was a fitting participant. His viewpoint was in line with both the domestic and foreign cultural policy of the GDR., and his contribution to the discussion was also printed in *Theaterdienst*.²⁹⁸ Even after Langhoff was forced to resign as the DT’s artistic director in 1963 after repeated and severe criticism from the SED, he remained president of the East German ITI centre until his death in 1966. His obituary in the East German theatre magazine *Theater der Zeit* thus highlighted his role as

²⁹⁵ Linzer, Martin. 2001. *Ich war immer ein Opportunist ...: zwölf Gespräche über Theater und das Leben in der DDR, über geliebte und ungeliebte Zeitgenossen*. Berlin: Theater der Zeit. p.61-62; Rischbieter. 1999, p.90

²⁹⁶ Rischbieter. 1999. p.92

²⁹⁷ Korsberg. 2017; Iacob. 2018. p.192

²⁹⁸ Langhoff, Wolfgang. 1959. “Das Theater muß beweisen und nicht behaupten.“ In: *Theaterdienst*. 28.6.1959, 4. Juniheft, Jahrgang 14: 5-6.

president of the ITI, without addressing his importance both as a theatre director and a cultural policy maker in the 1950s.²⁹⁹

Langhoff was succeeded by Walter Felsenstein, the artistic director of the Komische Oper. Felsenstein was well known in- and outside of the GDR for his approach to opera directing. He favoured *Musiktheater* over conventional opera and treated music and text as equal, with a strong focus on plot logic and characterisation that was psychologically comprehensible.³⁰⁰ Felsenstein's style lent itself well to the ideological demand for realism, and his 'music theatre' was proclaimed as the implementation of Socialist Realism in opera.³⁰¹ Although their approach to theatre was very different,³⁰² Felsenstein's status in the GDR has often been compared to Brecht: Both were so-called *Westemigranten* returning to Germany after the war, and their innovative style attracted a lot of international interest, which allowed them to retain some independence from official cultural policies.³⁰³ Felsenstein kept his Austrian passport and lived in West Berlin until 1967, which was highly unusual after the building of the Berlin Wall. He was ambivalent to official cultural policy, but willing to pay lip service to continue working on his Komische Oper.³⁰⁴ The GDR's cultural officials desperately wanted to avoid his departure from East Germany and were thus willing to grant Felsenstein more privileges than most other East German artists.³⁰⁵ This was also evident in his complaint to the MfK where Felsenstein confidently demanded a stronger say in the ITI.

Felsenstein was likely chosen as Langhoff's successor in the ITI because his approach to 'music theatre' was well known outside of the GDR. The fact that he was

²⁹⁹ „Wolfgang Langhoff 1901-1966. Nachruf des Zentrums DDR des Internationalen Theaterinstituts“. In: *Theater der Zeit*, 1966(17), p.I

³⁰⁰ More on Felsenstein's work, see: Götz, Friedrich. 1961. *Walter Felsenstein. Weg und Werk*. Berlin: Henschelverlag; Braunmüller, Robert. 2002. *Oper als Drama. Das 'realistische Musiktheater' Walter Felsensteins*. Tübingen: Niemeyer; Homann, Rainer. 2005. *Die Partitur als Regiebuch. Walter Felsensteins Musiktheater*. Osnabrück: Electronic Publishing; Kehrmann, Boris. 2015. *Vom Expressionismus zum 'Realistischen Musiktheater'*. *Walter Felsenstein - Eine dokumentarische Biographie 1901 bis 1951*. Marburg: Tectum Verlag.

³⁰¹ Felsenstein's idea of realism was not actually aimed at Socialist Realism, but could be appropriated by it without undue distortion of Felsenstein's intentions. (Braunmüller. 2002. p.59 and Homann. 2005. p.26ff)

³⁰² Homann. 2005., p.43

³⁰³ Linzer. 2001, p.57

³⁰⁴ Lennartz, Kurt. 1992. *Vom Aufbruch zur Wende. Theater in der DDR*. Velber: Erhard Friedrich Verlag, p.14

³⁰⁵ See, for example: Kehrmann. 2015. p.1104

regarded as one of the few 'independent spirits' behind the Wall³⁰⁶ made him an agreeable representative of East German theatre. During his presidency of the East German ITI centre, his 'music theatre' became a central subject of foreign representation. The GDR centre of the ITI was already working to establish Felsenstein's role as an expert in new opera direction at the time of Langhoff's death: In 1965, the GDR centre organised an international colloquium on opera direction, which focussed heavily on promoting Felsenstein's 'music theatre' approach to opera. Subsequently, Felsenstein was entrusted by the ExCom with the founding of a new opera committee together with British theatre manager Stephen Arlen. That this committee was named the Music Theatre Committee (MTC) can be attributed to his influence.³⁰⁷ Through his leading role in the MTC, Felsenstein was very visibly and actively involved in the work of the ITI.³⁰⁸

After Felsenstein's death in 1975, Karl Kayser became the next and last president of the ITI centre. Kayser had been general director of the Municipal Theatres of Leipzig since 1958 and as such had already been a member of the first ITI directorate. In 1975, Kayser was the longest-serving member of the directorate alongside Kohls, although less directly involved in the ITI's international work than Felsenstein. Next to the 'special class' Berlin theatres, the Leipzig Opera was one of the largest and best-known opera houses in East Germany, and the only non-Berlin theatre to have performed at the Theatre of Nations in Paris. Even more than his predecessors, Kayser was also involved in the cultural politics of the GDR: Like Felsenstein, he was vice president of the Association of Theatre Practitioners and a member of the Academy of Arts. In addition, as a member of the Cultural Association of the GDR, he was a deputy in the Volkskammer, the legislative assembly of the GDR, from 1954 to 1989, a member of the Central Committee of the SED from 1963 to 1989 and a member of the Cultural Commission of the Politbureau of the SED from 1977 to 1989, and was thus active in high political circles. As Manfred Pauli notes, "Karl Kayser war in seinem Selbstverständnis in erster Instanz Kulturpolitiker, Vertrauensmann der Partei auf dem

³⁰⁶ Homann. 2005, p.33

³⁰⁷ Linke. 1994, p.37-38

³⁰⁸ Linke wrote about Felsenstein's long-lasting influence on the MTC: "Zwar hat sich die Musiktheater-Regie nach Felsenstein weiterentwickelt, doch bleibt die Forderung nach einer wechselseitigen Durchdringung von Musik und Szene bestehen, um den Rückfall in bloßen Stimmfetischismus und das ‚kostümierte Konzert‘ vor allem bei der Oper zu verhindern." (1994. p.38)

Intendantensessel.”³⁰⁹ He rarely appeared in public and limited himself to vacuous statements “as if cut out of the current cultural policy ‘guidelines’”.³¹⁰ As the general director in Leipzig, he was known to be both authoritarian and efficient.³¹¹ As a theatre director, he was best known for his productions of classics and works of Soviet and German revolutionary drama.³¹²

As a successful and reliable theatre practitioner and cultural politician, Kayser was a reliable but not very illustrious choice for president of the ITI centre and his authority as an expert more limited to the national level. Unlike Felsenstein, Kayser’s work as a theatre artist never the subject of the ITI centre’s activities. His influence on the centre therefore appears less pronounced. Shaken by the events of November 1989, Kayser resigned both as general director in Leipzig³¹³ and as president of the ITI centre. In the final phase before the dissolution of both the GDR and the ITI centre, he was briefly succeeded first by Rolf Rohmer and then Gero Hammer.³¹⁴

While they were appointed to the ITI for varying reasons dependent on current circumstances, all three presidents of the ITI centre fulfilled some basic criteria. They were influential theatre directors of important East German theatres who first came into contact with ITI audiences in the 1950s through guest performances at the Theatre of Nations Festival. Typical of their positions, they were all also involved in other cultural institutions in the GDR such as the Academy of Arts. Langhoff and Kayser in particular were also actively involved in theatre politics through their membership in various state or party-affiliated bodies. They were also suitable representatives of the GDR theatre artistically. While Kayser’s work as a theatre director was above all in line with policy guidelines, both Langhoff and Felsenstein were – whether justified or not – presented as artistic pioneers of Socialist Realism.

The daily business of the centre was conducted by the staff of the GDR ITI: the directors, secretaries, and academic assistants. Although they were less in the limelight than the centre’s presidents, they were responsible for most of the work of the GDR

³⁰⁹ Pauli, Manfred. 2004. *Ein Theaterimperium an der Pleiße. Studien über Leipziger Theater zu DDR-Zeiten*. Schkeuditz: Schkeuditzer Buchverlag., p.43

³¹⁰ Irmer, Thomas. 2007. “Ein letzter Kayser. Theater in Leipzig zwischen 1957 und 1989”. 76-83. In: *Theater in der Übergangsgesellschaft. Schauspiel Leipzig 1957-2007*, edited by Wolfgang Engel and Erika Stephan. Berlin: Theater der Zeit., p.77

³¹¹ Pauli. 2004. p.242

³¹² *ibid.*, p.45

³¹³ Irmer. 2007, p.82

³¹⁴ Linke. 1994, p.111

ITI. They handled most of the centre's correspondence with the General Secretariat in Paris and the other centres of the ITI, the MfK, other national cultural institutions in the GDR, and individuals at home and abroad. The authority of the president or the directorate was often only called upon for special emphasis on official occasions or during controversies. It was also the director or secretary who chaired the directorate meetings and informed the directorate of the affairs of the centre and the world organisation. The importance of the directors is also reflected in the fact that they – and not the presidents of the centre – represented the GDR in the ExCom of the ITI. Since the GDR was regularly elected to the ExCom at the World Congresses, they were also involved in the internal affairs of the world organisation in a major way.³¹⁵

Walter Kohls, who was the administrative director at the DT from 1945 to 1970, was the first secretary of the centre. The choice of secretary of the new ITI centre likely fell on him because he was already working with Langhoff, who had been chosen as president, in the same theatre and in a similar constellation. Kohls initially carried out his duties as ITI secretary unsalaried alongside his work at the DT. In 1971, the new full-time position of director was created for him, with his duties remaining largely the same, which he carried out until his retirement in 1978.

The music theatre dramaturge Wolf Ebermann was another key figure in the East German ITI. He started as assistant secretary and then succeeded Kohls as secretary of the centre.³¹⁶ Notably, he also became secretary of the MTC in 1969. While MTC secretariat had originally gone to the GDR centre because of the central role Felsenstein played in the new committee, it remained there because Ebermann conducted the business of the MTC with great commitment, and the administration of the MTC was repeatedly singled out as exemplary.³¹⁷ Therefore, Ebermann retained the position of MTC secretary even after Felsenstein's death. In his role as MTC secretary, Ebermann maintained active contact with the members of the committee and a network of mostly European music theatre professionals. He travelled regularly to visit music theatre and opera festivals, and supported the organisation of many colloquia and other events affiliated with the MTC. Like the directors of the GDR centre, he also attended a huge number of over ITI events unrelated to the MTC.

³¹⁵ Keyn replaced Gysi with the permission of General Secretary Perinetti in the ExCom between the World Congresses. (BArch DR107/67. 1988/01/11. Letter to Tautz)

³¹⁶ BArch DR1/23123. 1967/07/22. Letter to International NGO Dpt.

³¹⁷ Linke. 1994. p.112

Irene Gysi transferred from the MfK to the ITI in 1978 and replaced Kohls as director.³¹⁸ Since 1956 she had been Head of the International Relations Department at the MfK. In that position she had already been responsible for the ITI centre even before its official founding. She had organised the crucial visit of the *Komische Oper* to the Theatre of Nations prior to the centre's admission into ITI in 1959, where she had spontaneously planned a reception on the evening of the premiere with illustrious guests of Parisian society. In her role at the MfK, Gysi was already in close contact with the ITI, and participated in ITI events such as the 1975 World Congress as a GDR delegate during her time in the MfK.³¹⁹ Because of her long-term involvement in the GDR ITI, she was very familiar with the administrative affairs of the centre. In contrast to Kohls, who was also not an artist but rather an administrator, Gysi had never worked in the theatre itself.

With her appointment as ITI director and East German representative in the ExCom, Gysi pushed the limits of what the ITI accepted as a 'theatre expert'. Secretary-General Darcante objected to Gysi's appointment to the ExCom. At the 63rd session of the ExCom in October 1978, at which Gysi stood in for Kohls for the first time, Darcante proposed an amendment to the ITI charter concerning the ExCom's rules of procedure, which specified that the ExCom should only be composed of active theatre professionals.³²⁰ Instead of addressing the issue of state influence and the implications of former state officials representing their country in an NGO like the ITI, this resulted in a discussion about what constituted a theatre professional. US representative Martha Coigney remarked that she had worked as the secretary of her predecessor Rosamond Gilder for twelve years, which was not active theatre practice either but nonetheless relevant professional experience that qualified her for the ExCom. Icelandic representative Sveinn Einarsson pointed out the absurdity that, according to this proposed amendment, "any cloakroom attendant" could become a member of the

³¹⁸ A short biography of Irene Gysi can be found in her obituary in:

Ensikat, David. 2007/06/21. "Irene Olga Lydia Gysi (Geb. 1912). Ein Anachronismus, der in das Jahrhundert passte". In: *Der Tagesspiegel*. "Wer sie erlebt hat, spricht von einer Frau, die ihrem Land zwar treu ergeben war, in deren Gegenwart man sich aber gar nicht fühlte wie in der DDR. Ein Anachronismus, der in das Jahrhundert passte. Ein Stück Weite in der Enge. Es gibt die Vermutung, dass sie das Kleinkarierte, das sie wie jeden in dem Land umgab, überhaupt nicht wahrnahm. Das Privileg des weiten Horizonts."

³¹⁹ BArch DR1/10257a. *Vorlage an das ZK der SED*.

³²⁰ BArch DR1/17543. 1978/10/16. *Bericht über Teilnahme an der Exekutiv-Komitee-Beratung des ITI vom 2.-4. Oktober 1978 in Paris*, p.1-2

ExCom while Gysi could not. Ivan Nagel, at the time president of the ITI and the West German centre, ended the discussion by saying: “The regulations must be very principled and the handling in practice very liberal”.³²¹ Even if the members of the ExCom did not put it so plainly, they were acknowledging that in their role as facilitators of international theatre exchange, their work in the ITI was not dissimilar to that of civil servants and did not require practical artistic experience. They were the intermediaries that facilitated the performance of expertise.

Gysi remained vice president of the ITI centre after her retirement. She was succeeded by Ulf Keyn, the third and last director of the East German ITI, who took over the post when Irene Gysi retired in 1988.³²² Unlike Kohls and Gysi, Keyn was primarily a theatre artist and, as such, had significant international experience. He had worked as a director, dramaturge and lecturer at the Academy of Arts in Havana and as an advisor to the theatre office in the Cuban Ministry of Culture in the 1970s. The purpose of his stay in Cuba was, according to Keyn himself, “to help develop the theatre there, to find out which basic experiences of GDR theatre were useful for the development of Cuban theatre in the 1970s.”³²³ After his return to Germany, he worked as artistic director of the Landestheater Halle.³²⁴ He was director of the GDR ITI only for the final years of the GDR. Therefore, he had to arrange the restructuring of the centre and its detachment from the state institutions within the framework of the reform efforts after the fall of the Berlin Wall before the GDR ITI was dissolved in 1990.

One of the most notable aspects in regards to the East German ITI theatre experts was that they were usually involved with the centre for a long time. During its thirty-year existence, the centre had only three different presidents and three directors. The same was true for the members of the directorate, who were often involved in the centre's work on a long-term basis. Once appointed to the directorate, most of the East German ITI members remained until the centre was dissolved. Joachim Tenschert and theatre director Fritz Bennewitz were part of the directorate since the 1960s, in 1971 they were joined by Rolf Rohmer, professor of theatre history at the Leipzig Theatre Academy and later artistic director of the DT, Ruth Berghaus, artistic director of the BE

³²¹ *ibid.*, p.2

³²² BArch DR107/67. 1988/01/11. Letter to Tautz.

³²³ Keyn, Ulf. 1979. “Ein langer, doch schöner Weg. Einiges über das Schauspiel-Theater in Kuba”. 45-48. In: *Theater der Zeit*, 1979/12, p.45

³²⁴ *Theater der Zeit. Kurzbiographie Ulf Keyn*. Theater der Zeit. Stand 1986. <https://www.theaterderzeit.de/person/7767/>

after the death of Helene Weigel, and Gerhard Wolfram, artistic director of the DT and the Dresden State Theatre.³²⁵ Irene Gysi epitomised this continuity: As head of the International Relations Department, she helped prepare the founding of the centre since 1957 and was its main contact for 19 years, before taking over the post of ITI director for 10 years until 1988, and remaining a member of the directorate after her retirement. Linke argues that these personnel continuities were key to the success of the GDR centre in the ITI world organisation.³²⁶ Because of them, the East German ITI experts were long-term members of ITI committees and were able to maintain long-standing personal contacts with foreign partners. These continuities were steered by state authorities and incentivised by the East German travel restrictions.

3.3 Non-governmental? Ties to the Administration of the Party-State

From the beginning, the ITI centre of the GDR was inextricably linked to the administration of the MfK. This was an automatic consequence of the GDR's theatre system. The GDR's theatres were not private businesses, but were subsidised and controlled by the state. The theatres were classified depending on their size and type of genre, and received financial support accordingly.³²⁷ Integrated into both the structures of the state and party apparatus of the SED, the theatre of the GDR was subject to dual supervision. The administrative supervision of the theatre was centralised in the MfK.³²⁸ The MfK provided binding artistic guidelines to the district councils to which the theatres were subordinate. The theatres had to take these guidelines into account when deciding which plays to include in their repertoire. They submitted their plans for a period of three to five years with reference to artistic and cultural policy goals, which needed to be approved by the local authorities.³²⁹ The MfK also made decisions about premieres and first performances in the GDR.³³⁰ Meanwhile party authorities had the final say and controlled the conformity of the theatres with party resolutions, Hasche, Schölling and Fiebach assess the cultural policy role of theatre in the GDR as follows:

³²⁵ BArch DR1/8853. 1971/03/28. *Stichpunkt-Protokoll der Direktoriumssitzung am 20.3.1971.*

³²⁶ Linke. 1994. p.111

³²⁷ Hasche. Schölling. Fiebach. 1994. p.197

³²⁸ *ibid.*, p.187

³²⁹ *ibid.*, p.188

³³⁰ *ibid.*, p.189

Die strukturelle Analyse hat ergeben, daß die Theater ebenso in das politische System der DDR integriert waren wie jede andere Institution oder Organisation der Gesellschaft auch. Aufgrund der öffentlichen Wirksamkeit wurden die Theater eher noch verstärkt der politischen Kontrolle unterworfen. Gegenüber den Organen des Staats- und Parteiapparats hatten sich die Theater nicht nur künstlerisch und konzeptionell, sondern auch kulturpolitisch zu verantworten. Sowohl der Intendant, dessen Position, von wenigen Ausnahmen abgesehen, die SED-Mitgliedschaft voraussetzte, als auch die Direktoren und Führungskräfte im Betrieb sollten die Beschlüsse der Partei unterstützen und nach Möglichkeit im Rahmen ihrer Aufgaben verwirklichen.³³¹

The same applied to the ITI centre of the GDR. The ITI served as an unofficial channel of foreign cultural politics of the GDR when official cultural relations were still improbable. As such, the centre inevitably fell within the remit of the MfK.

The founding history of the GDR ITI has already shown that the centre of the GDR was envisioned, prepared and founded on the initiative of the MfK. There were several departments of the MfK involved with the affairs of the ITI centre. Most important was the International Relations Department,³³² and within it the UNESCO/International NGO Working Group, which managed all GDR activities in international cultural organisations. The Theatre Section of the Department of Performing Arts was responsible for all theatrical affairs in the GDR. When it came to issues of foreign policy, the MfK coordinated with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MfAA).

The ties of the ITI centre to the GDR state institutions were not defined by its charter, nor any other legal document. While the 1959 charter described the aims, composition and structure of the centre, nothing indicated the critical role that the MfK played in all of them. Officially, the MfK was simply counted as a member of the ITI centre. At first glance, the national centre of the GDR therefore conformed to the ITI's expectations of a non-governmental organisation. Although the MfK's influence on the ITI centre was not written into the charter, it manifested in many ways. The scope of the MfK's involvement in the ITI centre can already be discerned from the wealth of material on the ITI found in the archive holdings of the MfK. There was always an MfK official invited to the directorate meetings, which ensured that the MfK was kept informed about the work of the ITI centre. In addition, the centre provided the MfK with annual reports that listed the centre's activities, events and future plans, and also included an assessment of the political balance of power and the new trends within the

³³¹ *ibid.*, p.246

³³² First called the Cultural Relations Department (*Abteilung Kulturelle Beziehungen*), it was at some point renamed International Relations Department (*Abteilung Internationale Beziehungen*). For the sake of clarity, I will stick to the latter.

ITI world organisation.³³³ The MfK also received mandatory travel cadre reports from all members of the ITI centre that travelled abroad. In turn, the MfK approved of all aspects of the centre's works. For example, the International Relations Department responded to the centre's various enquiries in November 1961 as follows:

Mit der Teilnahme von Professor Walter Felsenstein am Athener Kolloquium des ITI ist das Ministerium für Kultur einverstanden. Von einer Beteiligung an der Ausstellung in Israel muss abgeraten werden. Die gemeinsame Herausgabe der Zeitschrift ‚Le Théâtre dans le Monde‘ mit dem Nationalen Zentrum der CSSR ist genehmigt, sodass Sie die weiteren Maßnahmen nunmehr einleiten können.³³⁴

The ITI centre was also directly tied to the MfK financially. At first, the centre was intended to be subsidised only to a limited extent, since the running costs and salaries could be covered by the membership fees alone.³³⁵ The MfK was counted as a regular member of the ITI centre paying an annual membership fee. This contribution increased significantly in the mid-1960s after the centre's expenses had grown significantly as previously part-time positions were converted into full-time jobs and new posts were created to cope with the increased workload due to the centre's increased activity.³³⁶ Any additional expenses like travel budgets and the production of material such as brochures intended for distribution abroad were also covered by the MfK.³³⁷ Even independently of the state subsidy, the centre's finances were reviewed by the MfK. Annual ordinary and extraordinary budgets and reports on the total expenditure completed were sent by the ITI centre to the MfK.

The MfK also selected which East German theatre professionals were appointed to work in the ITI centre. It paid close attention to the composition of the directorate. Above all, it was important to have the GDR represented abroad by internationally acclaimed theatre artists. New members of the directorate and new staff of the centre were most often chosen in agreement with the ITI centre. To that end, the ITI centre regularly provided the MfK with cadre analyses.

The MfK's involvement in all aspects of the ITI centre should, however, not suggest that this was a one-sided relationship in which the MfK exerted despotic control over all the centre's activities. Instead, it illustrates that there was no dividing line between theatre, theatre NGOs and politics, and also none between theatre professionals

³³³ See: BArch DR1/13017. *Jahresbericht 1986*.

³³⁴ BArch DR1/20438. 1961/11/08. Letter to Kohls.

³³⁵ BArch DR1/18371. 1959/10/14. *Finanzierung des Zentrums DDR des ITI am 13.10.1959*.

³³⁶ BArch DR1/23123. 1967/07/22. Letter to International NGO Dpt.

³³⁷ BArch DR1/18371. 1959/10/14. *Finanzierung des Zentrums DDR des ITI am 13.10.1959*.

and cultural politicians. The members of the ITI centre were treated as experts on ITI issues, and the MfK often based its decisions on recommendations and mutual agreements with the ITI centre. If the MfK did not agree with the centre's suggestions, it had the final say.

The MfK significantly restructured the way in which the NGOs were integrated into the MfK in the early 1980s. This was done to “concentrate forces and resources”³³⁸ on NGOs that were considered significant “in terms of cultural policy and expertise”.³³⁹ To instrumentalise NGO membership more effectively in terms of cultural policy, a stronger “continuous political and technical guidance and control” by the MfK was deemed necessary.³⁴⁰ The MfK prioritised according to the perceived usefulness of the organisations.³⁴¹ Due to its A status with the UNESCO, the ITI received special attention among the theatre NGOs.³⁴² The East German ITI secretariat was assigned the role of an “auxiliary body” of the International Relations Department, and was to manage the national centres of other theatre NGOs.³⁴³ In 1987, the MfK connected itself even closer to the NGOs with the creation of subordinate secretariats.³⁴⁴ The director of the ITI centre was appointed to head the Secretariat of the International Non-Governmental Theatre Organisations, to which the other theatre organisations were also assigned with their own staff. This secretariat was directly subordinate to the UNESCO/ International NGO Working Group in the MfK. The ITI thus became officially part of the MfK's bureaucracy.

This position was challenged in the last phase of the GDR, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when the GDR was still aiming for reform rather than reunification. The ministry officials and members of the theatre NGOs began to discuss how to change the centralised organisation of the NGOs within the MfK bureaucracy.³⁴⁵ Ulf Keyn submitted a position paper at the end of 1989, in which he stated that he, in agreement with the representatives of the other theatre organisations, he would only carry out this

³³⁸ BArch DR1/13017. Draft: *Konzeption der weiteren Mitarbeit in den internationalen nichtstaatlichen Organisationen des kulturell-künstlerischen Bereichs*, p.5

³³⁹ *ibid.*, p.8

³⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.6

³⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.8-12

³⁴² *ibid.*, p.8

³⁴³ *ibid.*, p.13

³⁴⁴ In: BArch DR1/13618. *Positionspapier*, p.2

³⁴⁵ BArch DR1/27318. 1990/01/25. *Zur Tätigkeit des Sekretariates Internationale Theaterorganisationen (Zentrum DDR des ITI und assoziierte nationale Sektionen von AICT, FIRT, OISTAT und UNIMA) im Jahr 1989.*

task as working secretary of the ITI centre, no longer as a subordinate of the MfK.³⁴⁶ This was primarily a change of name and a preview of what was meant to be a more extensive restructuring. Keyn proposed to hold monthly meetings with the MfK to discuss long-term solutions from 1990 onwards on equal terms. Other long-standing members of the centre like Bennewitz or Rohmer supported him in his approach. Bennewitz clarified:

Die Nützlichkeit solch partnerschaftlicher Beziehungen ist von uns nie geleugnet und immer bedankt worden – was wir mit Unmut durch die Jahre erfahren und auch ausgesprochen haben, war (und wäre im schlimmen Falle weiter) die nicht sach- und fachbezogene Bevormundung aus dem Unterstellungsverhältnis, mit dem die Fachabteilungen – die weiter angesprochen bleiben – eben NICHTS zu tun hatten.³⁴⁷

The promise of systemic reform after 1989 had emboldened the centre's members to be much more forward and critical of the MfK's interference in their work. Bennewitz encapsulated the nuanced and ambivalent position of the GDR centre, which was certainly critical but also sympathetic of the state authorities. While the dictation by the MfK was rejected in favour of democratic self-determination, there was a definite desire to maintain friendly cooperation with state authorities. The flip side to the state control and subordination to the state administration was that the members themselves were able to influence the MfK's decision-making processes and heavily draw on the resources of its various departments.

In a subsequent discussion between Keyn and the representatives of the NGO Working Group, however, it became clear that the MfK did “not share the idea of autonomy put forward in the paper” and was not willing to accept Keyn's “unilateral termination” of the Secretariat of the International Non-Governmental Theatre Organisations.³⁴⁸ This changed with the new *Vereinigungsgesetz* passed on February 21st 1990, a law which released East German organisations from state control and gave the ITI centre complete autonomy. Keyn nevertheless sent the draft of an updated ITI charter, which was supposed to reflect the new circumstances, to the legal department of the MfK for review. The reply emphasised that all comments were “non-binding recommendations” of an “outsider” and “not determinations of a superior body”.³⁴⁹ Ultimately, the process of slowly disentangling the ITI centre from the MfK was cut

³⁴⁶ In: BArch DR1/13618. *Positionspapier*.

³⁴⁷ BArch DR107/67. 1989/16/12. Letter from Bennewitz to Keyn.

³⁴⁸ BArch DR1/13618. Note on conversation on 1990/05/01.

³⁴⁹ BArch DR107/109. 1990/03/27. Letter from England.

short later that year by the dissolution of the GDR and German reunification. State control had remained an integral part of its work until the end, which had both enabled and hindered the work of the ITI centre.

3.4 Illiberal Privileges. The Travel Cadre System

Another significant way in which the GDR ITI was inescapably tied to the ministerial administration was through the system of travel cadres. The travel cadre system was part of the Soviet model³⁵⁰ and considered a central aspect of the foreign politics in Soviet style socialism.³⁵¹ Private travel to non-socialist countries was, with a few exceptions, prohibited altogether and business trips were only permitted to those who belonged to the travel cadre. Unlike in the usual cadre system of the socialist states, in which an elite of party members held the most important roles in the state and economy, the travel cadres were not linked to party membership. They included all persons who had to travel abroad on business, including the staff of international organisations such as the ITI. Through the travel cadres, the SED regime limited and controlled the travel possibilities of GDR citizens and tried to instrumentalise all professional contacts with the West for political purposes.³⁵²

The strict control that the GDR maintained over all foreign travel framed all activities of the ITI centre. Since travel to capitalist countries was only possible for professional purposes deemed beneficial to the GDR, NGOs like the ITI provided one of the few opportunities to do so. This incentivised theatre artists to contribute to the ITI's work. On the one hand, the ITI centre therefore benefitted from the travel restrictions, even if involuntarily. On the other, the travel cadre system severely restricted the ITI centre and forced additional political objectives on their work.

Although travel had already required approval before, the travel cadre system was officially introduced in the mid-1960s.³⁵³ It led to the GDR having to significantly change its strategy regarding its foreign cultural representation. Far fewer people than

³⁵⁰ Hedin, Astrid. 2005. "Die Reiseorganisation der Hochschulen der DDR – ein Reisekader-System sowjetischen Typus". In: *Die DDR in Europa: zwischen Isolation und Öffnung*. edited by Heiner Timmermann. 280-290. Münster: LIT Verlag, p.281

³⁵¹ *ibid.*, p.289

³⁵² Hedin, Astrid. 2019. "Illiberal deliberation: Communist regime travel controls as state capacity in everyday world politics". In: *Cooperation and Conflict*. 211-233, p.212

³⁵³ Niederhut, Jens. 2005. *Die Reisekader. Auswahl und Disziplinierung einer privilegierten Minderheit in der DDR*. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, p.17

before were now considered suitable to go abroad. While the GDR had often sent entire ensembles to foreign countries in the 1950s, the number of travellers, especially in the cultural field, decreased considerably and was increasingly limited to single individuals.³⁵⁴ The guest performances of the Berliner Ensemble and other prominent East German theatres had played a significant role in familiarising the ITI with the theatre of the GDR. After the construction of the Berlin Wall and the introduction of the travel cadre system, however, the GDR no longer participated in the various ITI festivals at all. An entire theatre troupe was rarely considered politically reliable as a whole.³⁵⁵ Through the travel cadre system, preference was now given to individual experts that could be vetted and controlled more easily.

Contrary to the widespread belief that Carl Ebert had voiced of the East German delegation to the Helsinki Congress in 1959, not all travel cadres were party functionaries. In fact, only about half of the travel cadres were party members.³⁵⁶ And while the Ministry of State Security (MfS) recruited many travel cadres as *Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter*, unofficial collaborators, they remained a minority within the group.³⁵⁷ Political loyalty to the GDR was, however, absolutely necessary. To be admitted as a travel cadre, the candidate had to be nominated by their institution and was then subjected to a security check by the secret police of the MfS, in which both their work and private environment were investigated to check their political reliability and suitability as a foreign representative of the GDR.³⁵⁸ These non-transparent processes were perceived as “degrading” by those concerned, especially as no reasons were given when a candidate was rejected.³⁵⁹ After the MfK approved them as travel cadre, they were obliged to take part in training sessions. Apart from teaching the isolated GDR citizens about foreign customs, the main purpose of this training was to prepare them to defend the GDR’s policy to their Western contacts. For this purpose, they were provided with counter-arguments to common Western criticism against for example the Berlin Wall or the lack of democracy in the GDR, or with stances on more specific

³⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.30

³⁵⁵ During the 1965 guest performance of the BE in London, for example, the two members of the troupe defected. (Smith. 2006. p.320-1)

³⁵⁶ Niederhut. 2005. p.43

³⁵⁷ Hedin. 2019. p.214

³⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.219-220

³⁵⁹ Tesch, Joachim. 1995. „DDR-Reisekader = MfS-Agenten?: Eine sehr persönliche Replik“ In: *Hochschule Ost* 5/6. 110-113, p.111

topics to the respective trip.³⁶⁰ This was to convey to the travel cadres that they were moving in enemy territory when visiting a capitalist foreign country.³⁶¹

The travel cadre system had several purposes. First, it was meant to prevent *Republikflucht*.³⁶² The building of the Berlin Wall had made defections from the GDR very difficult and dangerous. Therefore, the risk increased that travel cadres would use their stay abroad to permanently leave the GDR. They were always required to contact the GDR embassy at their travel destination to confirm their arrival and inform them about their activities. Because of the risk of defections, the GDR authorities were very adamant that travel cadres stick to their planned itinerary. Furthermore, when GDR citizens travelled in groups, their activities were also potentially reported on by their travel companions.³⁶³ Secondly, the travel cadre system was meant to safeguard the GDR's domestic discourse against Western influences. And thirdly, it attempted to control the discourse about socialism and the GDR in non-socialist countries.³⁶⁴ Citizens who were not considered politically reliable and loyal were prevented from travelling abroad and making Western contacts, which prevented negative information about the domestic situation from reaching foreign countries.³⁶⁵ Since the mechanisms of the travel cadre system were unknown to the West, or at least could not be proven with certainty to its full extent,³⁶⁶ it functioned not only to control their own population but also as an effective foreign policy tool that turned East German travellers abroad in the West into positive representatives of the GDR. In the report on the ITI World Congress in Montreal in 1985, the GDR ITI described how East German participation in an international event in North America served as a supposed rebuttal to the anti-communist propaganda there: "Allein unsere Anwesenheit [...] in den USA entlarvte die Lüge über unsere DDR, daß niemand das Land verlassen dürfte."³⁶⁷ The fact that the travel cadre system did indeed constitute a travel ban for the majority of the GDR population. That the East German delegates present in Montreal had been subjected to

³⁶⁰ Niederhut. 2005. p.64-65

³⁶¹ *ibid.*, p.65

³⁶² Hedin. 2005. p.282

³⁶³ Niederhut. 2005. p.85

³⁶⁴ Hedin. 2005. p.283-284

³⁶⁵ Hedin. 2019, p.223

³⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.224

³⁶⁷ BArch DR1/13017. 1985/06/14. *I. Bericht des Zentrums des ITI der USA. Zu: Bericht der DDR-Delegation über Weltkongreß in Montreal, 1.-8.6.1985.*

security screening, carefully selected on the basis of their political suitability and subjected to preparatory indoctrination remained invisible to foreign citizens.

Because of the travel cadre system, East German travellers were always required to fulfil representative duties. To that end, they were provided with official directives that contained both specific instructions to that particular foreign trip as well as general guidelines. The ITI centre prepared the directives for its theatre experts in accordance with the MfK's template and submitted them to the MfK for approval. This was the standard procedure, since the respective organisation had greater knowledge about the purpose and challenges of the trips. When the directives and the travel applications were approved, the travel cadre was informed of their "rights, duties and tasks" verbally or in writing.³⁶⁸ According to the 1987 template, the directive had to contain "positions of the GDR on decision-making issues (including any variants)", "indication of consultation partners to whom the traveller should turn for clarification of the above-mentioned issues", "calls for constant consultation with the delegates of the USSR and the other socialist countries", "clear statements on the authority of and limitations placed on the traveller" and, lastly, conduct towards West German individuals and organisations.³⁶⁹

Examples from the directives of the ITI centre demonstrate to what extent the travel cadres were regarded as GDR representatives. Some of the items in the directives had little or no direct connection to theatre, but were instead solely concerned with foreign policy. The last item of the directives always pertained to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), and never changed in its core message:

Sollten seitens der Botschaft oder anderer Institutionen der BRD Einladungen an den Delegierten aus der DDR ausgesprochen werden, so sind diese mit den Delegierten der anderen sozialistischen Länder abzusprechen. Einzeleinladungen sind nicht anzunehmen.³⁷⁰

Other items related to more specific current political conflicts and concerns of the GDR government.³⁷¹ In the wake of the Prague Spring, for example, East German visitors to the ITI Jubilee Congress in Prague in 1968 were to "represent the domestic and foreign policy positions of the GDR, referring in particular to the development of socialist democracy of proletarian internationalism." In reference to the West German student

³⁶⁸ Hedin. 2019. p.221

³⁶⁹ BArch DR107/98. *Hinweise zur Erarbeitung von Direktiven für Auslandsdienstreisen 1987.*

³⁷⁰ BArch DR1/10257a. *Direktive für EXCOM-Sitzung in Paris, 26.-30.10.1975*, p.2

³⁷¹ Niederhut. 2005. p.76

protests, they were also to “point emphatically [...] to the deteriorating situation in West Germany (emergency dictatorship)”.³⁷² The delegation to an MTC symposium in Amsterdam in 1972 was instructed to “clarify to the international participants [...] that the temporary termination of the Allied Travel Office’s (ATO) activities had not ended the discrimination against GDR citizens [...]”, and to “contribute to the granting of entry visas for GDR citizens by the authorities of the NATO states to the GDR's passport, thus cutting out the consulates in West Berlin.”³⁷³ In the same year, at the colloquium on “The Role of Theatre in the Education of Youth” in Budapest, the delegation was mandated to “emphasise the decisive contribution of the GDR in bringing about the agreement on West Berlin and between the GDR and the FRG” and to “point out the necessity of convening a European Security Conference as soon as possible”.³⁷⁴

The East German theatre professionals were also supposed to represent GDR policies in regards to theatre. At a colloquium in Stockholm in 1967, the delegation of the State Acting School Berlin was to “illustrate the high level of training in the education of actors” and “to demonstrate it as a component of socialist educational work”.³⁷⁵ At the summer course on Music Theatre Training in Breukelen in June 1978, the participating dancers were tasked “to give the best possible testimony to music theatre training and practice in the GDR through intensive collaboration.”³⁷⁶ In this way, all artistic achievements were framed as successes of the GDR.

Apart from such broad and ultimately vague obligations, there were also very specific instructions, that restricted the foreign activities of the travel cadres in much more tangible ways. For the international colloquium on theatre directing organised by the FRG centre in Essen in 1970, the delegates were instructed not to attend certain theatre performances on the programme so they did not have to participate in the discussion afterwards, supposedly to avoid uncomfortable topics. This applied to

³⁷² BArch DR1/13619. *Direktive für die Teilnehmer der Delegation des ITI-Zentrums DDR am Jubiläums-Kongress in Prag (10.-16.6.1968)*, p.3

³⁷³ BArch DR1/10257a. *Direktive für die Teilnahme der Delegation des ITi-Zentrums DDR an dem II. Ausbildungssymposium des MTC in Amsterdam (28.9.-1.10.1972)*, p.3

³⁷⁴ BArch DR1/10257a. *Direktive für Reise einer Delegation für die Teilnahme an dem Internationalen Colloquium “Die Rolle des Theaters bei der Erziehung der Jugend“ in Budapest, 10.-14.12.1972*, p.2

³⁷⁵ BArch DR1/22790. *Direktive 20.1.1967*.

³⁷⁶ BArch DR1/10257. *Direktive für die Teilnahme von Roland Gawlik, Stefan Lux und Wolf Ebermann am Sommerkurs des Musiktheater-Komitees des ITI “Musiktheater-Training“ – in Breukelen (Niederlande) vom 6.-25.Juni 1978*.

Trotsky in Exile by Peter Weiss, but also to plays by “directors from the people's democracies” and plays with a “happening or shock character”.³⁷⁷

After returning from abroad, the travel cadre was obliged to report to the MfK. First, they were required to submit a short immediate report within three days and a comprehensive report after one month (or after two weeks according to later regulations). The immediate reports could be worded freely and were sometimes replaced by report forms with which the planned course of the journey was verified and special incidents were immediately recorded.³⁷⁸ The comprehensive report outlined the entire itinerary and detailed both the traveller's activities and observations while performing their duties. Again, there were specific instructions from the state about the topics the reports had to cover.³⁷⁹ Any problems encountered before or during the trip also had to be mentioned, and deviations from the planned itinerary had to be justified.

Because of these guidelines, the reports were strongly fixed on cultural policy aspects. It is difficult to say to what extent this interpretation of the events described corresponded to the perception of the person writing the reports, or to what extent it was merely a framework imposed by the MfK. The sub-heading ‘Behaviour of the FRG delegation’, which appeared in reports on the ITI World Congresses, demonstrates how the prescribed style of the travel cadre reports could lead to even complete inaction being reinterpreted as a hostile act. According to the report on the 1971 World Congress in London, “in accordance with the new Bonn guidelines, the West German centre undoubtedly had a mandate to intervene more actively than before.” This assertion was substantiated by the unusual size of the 8-person West German delegation.³⁸⁰ In contrast, however, the report also states that these delegates – apart from Karl-Ernst Hüdelpohl from the cultural department of the Goethe Institute – “did not participate in the official debates”. Nevertheless, to give weight to the narrative of a growing West German presence, it also noted: “Das schließt nicht aus, daß sie ‘hinter den Kulissen’ aktiv waren.”³⁸¹ The narrative was maintained at the next World Congress in Moscow

³⁷⁷ BArch DR1/10257a. *Direktive über Teilnahme einer Delegation an der vom westdeutschen ITI-Zentrum organisierten Veranstaltung “Internationales Colloquium 70: Regie“ in Essen, 3.-10.5.1970.*

³⁷⁸ Gries, Sabine. Voigt, Dieter. 1995. „Reisekader der DDR - Kundschafter und Erfüllungshelfen der SED“ In: *Hochschule Ost* 4(3), 73-85, p.79

³⁷⁹ BArch DR107/98. *Hinweise zur Erarbeitung von Berichten über Auslandsdienstreisen 1987.*

³⁸⁰ ITI. *Weltkongresse. Bericht über den XIV. Weltkongreß des Internationalen Theaterinstituts in London vom 29. Mai bis 5. Juni 1971*, p.18

³⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.19

in 1973. While the previously active Hildepohl hardly made an appearance in Moscow, this “certainly did not prevent him from conducting his business behind the scenes, i.e. outside the official meetings.”³⁸² The inactivity of the West German delegates was, on the one hand, used to show the GDR’s superiority, but at the same time reinterpreted as a sign of secret machinations.

As East German theatre artists and scholars had learned to deal with the limits imposed on them by GDR cultural policy by reframing their work in these terms, they also learned to use the framework of the travel cadre system to their own benefit. Acutely aware of the political expectations that facilitated their travels abroad, they presented their activities as vital in terms of cultural policy to guarantee their future participation in international circles. Thus, in the case of individual reports, it is impossible to determine whether the political account was meant to prove one's loyalty and usefulness, or wishful thinking born of political conviction.³⁸³ The travel cadres often emphasised the specific political benefits of their stay abroad³⁸⁴ and praise of the GDR was a recurring central element in the travel reports.³⁸⁵ Success was presented in the context of the state and seen as an enhancement of the GDR's reputation.³⁸⁶ They described the “‘realistic’, ‘open-minded’ or even ‘progressive’ attitude” of Western contacts to legitimise further exchanges with the person in question.³⁸⁷ On the other hand, the travel cadres often tried to evade their political responsibilities by deliberate omission of unfavourable details. As a result, the GDR authorities rarely received any factual political information and were instead merely affirmed in their worldview.³⁸⁸

While the travel cadre system severely restricted the activities of the ITI centre, its members were deeply familiar with it. There are only few documented cases in which the East German ITI centre came into direct conflict with the travel cadre system. In one case, the ITI centre directly attempted to disregard the foreign policy guidelines

³⁸² ITI. ITI-Weltkongresse. 1973/07/31. *Bericht über den XV. Weltkongreß des Internationalen Theaterinstituts in Moskau vom 27.Mai bis 1.Juni 1973.* p.21

³⁸³ Gries, Sabine. 1995. „Die Pflichtberichte der wissenschaftlichen Reisekader der DDR“ In: *DDR-Wissenschaft im Zwiespalt zwischen Forschung und Staatssicherheit*, edited by Dieter Voigt. 141-168. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, p.157

³⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p.151

³⁸⁵ Klussmann, Paul Gerhard. „Berichte der Reisekader aus der DDR“ In: *DDR-Wissenschaft im Zwiespalt zwischen Forschung und Staatssicherheit* edited by Dieter Voigt. 131-140. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot., p.137

³⁸⁶ Gries. 1995. p.152

³⁸⁷ Niederhut. 2005. p.125

³⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p.128

and was prevented from doing so by the MfK. ITI staff member Hengst was delegated by Gysi to attend a meeting of the ITI's New Theatre Committee (NTC) in West Berlin in 1978. The travel application³⁸⁹ and the directives³⁹⁰ were submitted to the MfK together with the invitation from the NTC Secretary Heinz Spira from the Swedish ITI Centre.³⁹¹ After the forms had already been countersigned in both the UNESCO/International Organisations Department and the Theatre Section, the process was halted temporarily to await a pending decision on visits to the West Berlin Theatertreffen. During this time Rudolf Greiser examined the documents and determined that the invitation did not comply with the conditions of the Four Power Agreement of 1971 on the West Berlin question.³⁹² Sending an East German delegate under these conditions would have set an unfavourable precedent concerning international events hosted in West Berlin. Greiser criticised that Gysi had neglected to inform either the MfK or the Soviet ITI about the wording of the invitation and nevertheless applied for travel permission. Gysi had in the same year just transferred to the ITI after working at the MfK for more than twenty years, and had only recently attended a consultation for the national representatives of international cultural NGOs on the issue of the Four Power Agreement. Greiser suspected that she had already known the invitation was unacceptable and accused her of "trying to get us send a delegation by giving us only partial information."³⁹³

As secretary of the GDR centre and secretary of the MTC, Ebermann frequently travelled to MTC meetings, ITI colloquia or theatre festivals around the world and was well connected especially among music theatre professionals. This led to him often deviating from the prearranged itinerary without consulting GDR authorities. In 1980, he had illegally prolonged three trips for several days by leaving early and returning late.³⁹⁴ For example, for his annual trip to the *Cantiere Internazionale d'Arte* in Montepulciano, he had been asked by composer and founder of the festival Hans Werner Henze via telegraph to attend the premiere of Henze's new opera *Pollicino*. Thus, Ebermann spontaneously left to Italy three days early. He then extended his trip

³⁸⁹ BArch DR1/10257. *Dienstauftrag für Reise nach Westberlin.*

³⁹⁰ BArch DR1/10257. *Direktive für die Entsendung zur Sitzung des Komitees Neues Theater in Westberlin.*

³⁹¹ BArch DR1/10257. 1978/04/24. Letter to Nindl und Greiser.

³⁹² BArch DR1/10257. 1978/07/05. Statement by Greiser to Tautz, p.1

³⁹³ *ibid.*, p.2-3

³⁹⁴ BArch DR1/10608. 1981/08/13. Letter to Werner.

for two days when he was offered a ticket for a production of *Ariadne auf Naxos* conducted by Karl Böhm. Composer Gerhard Wimberger had agreed to accommodate him for that time. Ebermann justified this decision by claiming that his coverage of the festival would have been incomplete “without having experienced the most likely last artistic performance of the 86-year-old Karl Böhm.” In Ebermann’s opinion, such spontaneous changes were sometimes necessitated by his line of work.³⁹⁵ However, the MfK took offence at this nonchalant attitude and reprimanded him for his conduct. In 1981, Ebermann violated the directives during his annual trip to Montepulciano again. This time, instead of returning straight from Italy to the GDR, he travelled to Austria and got a new visa there to return to the GDR. This caused the Travel Department of the MfK to inform the Minister of Culture, Hans-Joachim Hoffmann, about Ebermann’s “repeated violations of travel regulations, misuse of passports and visas, and unauthorised visits to capitalist embassies”.³⁹⁶ Hoffmann was “very indignant” about Ebermann’s conduct and suggested a travel ban of twelve months. After a consultation with the Minister’s office, MfK official Manfred Hausding declared that he doubted the necessity of a travel ban since Ebermann’s travel violations were the result of understandable circumstances.³⁹⁷ This incident demonstrated that the members of the ITI centre embraced their privileged status as travel cadres quite readily. They sometimes moved more freely and with more flexibility than the state authorities approved of.

Both cases show a certain resistance of the ITI members to letting the scope of their work be limited by the travel restrictions. They did not act only as state representatives, but understood themselves as part of an international community. Ebermann’s unauthorised conduct also shows that there were still limits to the control the GDR was able to exert on the travel cadres. Especially when travelling alone, the travel cadres were often unsupervised for large parts of their trips.³⁹⁸ While it was not uncommon for travel cadres to report on misconduct of their travelling companions,³⁹⁹ there are no documented instances of this in the reports of the ITI centre. ITI delegates routinely travelled to ITI meetings and theatrical events and were often quite familiar

³⁹⁵ BArch DR1/10608. 1980/09/10. *Aktenvermerk zur Veränderung des Reisantritts bzw. der Rückkehr bei Reise nach Italien/ Österreich im August 1980.*

³⁹⁶ BArch DR1/10608. 1981/08/12. Handwritten note from Freygang to the minister.

³⁹⁷ BArch DR1/10608. 1981/09/09. Handwritten note.

³⁹⁸ Niederhut. 2005. p.85

³⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p.86

with their international ITI colleagues. What was discussed between colleagues in private was impossible for the GDR authorities to control. Manfred Linke of the FRG centre claimed: “Die Kollegen aus der DDR haben wesentlich mehr Zusammenarbeit mit den Repräsentanten des ITI-Zentrums der Bundesrepublik praktiziert, als von politischer Seite in der DDR erwünscht war [...]“⁴⁰⁰

Even if the travel directives were often very specific, they were not always enforceable. In the case of secret ballots, it was impossible to verify whether the delegates of the GDR had voted as instructed. Whenever it appeared that some representative from Eastern Europe had not voted with their socialist allies, the GDR delegates were quick to speculate and suspect their colleagues. Linke stated that the East German ITI members had not “allowed themselves - in contrast to some colleagues from other ‘socialist countries’ - to be bullied into ‘bloc decisions’.”⁴⁰¹ This claim directly contradicts the reports of the GDR centre itself, which presented them as particularly loyal to the Soviet Bloc. Ultimately, the travel cadre system had created a situation in which, to control them, state officials had to largely rely on the travel cadre’s account of events. If the actions of the East German delegates were in line with the GDR’s foreign policy approach, it was partly because it was advantageous for them to present them as such.

Despite the restrictions it imposed, the travel cadre system played a crucial role establishing the status of an international socialist expert. Being admitted as a travel cadre can even be regarded as the state-certified acknowledgement of the expert status. The system prioritised a small group of experts, who were crucial to the GDR’s foreign representation and thus, while under heavy scrutiny, also highly privileged. The ITI members who had long-standing contacts abroad were to a certain extent protected by their standing within the ITI world organisation. Disrupting their activities would have been highly damaging to the GDR’s image. Because of the privileges their status as travel cadres afforded them, the East German theatre experts also had a particularly strong personal and professional interest in participating in the ITI.

⁴⁰⁰ Linke. 1994. p.114

⁴⁰¹ *ibid.*

4 Methods of Building Relations with Theatre Artists from the Global South

The members of the East German centre, especially Wolfgang Langhoff and Walter Kohls, had established their first contacts during the Theatre of Nations festival in Paris in the 1950s, and had then called upon these contacts to obtain Western approval for a separate East German ITI. After its foundation, the GDR centre began to establish and expand its foreign contacts. The GDR's foreign policy at that time was entirely dedicated to overcoming diplomatic isolation and being recognised internationally as a sovereign state. The ITI's affiliation with UNESCO was considered key. Through participation in international organisations such as ITI, the GDR aimed to prove that it had already been accepted by the international community *de facto*, hoping that this would turn to lead to the diplomatic recognition *de jure*⁴⁰²

In the first year of the East German ITI's existence, it did not pursue a distinct strategy as far as its foreign contacts were concerned. This was because the members of the centre had limited option to establish contacts with other ITI centres and foreign theatre experts. Since the GDR was not recognised as a sovereign state, NATO countries did not accept East German passports as valid travel documents. Instead, the Allied Travel Office (ATO) in West Berlin issued temporary travel documents to GDR citizens travelling to the West.⁴⁰³ The East German centre of ITI had been founded during the Berlin Crisis, in which these circumstances worsened considerably. In 1958, the Soviet Union issued an ultimatum to the three Western Allies, demanding the withdrawal of the Western armed forces from West Berlin, to turn it into a demilitarised 'free city' unaffiliated with the FRG or GDR. After the Western Allies rejected the demands and the Soviet Union was unwilling to take military action, the conflict instead

⁴⁰² When the GDR applied for UNESCO membership in 1970, the ITI centre tried to leverage its good relationship with the Finnish centre, that it had maintained since the World Congress in 1959. Kohls wrote to Arvi Kivimaa of the Finnish ITI and asked him to influence the Finnish UNESCO commission "in the desired direction." (BArch DR/107 48. 1970/09/09. Letter to Kivimaa.). Kivimaa agreed to discuss the issue with the senior official responsible, assuring Kohls that he took it very seriously. (BArch DR/107 48. 1970/09/17. Letter from Kivimaa) The East German ITI centre attributed the fact that the Finnish UNESCO commission supported the application to their good relations. (BArch DR1/12950. *Tätigkeitsbericht 1966-1970*. 15 p.1)

⁴⁰³ Hoff, Henning. 2014. *Großbritannien und die DDR 1955-1973: Diplomatie auf Umwegen*. München: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, p.19

culminated with the construction of the Berlin Wall.⁴⁰⁴ Because of the Berlin Wall, citizens from West Berlin were no longer able to visit the GDR or East Berlin. In retaliation, the Western Allies began severely restricting the travel of GDR citizens to NATO countries through the ATO.⁴⁰⁵ Besides high-ranking state and party representatives that were regularly denied visa,⁴⁰⁶ the ATO also frequently banned visits suspected of serving propaganda purposes, which included participation in academic and cultural events. In the first years of the GDR centre of ITI, the East German theatre experts were thus prevented from participating in most ITI events. They were, for example, denied visa to visit the international theatre exhibition in Athens and the *Rencontres Internationales de Jeunes* at the theatre festival in Avignon in 1962, while Wolfgang Langhoff was not invited to a UNESCO-funded symposium in Tokyo in 1963.⁴⁰⁷ The members of the ITI centre regularly wrote protest letters to ITI headquarters and other national centres, urging them to lobby their governments to stop this discrimination of East German theatre experts.⁴⁰⁸ The East German protests were successful to the extent that the World Congress decided in 1965 to hold official ITI events only in countries where all delegates could obtain a visa. However, other trips by East German theatre experts sometimes still failed until the ATO was dissolved in 1970. Cultivating contacts was thus often limited to what could be done from home.

4.1 First Steps. Publications and Information

Especially in the early days of the ITI, collecting and communicating information about theatre was still an important basic task.⁴⁰⁹ The ITI headquarters regularly sent out enquiries to its national centres about the situation of theatre in their respective countries.⁴¹⁰ The information bulletin *World Theatre Premieres* collected and published information about the premieres of new plays in the ITI member states.

⁴⁰⁴ Krüger, Dieter. 2013. *Am Abgrund? Das Zeitalter der Bündnisse: Nordatlantische Allianz und Warschauer Pakt 1947 bis 1991*. Fulda: Parzeller, p.69-70

⁴⁰⁵ Smith. 2006. p.316

⁴⁰⁶ Hoff. 2014. p.19

⁴⁰⁷ BArch DR1/26185. 1964/02/27. *ITI. Aufnahme der Mitgliedschaft und Entwicklung der Beziehungen*, p.3

⁴⁰⁸ In general, the GDR tried to fight back against the ATO travel restrictions by appealing to Western scientists, scholars and artists to lobby on its behalf. See, for example: Gewerkschaft Wissenschaft, Zentralvorstand. 1963. *Documentation on the Obstruction of International Scientific Cooperation. Discrimination against GDR Scientists by NATO Countries and the so-called Allied Travel Office in West Berlin*. Mittweida: Gewerkschaft Wissenschaft.

⁴⁰⁹ Linke. 1994. p. 23

⁴¹⁰ For an overview, see: *World Theatre*. 1968, Vol. XVII 1-2: Major Trends 1948-1968, p.138

The ITI magazine *World Theatre/ Théâtre dans le monde* similarly asked the centres for statements about aspects of theatre in their countries, like the reception of specific genres or dramatists. Such statements were then published in *World Theatre* in the issue about said topic. The East German centre responded diligently to all of these requests, eager to use this opportunity to inform an international audience about theatre in the GDR. Information about current theatre premieres, new East German plays and other important events in theatre life in the GDR were therefore regularly sent to René Hainaux, editor-in-chief of *World Theatre*.⁴¹¹ East German contributions can, for example, be found in the 1963 issues on Stage Design⁴¹² or Stanislavski⁴¹³, or the 1965 issue on Realism.⁴¹⁴ Naturally, the 1966 issue on Brecht, ten years after his death in 1956, also quite heavily relied on East German.⁴¹⁵ The first part of the issue consisted entirely of contributions from various members of the Berliner Ensemble (BE), like Werner Hecht,⁴¹⁶ Manfred Wekwerth⁴¹⁷ and Joachim Tenschert,⁴¹⁸ and also previously unpublished text by Brecht. The second part then featured insights into international Brecht reception.

World Theatre frequently dedicated single issues to theatre in specific countries. The FRG centre of ITI had contributed to such an issue about West German theatre in 1961.⁴¹⁹ Shortly after, the ITI centre of the GDR suggested an issue on East German theatre,⁴²⁰ which was eventually published in 1965.⁴²¹ Whereas the West German issue had mainly explained the system and organisation of theatre in the FRG, the East German issue focussed on artistic trends in GDR theatre. A special focus was given to

⁴¹¹ The contributions intended for *World Theatre* Premieres included theatre programmes, synopses of plays and excerpts from press reviews and can be found in: BArch DR107/92, 93, 94, 95 and 96.

⁴¹² *World Theatre*. 1963, Vol. XII-1: "Stage Design".

⁴¹³ *World Theatre*. 1963, Vol. XII-2: "Pantomime/Stanislawski".

⁴¹⁴ *World Theatre*. 1965, Vol. XVI-2: "Realism in 1965".

⁴¹⁵ *World Theatre*. 1966, Vol. XV-3-4: "Brecht 1956-1966".

⁴¹⁶ Hecht, Werner. 1966. "On using production models" In: *World Theatre* (Vol. XV-3-4: Brecht 1956-1966). 201-203.

⁴¹⁷ Wekwerth, Manfred. 1966. "Experiments at the Berliner Ensemble" In: *World Theatre* (Vol. XV-3-4: Brecht 1956-1966). 210-214.

⁴¹⁸ Tenschert, Joachim. 1966. "Berliner Ensemble 1956-1966" In: *World Theatre* (Vol. XV-3-4: Brecht 1956-1966). 206-209.

⁴¹⁹ *World Theatre*. 1961. Special Issue: „Le Théâtre en Allemagne. Bundesrepublik Deutschland“.

⁴²⁰ BArch DR1/20438. 1961/11/08. Letter to Kohls.

⁴²¹ *World Theatre*. 1965, Vol. XVI-4: "Theatre in East Germany".

‘music theatre’ and opera, to promote the upcoming colloquium on the contemporary interpretation of opera in Leipzig.⁴²²

In addition to such contributions to *World Theatre*, the ITI centre also began its own series called *Theatre in the GDR/ Theater in der DDR*. These booklets were published in regular intervals of about two years and distributed during events such as the World Congresses. They intended to inform the foreign partners, national centres of the ITI and all institutions abroad interested in theatre work about the developments of theatre in the GDR. As such, they were the only theatre publication in the GDR produced directly for the purpose of foreign distribution.⁴²³ The booklets were of different length, often somewhere between 30 and 60 pages, usually with a large number of photos illustrating the topic.⁴²⁴ Each issue was dedicated to a different aspect of East German theatre, like ‘theatre and audience’ or ‘classical heritage’, or to an important East German theatre personality like Brecht or Felsenstein.

Another way of disseminating information about East German theatre was through correspondence with foreign theatre artists and national centres who contacted the GDR centre on their own initiative with specific requests. In 1963, for example, the East German ITI centre had postal correspondence with 21 foreign national centres from predominantly capitalist countries.⁴²⁵ When authors and publishers needed basic information, photos or other material on past or contemporary theatre in the GDR, the ITI centre was often their first point of contact. The first correspondences of the GDR ITI mostly concerned simple requests that the ITI centre then either answered itself or forwarded to the relevant institutions. Due to its connection with the ITI, the East German centre was ascribed a different quality than other East German institutions. This can be discerned from a request by Rhoda Bartholomew of the Lincoln Center in

⁴²² There were two articles dedicated to this topic. “‘Musiktheater’ in the repertory by Joachim Herz and “Handel’s Operas in Halle” by Heinz Rückert. At the end of the section was an advertisement for the colloquy. In: *World Theatre*. 1965, Vol. XVI-4: Theatre in East Germany.

⁴²³ BAArch DR107/90. 1975/01/10. Letter to Hincke, p.1

⁴²⁴ For example, for the 7th issue of *Theater in der DDR*, the ITI centre planned to use 53 black and white photos and 7 color photos for a booklet of 34 pages. (BAArch DR107/90. 1975/01/10. Letter to Erika Hincke, p.1) The ITI centre explained the use of photos as follows: “Wir orientieren uns auf ein Verhältnis Text/Bild von 1/3 zu 2/3. Dabei streben wir an, ein System zu entwickeln, zu den einzelnen Themen mit einem optisch eindrucksvollen Großfoto zu arbeiten, das etwa die eine Seite einnimmt, und auf der anderen Seite sowohl mit Text als auch mit kleineren Fotos, die dokumentieren, informieren, belegen, ergänzen.“

In: BAArch DR107/90. Draft for “Theater in der DDR“, Heft 7: “Unser Theater und sein Publikum“, p.1

⁴²⁵ BAArch DR1/19834. *Bemerkenswerte Einzelheiten aus Tätigkeit 1963*.

New York, who approached the GDR ITI to enquire about who in the centre's opinion were the "outstanding performing artists in Germany (East)". She used the opportunity to express her approval of the existence of an East German ITI centre: "It is gratifying to have an ITI centre in your country to whom Americans can write for such vital information, knowing the source will be reliable."⁴²⁶ This remark reveals that, to correspondents outside of the Eastern Bloc, the ITI centre was considered to be more reliable than other potential sources of information in the GDR that were either inaccessible to the West or presumed untrustworthy due to ideological slant. The ITI centre, on the other hand, was legitimised through its affiliation with an international NGO and was not categorically suspected of being a tool of the SED regime. Perceived as part of an international organisation, the ITI centre presented a small door to all that was otherwise hidden away behind the Iron Curtain. For that reason, it was easier for the ITI centre to establish contacts also with individuals and organisations in the USA. The ITI centre was, for example, also a point of contact for the Library of Congress and provided it with publications of the GDR ITI.⁴²⁷

Through such enquiries, the GDR centre also gained its first contacts to national centres in the Global South, mainly in Latin America. In September 1960, Saul Benavente, secretary of the Argentinian ITI centre, contacted the East German ITI by letter. After various Argentinian authors and publishers had requested visual material on past and contemporary theatre in the GDR for use in publications, he asked for photographs and drawings of theatre architecture, stage technology and performances by the BE and the Meiningen Ensemble, and offered to provide similar services in return.⁴²⁸

East German theatre professionals also contacted the ITI centre to facilitate exchange with foreign theatre artists. Joachim Herz from the Municipal Theatres Leipzig approached the ITI centre in August 1967 to convey a request from Enrique Sivieri of the Argentinian ITI centre. The theatre director and conductor of the Teatro C3lon had worked with Herz in Leipzig on the productions of *William Tell* and *Così fan tutte* in the previous and current seasons. To Herz, he had expressed interest in establishing contact with the East German ITI and a regular exchange of publications,

⁴²⁶ BArch DR107/52. 1961/03/14. Letter from Bartholomew.

⁴²⁷ See: BArch DR107/54. 1981/11/23. Letter from Einhorn; BArch DR107/54. 1980/09/11. Letter from Bridge; BArch DR107/53. 1971/04/08. Letter from Einhorn.

⁴²⁸ BArch DR107/48. 1960/11/04. Letter from Benavente.

communications and information. Herz wrote to Ebermann to inform him of this enquiry, asking him to initiate a “fairly active contact”. The ITI centre complied with this request at least to the extent of sending some material to Sivieri and the Argentinian centre.⁴²⁹

This exchange indicates that at that point, the GDR did not yet have regular contact with many of the other ITI centres, not even in Sivieri’s case, who at the time was working in the GDR. While the centre was often entrusted with matters that concerned theatrical exchanges with non-Eastern Bloc countries, other institutions, especially the theatres and theatre artists themselves, were making their own contacts as well. In general, however, these brief correspondences did not yet translate to the establishment of lasting relations.

4.2 Behind the Berlin Wall. Guest of the East German ITI

Apart from requests for information and material, the ITI centre also quickly became a point of contact for theatre artists who wanted to visit the GDR. Since the GDR appeared quite closed off and inaccessible to those outside of the Eastern Bloc, theatre artists often contacted the ITI centre, which then helped with organising visits to the GDR by arranging for accommodation and theatre tickets. When Ruth Mayleas, the secretary of the US centre of the ITI, was given the opportunity to undertake a three-month trip through Europe in 1963 through a travel and study grant from the Ford Foundation, she approached the East German centre for assistance.⁴³⁰ In late May 1963, Mayleas and Rosamond Gilder visited East Berlin and saw various productions at the BE, Deutsches Theater and Komische Oper and commented very positively on the quality of the performances to the members of the ITI directorate.⁴³¹ In 1963, the ITI centre of the GDR looked after a total of 62 foreign guests from predominantly capitalist countries and arranged visits to theatre performances and rehearsals, and talks with East German artists and intellectuals for most of them. Most of the visitors from capitalist countries stayed in West Berlin and visited the GDR on day trips; only four were guests of the East German ITI centre. Guests from other socialist countries were invited by other means and were therefore not hosted by the ITI centre.⁴³²

⁴²⁹ BArch DR107/47. 1967/08/31. Letter from Herz.

⁴³⁰ BArch DR107/52. 1963/03/14. Letter from Mayleas.

⁴³¹ BArch DR107/52. 1963/06/06. *Notiz an die Pressestelle des MfK.*

⁴³² BArch DR1/19834. *Bemerkenswerte Einzelheiten aus Tätigkeit 1963.*

In addition, the East German ITI also invited and hosted guests that the MfK considered interesting. The first important foreign guest of the East German centre had been Canadian actor Paul Mann, founder of the Paul Mann Actor's Workshop in New York. Mann went on a five-month trip to Europe in 1960, during which he also visited the Soviet Union and Poland. During his stay in Warsaw, he spoke to the diplomats of the GDR embassy, expressing his interest in visiting the GDR. Mann presented them with two recommendation letters. The first was from the American National Theater and Academy (ANTA), where the office of the US centre of ITI was located. The GDR diplomats were especially impressed with the second letter by American sociologist, historian, and civil rights activist W.E.B. Du Bois, who had just been awarded the Lenin Peace Prize in 1959. In this letter, Mann was described as a friend and co-worker of singer and actor Paul Robeson, who was likewise known for his support of civil rights causes and Soviet policies.⁴³³ Mann was very interested in the work of the BE and, despite difficult political conditions, considered it feasible to organise a tour of the BE in the USA with the help of ANTA. The GDR diplomats suggested inviting Mann and his wife to the GDR for a two-week stay and proposed that the GDR centre of the ITI could play host.⁴³⁴ Mann was then invited to the GDR on behalf of the ITI centre.⁴³⁵ While his stay did not result in a US tour of the BE, Mann sent a group of theatre students from the Negro Ensemble Company to the GDR in 1970.⁴³⁶ Mann's example shows how ITI centre was firmly included in the foreign theatre-related activities of the MfK. If any issue fell under its responsibility, it was passed on to the centre as a matter of course. The East German ITI's contacts were not limited to those made by the centre's members at international events or through exchanges with the other ITI centres themselves. Rather the ITI centre was also used to extend invitations that the MfK deemed useful.

The GDR hoped for such Western visitors to provide positive coverage about the GDR and East German theatre in capitalist countries where its own opportunities to influence public opinion were severely limited. One example for this is the Australian playwright Alan Seymour in 1963. Seymour spent twelve days in the GDR and was hosted by the ITI centre. The programme arranged for him included daily theatre

⁴³³ BArch DR1/20438. Copy: Aktennotiz über 2 Unterredungen mit Paul Mann.

⁴³⁴ *ibid.*, p.3

⁴³⁵ BArch DR1/20438. 1960/07/18. Letter to Mann.

⁴³⁶ BArch DR107/53. 1970/10/13. *Vorläufiger Programmvorschlag für die Reisegruppe, 17.-31.10.1970.*

performances and talks with a large number of East German theatre artists: theatre directors such as Besson, Felsenstein and Langhoff, actors, critics, and writers such as Fritz Erpenbeck, Rainer Kerndl and Paul Wiens.⁴³⁷ The report on his stay reveals that his East German hosts paid close attention to Seymour's statements on the political situation. By way of introduction, Seymour's political views and his openness to the East German perspective were mentioned to present him in a positive light and useful to the GDR's foreign representation:

Herr Seymour behauptet von sich immer ein Linker gewesen zu sein. Er war sehr aufgeschlossen, vorurteilslos, kritisierte ehrlich und war stets darum bemüht, die Wahrheit über die politischen Vorgänge und alles was die DDR betraf zu ergründen.⁴³⁸

In addition to the many cultural engagements, the ITI centre was also keen to inform Seymour about the political situation in the GDR. His city tour therefore included a visit to the Berlin Wall. The report claimed: "Dadurch wurde ihm Problem der Staatsgrenze richtig klar, billigte Haltung der DDR."⁴³⁹ Western visitors to the GDR represented one of the few opportunities to provide credible counterstatements to Western propaganda about the situation in East Berlin and the GDR after the construction of the Berlin Wall. The report on Seymour's stay gives the impression that he was successfully convinced of and willing to disseminate the East German point of view:

Herr Seymour erklärte, daß sein Wissen über die DDR, sehr begrenzt, [sic] da auf Informationen der kapitalistischen Presse beruhte. Er beabsichtigt in 2 Magazinen Artikel über das Theater in der DDR zu veröffentlichen. Einen Artikel an eine Zeitung in Australien zu schicken. Und in einer liberalen Zeitung in England einen Artikel über den Schutzwall und den Standpunkt der DDR zu veröffentlichen.⁴⁴⁰

As a Western visitor who had been sympathetic to the GDR and useful for foreign propaganda, Seymour was reinvited to the opera colloquium in Leipzig in 1965, the first event of the ITI centre.

The Berliner Festtage were an important occasion for inviting foreign theatre professionals to the GDR. The Festtage were the annual East Berlin theatre, opera, and music festival, that had been devised as a counter-project to the Berliner Festwochen

⁴³⁷ BArch DR1/20493. *Bericht über die Betreuung des in England wohnhaften australischen Dramatikers Alan Seymour, vom 28.9. bis zum 9.10.63.*

⁴³⁸ *ibid.*, p.1

⁴³⁹ *ibid.*, p.2

⁴⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.1-2

and Berliner Theatertreffen in the Western part of the city. It was held every year in October, around the GDR's national holiday. Each year, the East German ITI centre invited around 20 to 25 visitors to the Festtage, which often included the ITI's general secretary or members of the ExCom or other national centres⁴⁴¹ The centre provided these visitors with a detailed programme for their stay, which included daily attendance of theatre performances at the Festtage, but also guided tours in East Berlin and trips to other cities to visit other theatres or museums.⁴⁴² As soon as the centre was able to participate in more international events and therefore became more proactive in developing its foreign relations, it increasingly invited theatre artists to the festival with whom it wanted to establish closer contacts. In 1974, for example, there were 25 guests from 18 different countries, including Venezuela, Lebanon and the Philippines.⁴⁴³

In the 1970s, the deteriorating financial situation of the GDR also began to affect the invitations of foreign theatre artists. After the establishment of normal relations with the FRG in 1973, the GDR and the other socialist states of Eastern Europe began taking Western loans in hopes to kickstart their own economy. This new debt and dependence on Western hard currency caused a price increase for accommodation in the Interhotels, the chain of hotels in large East German cities reserved for foreign visitors. In 1979, the centre informed Minister of Culture Hans-Joachim Hoffmann about how these economic circumstances made the ITI's work more difficult. To convince him of the urgency of the problem, they emphasised that personal contacts with artists were an important asset of foreign representation. At the time, the Eastern Bloc was arguing against the deployment of medium-range nuclear weapons in Western Europe in the context of the NATO Double-Track Decision. The ITI centre pointed out that the opposition to this military build-up united the Eastern Bloc states and many people in the West, and therefore presented a favourable opportunity to influence the guests of the ITI centre in the interests of the GDR:

Die Friedensoffensive läßt sich über bestimmte NGO's in die kapitalistischen Länder tragen. Denn wir arbeiten mit Künstlern und Kulturschaffenden. Sie sind sensibel, meistens mit ihren Regierungen nicht einverstanden und führen einen

⁴⁴¹ BArch DR1/12950. *Arbeitsbericht 1971-1975*, p.12

⁴⁴² An example of this is the visit of Nora Badia from the Cuban ITI in 1966, who stayed in the GDR from September 30 to October 17 on the occasion of the Festtage. BArch DR107/49. *Programm für Nora Badía, Cuba, anläßlich des Berlinbesuchs während der Berliner Festtage 1966, 30.9.-17.10.1966.*

⁴⁴³ BArch DR1/22792. *ITI-Gäste zu den Berliner Festtagen 1974.*

harten Kampf als Mensch und als Künstler. Nichts ist so effektiv als der persönliche Einsatz solcher Multiplikatoren.⁴⁴⁴

The financial situation in the GDR now negatively influenced the ITI centre's ability to invite and maintain contacts to foreign theatre artists:

Der Austausch von Delegationen wird fast unmöglich gemacht durch die letzten Festlegungen in Bezug auf die Interhotels. Da unsere Delegierten die Interhotelpreise nicht aufbringen können, wohnen sie in Berlin (West) und besuchen von da aus unsere Theater. Wir können mit ihnen nicht mehr arbeiten und sie für den Friedenskampf gewinnen.⁴⁴⁵

Guests who were able to finance their own travel expenses were still received and provided with packed itineraries. This primarily applied to theatre artists from the capitalist West. For example, the GDR centre, in collaboration with the US centre of the ITI, continued to organise and host visits by American theatre artists in the 1980s.⁴⁴⁶ Theatre artists from the Global South could hardly be invited under these conditions.

While the ITI centre continued to invite foreign theatre artists to the Berliner Festtage, the number of guests started slowly declining since the mid-1970s. While 25 guests had been invited the previous year, in 1975 there were only 16 from 9 countries,⁴⁴⁷ and in 1976 20 guests from 11 countries,⁴⁴⁸ all of whom, apart from one guest from Japan, came from other European countries. Two guests each were invited from other Eastern Bloc countries with which the GDR had its own bilateral cultural exchange programmes. Likewise, two guests came from the capitalist European countries with which the ITI centre had its own agreements: Finland, Sweden and the Netherlands. In 1988, it was 10 guests from 6 European and North American countries.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁴ BArch DR1/10608. 1979/11/26. Letter to Hoffmann.

⁴⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁴⁶ See, for example, a visit to the GDR by five US theatre directors and playwrights in 1980 as part of a larger trip to Eastern Europe. Lynn Gross of the US centre provided the ITI with a provisional itinerary (BArch DR107/54. ITI centre of the United States. *Tentative itinerary – Group project to Eastern Europe.*) and a list of the special interests of all participants (BArch DR107/54. Letter from Gross). The ITI centre planned their stay in the GDR accordingly. (BArch DR107/54. *Programm für die amerikanische Delegation.*). Another example is the visit of Christopher Martin in May 1982. (BArch DR107/54. *Ablaufplan: Aufenthalt Christopher Martin (USA) in der DDR vom 14. bis 19. Mai 1982.*

⁴⁴⁷ BArch DR1/22792. *ITI-Gäste zu den Berliner Festtagen 1975.*

⁴⁴⁸ BArch DR1/22792. *ITI-Gäste zu den Berliner Festtagen 1976.*

⁴⁴⁹ BArch DR1/26185. 1988/12/23. *Tätigkeitsbericht für das Jahr 1988*, p.7

4.3 Bilateral Exchange Agreements as a Basis for Theatrical Development

Aid

The GDR's development aid was mainly bilateral and did not go through international organisations.⁴⁵⁰ In the ITI the East German ITI members were likewise reluctant to sponsor development projects envisioned or organised by ITI headquarters. Their attitude is illustrated, for example, by the disparaging way in which Wolf Ebermann described an appeal by General Secretary Jean Darcante to the ITI delegates to support ITI projects in the Global South by providing higher financial contributions:

Zum Teil mit der subjektiven Emphase eines Komödianten formuliert, kreiste sein Bericht immer wieder um einen zentralen Herzdrücker: Mangel an Geld! Wir würden gern noch dies und das machen, in Latein-Amerika, in Asian, in Afrika, aber... (Eine verhüllte Aufforderung an die ‚Reichen‘ unter den Zentren, ihre Jahresbeiträge nochmals zu erhöhen!)⁴⁵¹

Instead of funding the ITI's projects, the East German centre chose to bypass ITI headquarters and instead establish bilateral contacts with other members of the ITI network. The results of these efforts were formal exchange agreements with other national centres.

Bilateral exchange agreements were the basis of the GDR's foreign trade and cultural exchange. They were crucial mainly for economic reasons: The East German Mark was a purely domestic currency, meaning it was only valid as a means of payment within the country, while its import and export from the territory of the GDR was prohibited. The Mark was not convertible for foreign trade or international travel outside the GDR, and was almost worthless compared to hard currencies.⁴⁵² For trips to other socialist countries travellers could exchange a limited amount of currency, but exchange with Western currencies was very difficult, expensive, and ultimately unfeasible for the GDR. Theatrical exchanges with other ITI centres could therefore only work if they took place without it. In trade relations, the GDR tried to circumvent this problem with clearing agreements that avoided the transfer of hard currency with exports being offset by imports.⁴⁵³ For its cultural exchange with other ITI centres, the GDR centre used the same system. Both centres needed to contribute to the exchange

⁴⁵⁰ Post, Ulrich. Sandvoss, Frank. 1982. *Die Afrikapolitik der DDR*. Hamburg: Institut für Afrika-Kunde, p.15

⁴⁵¹ BArch DR1/13619. 1965/07/14. *Report. XI. Weltkongreß des ITI in Tel Aviv, 20.-27.6.1965*. p.3

⁴⁵² Zaitlin, Jonathan R. 2007. *The Currency of Socialism. Money and Political Culture in East Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, p.57

⁴⁵³ Schulz. 1989. p.215

equally, so that any exchange of currency would be unnecessary. This kind of exchange was best regulated by bilateral agreements.

Unlike the earlier sporadic contacts, which had depended on the interest of foreign partners, it was the ITI centre that primarily drove the exchange agreements. Initially, the ITI centre mainly considered the centres of the socialist countries as possible partners for such exchange agreements, because similar bilateral cultural agreements already existed with these countries. The first ITI exchange programme was planned with the CSSR and was to start in November 1962. The ITI centre also considered extending the exchange to Poland and Hungary.

When the ITI centre approached the MfK to enquire about the possibility of theatrical exchange based on fixed agreements with other ITI centres, there was initial disagreement about the direction this cultural exchange should take. The International Relations Department disapproved of additional agreements with the other socialist countries. Since there were already sufficient state contacts and friendly relations between the theatres and their partner organisations in the other socialist countries, the Department did not see any “political necessity” for “such additional agreements” with the ITI centres of other socialist states. Additional theatrical exchange through ITI agreements could not be financed within the budget of the already fixed cultural work plans. Instead, the International Relations Department welcomed the idea of formalised cultural exchange with capitalist countries which was harder to achieve through official channels. They considered the exchange of theatre professionals between the GDR “and capitalist countries such as Sweden, Finland and others” worthwhile. Such agreements with other centres were expected to expand and intensify “in the field of theatre and beyond that of the entire artistic field with some capitalist countries in Europe”.⁴⁵⁴

Deputy Minister Bork disagreed with this assessment that the ITI centre’s theatre exchanges should be limited only to capitalist countries. During a talk with Bork, the International Relations Department conceded that the ITI centre could also pursue cultural relations with socialist countries. However, all agreed that the exchange had to take place entirely without currency. As Bork told Kohls:

Das bedeutet, dass die Fahrtkosten ab Grenze und bis zur Grenze jeweils vom empfangenen Nationalen Zentrum übernommen werden müssen. [...] Die Fahrtkosten ab und bis zur Grenze müssen jeweils vorher übersandt werden.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁴ BArch DR1/18115. 1962/10/15. Letter from Köhler to Witt.

⁴⁵⁵ BArch DR1/18115. 1962/10/26. Letter from Bork to Köhler.

The central part of this exchange programme with the CSSR ITI centre was both centres agreeing to host theatre artists of their respective partner centre for 50 days.⁴⁵⁶ It was first limited to a trial phase, and was extended in 1963.⁴⁵⁷ At the Warsaw World Congress in 1963, the GDR ITI negotiated further exchange agreements with other centres: Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, Finland, and Sweden. Due to the NATO travel ban, the GDR centre initially only approached the centres of socialist or non-aligned countries where the planned exchange would not be prevented by a refusal of visas to GDR theatre artists.

When Darcante proposed ‘sponsorships’ between national centres of the ITI to support ITI centres in the Global South, the East German centre took his suggestions as an impetus to expand their exchange agreements to ITI centres in the Global South.⁴⁵⁸ The first suitable partner for such a sponsorship was the Venezuelan ITI centre, which was quite active and regularly represented at ITI. Even the East German ITI members had first established contact with their Venezuelan colleagues at the World Congress in Warsaw 1963. Humberto Orsini, president of the Venezuelan ITI, had been prevented from attending the Warsaw Congress by the Venezuelan government. This piqued the interest of the GDR’s Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MfAA), and the East German delegates were instructed to take care of his deputy Clemente Izaguirre during the Congress.⁴⁵⁹

The fact that many of the centre’s members, including Orsini, advocated Marxist-Leninist politics,⁴⁶⁰ was also highly advantageous. This kind of political compatibility was not a requirement, but an advantage in building relationships with other ITI centres. Since the GDR ITI was dependent on the MfK’s approval, its relations to other ITI centres needed to be framed in terms of their political usefulness. The work of the ITI centre a contribution to the GDR’s foreign policy and thus ultimately intended to contribute to the establishment of diplomatic relations and support for the international socialist system. Theatre artists were therefore more interesting as partners if either they themselves or their country’s foreign policy were sympathetic to the GDR

⁴⁵⁶ BArch DR1/18115. 1962/11/20. Letter from Bork to Kohls.

⁴⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁵⁸ BArch DR107/24. 1967/04/18. Letter to Orsini.

⁴⁵⁹ BArch DR1/8718. 1963/07/29. *Interner Bericht über den 10. ITI-Kongreß in Warschau 1963*, p.4.

⁴⁶⁰ In the internal report on the Warsaw Congress, both Orsini and Izaguirre were named “Genosse”, the address usually reserved for party members. BArch DR1/8718. 1963/07/29. *Interner Bericht über den 10. ITI-Kongreß in Warschau 1963*, p.4.

and the Eastern Bloc. As with Western visitors, it was therefore useful to point out compatible political beliefs of their partners. Thus, the GDR ITI described the Venezuelan ITI members for the International Relations Department in the MfK as follows:

Das venezolanische iTi-Zentrum ist eine Gruppe sehr progressiver, zumeist kommunistischer Intellektueller, die in ihrem Lande einen sehr harten, opferreichen Kampf um die Durchsetzung einer progressiveren Theaterpolitik führen. Diese Genossen stürzten sich bei ihren Aktivitäten vornehmlich auf die Zentraluniversität von Caracas, der sie zum Teil als Dozenten angehören und die als Zentrum und Basis der revolutionären venezolanischen Intelligenz gilt. Die kommunistischen Kräfte können innerhalb des Universitätsgeländes relativ ungehindert arbeiten, da es hier gewisse Grenzen für das Eingreifen staatlicher Autoritäten gibt.⁴⁶¹

Such a description suggested to the GDR authorities that the Venezuelan ITI members were suitable partners and that it would be worthwhile to invest in this theatrical exchange in terms of cultural policy. It also reaffirmed the GDR's assumption that the non-aligned countries of the Global South would eventually turn towards and join the Socialist Bloc.

In the following years, the East German ITI built up relations with the Venezuelan centre. Orsini was, for example, also invited to the opera colloquium in Leipzig in 1965, and the members of the East German Centre held talks with him in Berlin about some initial possibilities for theatrical exchange between the centres. In April 1967, a few months before the World Congress in New York, Kohls approached Humberto Orsini and proposed a friendship agreement between the two centres. At the meeting at the World Congress in New York, Felsenstein and Orsini signed the first friendship agreement between the GDR and Venezuelan ITI centres.⁴⁶²

After concluding the agreement with Venezuela, the ITI centre sought to negotiate further exchange agreements with other centres from the Global South. These focused mainly on countries that were friendly to the GDR, such as the United Arab Republic/Egypt in the late 1960s⁴⁶³ and later Iraq in the late 1970s.⁴⁶⁴ When the NATO travel bans were lifted and the GDR became diplomatically recognised in the 1970s,

⁴⁶¹ BArch DR107/24. 1968/09/16. Letter to Liebscher.

⁴⁶² BArch DR107/24. 1967/04/18. Letter to Orsini.

⁴⁶³ The agreement with the UAR was discussed with Leila Gaad from the Egyptian centre during the Brecht Dialogue in East Berlin in 1968.

⁴⁶⁴ BArch DR/17543. 1978/12/19. *Stichpunktprotokoll Direktoriumsstizung*.

the East German ITI centre also began to pursue exchange agreements with Western European centres such as the Netherlands and the UK.

Apart from the national centres to which the GDR itself proposed an exchange agreement, there were also other interested parties. Whether or not the East German ITI centre would respond to that interest was dependent on whether or not it matched the GDR's foreign policy that was strongly focused on priority countries.⁴⁶⁵ At the 1976 World Congress, Cecile Guidote, founder of the Philippine Educational Theatre Association (PETA), and a South Korean delegate⁴⁶⁶ heard about the agreement with the Venezuelan centre and approached one of the East German delegates, Hans-Michel Richter of the Leipzig Municipal Theatres, to enquire whether a similar exchange was also possible with the Philippines. Richter passed on the request to the ITI centre, unsure if the Philippines were a politically suitable partner for a friendship agreement:

Miss Guidote war nun – ähnlich wie Vertreter Süd-Koreas – erstaunlich interessiert an der Entwicklung unseres Theaters, des sozialistischen Theaters überhaupt und wendete sich an mich mit dem impulsiven Vorschlag, eine ähnliche Möglichkeit für die Philippinos zu schaffen. [...] Mir ist nicht entgangen, daß bereits im leitenden Komitee und in den regionalen Büros dieser Vereinigung einige katholische Priester und Schwestern vertreten sind. Uninformiert über die Situation auf den Philippinen gebe ich deshalb die Sache an Sie weiter [...].⁴⁶⁷

The South Korean interest in establishing a theatrical exchange with the East German centre was ignored without any comment, since the Eastern Bloc did not recognise South Korea as a sovereign state. The GDR was also hesitant towards the Philippines, likely because of its ties to the United States. PETA artists from the Philippines were thus invited to the Berliner Festtage or ITI events, but no attempt made to formalise this exchange in a friendship agreement. An attempt to send a team of East German theatre artists to the Philippines was abandoned when the MfAA expressed its disinterest in cultural relations with the Philippines.⁴⁶⁸ When PETA began to play a significant role in the ITI in the 1970s regarding theatre in the Global South, the East German centre resumed contact and invited two delegates to the Berliner Festtage 1970.⁴⁶⁹ In 1970, the East German centre also agreed to a suggestion of General-Secretary Jean Darcante to

⁴⁶⁵ Post. Sandvoss. 1982. p.15

⁴⁶⁶ This was likely Guidote's fellow student and associate Yoo Duk Hyung.

⁴⁶⁷ BArch DR107/51. 1967/30/08. Excerpt: Letter from Hans Michael Richter.

⁴⁶⁸ BArch DR1/12950. 1970/01/25. *Arbeitsplan 1969. Bericht über die Realisierung der Vorhaben*, p.4

⁴⁶⁹ BArch DR1/12950. 1970/12/31. *Erfüllungsbericht. Arbeitsplan 1970*, p.2

take on a sponsorship for one or two associate centres in Sub-Saharan Africa, like the Nigerian or Zambian ITI. However, this exchange was dismissed by the MfK, as the respective countries were not priorities of East German foreign policy towards Africa.⁴⁷⁰

Even ideological compatibility was not always a sufficient base for theatrical exchange without the right foreign policy prerequisites. This was demonstrated by a case of attempted and failed contact with a group of Peruvian theatre artists. Luis A. Rodríguez, the president of the Peruvian student theatre association CEINSAD wrote to the GDR ITI in June 1967 because he wanted to subscribe to the publications of the East German centre.⁴⁷¹ He also wished to establish close relations with artistic institutions in the GDR and was interested in study grants. With his declarations “for a revolutionary theatre” and “for the unity of farmers, workers and students”, Rodríguez expressed his and his organisation’s socialist sympathies. However, he also noted that Peru was “a reactionary country” and that these political ideas were “pursued with terror.” In his opinion, this, and Peru’s lack of diplomatic recognition of the GDR, presented potential difficulties for theatrical exchange. He therefore felt it necessary to “take appropriate measures” to facilitate contact.⁴⁷² The GDR centre was inclined at first to respond positively to this request for contact. Ebermann forwarded the letter he deemed “extremely interesting” to the MfK and asked if they had any information about the Peruvian group or if they could acquire it. He made several suggestions for how this contact could look like: He planned to involve the Leipzig Theatre Academy, which, according to Ebermann, was “interested in international relations” and could “organise an exchange of material from school to school.” He was also in favour of granting a scholarship and inquired about availability for 1968. In addition, Ebermann suggested using a cover address in London⁴⁷³ to take into account the unfavourable political climate in Peru.⁴⁷⁴ After consultation with the MfAA, the MfK rejected this request, stating: “Das MfAA ist gegenwärtig nicht an Kontakten zu Peru interessiert, und es

⁴⁷⁰ A handwritten comment on the ITI report sent to the MfK read: “Sind das Schwerpunktländer? Mit wem abgestimmt?”. The sponsorship is simply not mentioned again after that. *ibid.*, p.3

⁴⁷¹ Langhoff had already died in 1966, but was presumably still listed as the president of the GDR ITI in the material available to Rodríguez.

⁴⁷² BArch DR107/51. 1967/06/19. Letter from Luis A. Rodríguez.

⁴⁷³ This is the only mention of the London cover address in the files of the GDR ITI. The casual way in which Ebermann mentions it in this letter gives the impression that the members of the ITI centre at least occasionally used it to establish contacts in countries where the political situation could have prevented them from doing so.

⁴⁷⁴ BArch DR107/51. 1967/09/10. Letter to Ruff.

wäre ratsam, die Angelegenheit, bis auf die Übersendung von Materialien, einschlafen zu lassen.“⁴⁷⁵ Even an openly left-wing theatre group in the Global South would only be supported when it seemed favourable or important to East German foreign policy. These conditions were not met in Peru at the time.

Comparing the exchange agreements with different ITI centres illustrates the different goals the GDR ITI centre was pursuing in regards to different countries. In the agreement with the Dutch centre, for example, both partners agreed to host theatre professionals selected by the other ITI centre for a total of ten days a year. The guests were to receive free accommodation and a daily allowance from the host centre. The centres also committed themselves to fulfil special programme requests of the guest “which included the procurement of theatre tickets”.⁴⁷⁶ The agreements were always designed for one year and could subsequently be revised and extended each year.⁴⁷⁷ The agreement with the UK centre had similar terms. With these agreements with Western centres, the GDR ITI primarily intended to enable its own theatre artists to travel abroad. Foreign visitors to the GDR were not affected by the non-convertibility of the East German Mark to the same extent. They were required to exchange a prescribed amount of a Western currency into Mark during their stay in the GDR, but were otherwise not hampered by the fact that the Mark was internationally worthless. Only for GDR theatre artists who wanted to travel abroad was a clearing agreement without currency exchange actually necessary. This was highlighted in the letter Kohls wrote to Helga Dostal of the Austrian centre to offer an exchange agreement there as well:

Bei uns gibt es eine Reihe von Theaterleuten, die spezielle Wünsche im Hinblick auf den Besuch bestimmter westlicher Länder äußern. Bei unserer Valuta-Situation treten hier regelmäßig Schwierigkeiten auf, die manches gutgemeinte Vorhaben verhindern.⁴⁷⁸

Kohls’ insistence on a formal agreement, however, made it clear he considered it a necessity to secure foreign travel for the theatre experts of the East German centre.

The exchange agreement with the Venezuelan centre had a very different character. It can be understood not only as a typical clearing house agreement, but also in terms of East German development assistance. Despite the GDR’s comparatively

⁴⁷⁵ BArch DR107/51. 1967/09/19. Letter from Bambor.

⁴⁷⁶ BArch DR107/50 . 1971/11/11. *Vereinbarung zwischen dem niederländischen iTi-Zentrum und dem iTi-Zentrum DDR.*

⁴⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁷⁸ BArch DR107/50. 1971/10/21. Letter to Dostal.

strong economic position in the Eastern Bloc, it provided only small sums of financial support to the Global South both in comparison with capitalist West but also the other Comecon countries.⁴⁷⁹ Instead, the aid it offered was within the framework of long-term bilateral agreements,⁴⁸⁰ and emphasised trade, technical cooperation, and the training of personnel.⁴⁸¹

The first friendship agreement with the Venezuelan ITI reflects this approach: Firstly, the agreement detailed the exchange of information, both centres agreed to inform each other about the theatre activities of their countries. This was to be done through “information by letter as well as by sending programme booklets, brochures, posters, photos and specialist literature”. Both centres were then to evaluate and use the material they received “as comprehensively as possible”. Specific proposals on how this information could be used included press reports, forwarding to academic institutions or libraries, and the organisation of exhibitions about theatre in the country of the respective partner. In addition to this, the GDR centre agreed to seek the rights to the Spanish translation of important works of East German theatre literature so that these could be translated in Venezuela.

Secondly, the agreement also provided for the mutual reception of guests, with the respective host covering the expenses of their stay. Unlike in the exchange agreements with European countries, there was no fixed number of days per year. Instead, these visits were tied to special occasions, which were already listed in the agreement. For the 1967 version, these were the Brecht Dialogue in 1968, the Berliner Festtage, the Festival des las Americas and the opening of exhibitions. For the Brecht Dialogue, it was specified that the GDR centre would invite two guests and would also pay the return flight for one of them.⁴⁸² The reason for this specificity was likely the significantly higher travel cost of transatlantic flights that had to be calculated into the budget of the East German centre in advance.

Thirdly, the GDR centre granted a scholarship to a Venezuelan theatre artist every three years. The duration of the stay was to be one and a half years and the scholarship holder was to first complete a German language course and then work as an intern at one of the major Berlin theatres. The expenses of the stay and the return

⁴⁷⁹ Post. Sandvoss. 1982. p.15

⁴⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.15

⁴⁸¹ Schulz. 1995. p.1

⁴⁸² BArch DR107/24. *Vereinbarung über freundschaftliche Zusammenarbeit zwischen den Zentren Venezuela und DDR des Internationalen Theaterinstituts. New York, Juni 1967.*

flight were covered by the GDR centre. In return, the Venezuelan ITI would invite an East German guest director every two years to stay in Venezuela for three months. During this stay, the guest director was to stage a production with a Venezuelan theatre group and give “lectures and seminars on theatre work in the GDR, Brechtian methods, etc.”. The costs of the stay were covered in turn by the Venezuelan centre.⁴⁸³

On all these points, the terms to which both centres agreed were noticeably asymmetrical. While both undertook to provide their partner with information, the GDR centre was to additionally acquire publishing rights. Even if both centres agreed to host guests from the partner centre, they were sent for different reasons. Venezuelan guests were to attend theatre performances and colloquia in the GDR, East German guests were sent to Venezuela to open an exhibition on East German theatre. The asymmetry becomes especially noteworthy when comparing the sending of theatre artists. One was a scholarship holder, the other a theatre director. The GDR centre agreed to host someone to study in East Germany, while the Venezuelan centre invited a teacher, who was to stage a play and give lectures and seminars. In both cases, it was the GDR ITI that exported its theatrical expertise.

Some of the points had been formally included in the agreement because their fulfilment was already assured. In the letter offering the friendship agreement, Kohls mentioned that Orsini would soon receive the promised shipment of posters, photos and books. The visits to the GDR were also realised smoothly. The Venezuelan guests were invited to the Brecht Dialogue as intended and scholarship holder came to the GDR in 1969, completed their study programme and even extended their stay. However, not all the terms agreed upon could be realised as planned. The return visit proved more difficult. The first sending of an East German director to Venezuela, which was originally planned for 1968 but postponed by a year, failed because Fritz Bennewitz was not issued a visa. Orsini wrote to Ebermann that his centre had private information that the minister responsible had declared it impossible in principle to issue visas to GDR citizens.⁴⁸⁴ This meant that the Venezuelan ITI could not fulfil its obligations under the agreement and no East German theatre people were invited.

Despite this, the GDR centre suggested to extend the exchange agreement in 1971. Most of the points were unchanged from the first version from 1967. Both centres

⁴⁸³ BArch DR107/24. *Vereinbarung über freundschaftliche Zusammenarbeit zwischen den Zentren Venezuela und DDR des Internationalen Theaterinstituts. New York, Juni 1967.*

⁴⁸⁴ BArch DR107/24. 1969/03/04. Letter from Orsini.

again agreed to send material on current theatre events and developments in their country. The sending of an East German guest director and the acceptance of a further scholarship holder were also retained. Other points, however, such as the sending of specialist literature, were removed or changed. The reciprocal invitation of guests to important theatre events was omitted, possibly because the high flight costs were not affordable for such short visits. Instead, the revised agreement of 1971 contained several points on exhibitions about the theatre of the respective partner country. The ITI took over an exhibition on Venezuelan theatre which had originally been shown at the Prague Quadrennial in 1971. It first opened at the National Theatre in Weimar and the Venezuelan centre agreed to let the GDR use the exhibition in other cities. In turn, the GDR wanted to bring an exhibition on East German theatre currently hosted in Chile to Venezuela, send a technician to set it up, as well as provide a second exhibition of theatre posters. Although not as much as in the first version of the agreement, the effort was still significantly higher on the East German side here as well.

The fact that the GDR ITI still favoured an extension of the agreement even when the Venezuelan centre was unable to deliver, shows that this was not an equal exchange for the benefit of the East German theatre artists. Instead, the GDR invested in its relations with the Venezuelan ITI to support and influence theatre artists in the Global South.

Not all agreements the GDR ITI concluded with the national centres of non-European countries had the same scope as the agreement with Venezuela. Compared to the Venezuelan friendship agreement, the agreement with the Egyptian ITI was scaled down considerably: there was a commitment to mutual information, the exchange of new plays, and the organisation of exhibitions on the theatre of the respective partner country. Like the agreements with the European centres, it also provided for a currency-free exchange for a study visit for two people of 10 days each.⁴⁸⁵

4.4 Scholarships for Theatre Artists from the Global South

During the period in which the GDR centre sought to build stronger links with ITI centres and other theatre institutions in the Global South, it began to give out scholarships for theatre artists from developing countries to intern at East German

⁴⁸⁵ BArch DR107/24. *Vereinbarung über freundschaftliche Zusammenarbeit von DDR und VAR.*

theatres. The East German centre also supervised Western scholarship holders studying in the GDR, albeit under very different circumstances. Western theatre people came to the GDR on scholarships from their own countries and usually followed the course of a specific theatre production.⁴⁸⁶ In contrast, scholarship holders from developing countries were part of a large-scale training and study programme, that was a major part of East German development aid.⁴⁸⁷

In general, the GDR was not a society characterised by strong immigration.⁴⁸⁸ While many GDR citizens wanted and sometimes attempted to leave the GDR, there were only few foreign nationals living and working in the GDR. Foreign students and trainees were the only major exception. Just like GDR citizens, foreign students did not have to pay tuition fees, were offered accommodation in student residences and given a monthly contribution to their living expenses.⁴⁸⁹ The GDR considered the fact that students from all over the world were welcome at East German universities a central element of its international image and an important asset of foreign relations, and thus hosted students from all over the world. Slightly under half of these came from other socialist states, with students from the Global South forming the second largest group. Changes in foreign policy were also reflected in the composition of the students: While in the 1950s the students came mainly from India and the Arab countries, later there was a stronger focus on the “young nation states” in Africa and Asia. During its quest for international recognition, the GDR at first offered study opportunities to other countries to create incentives for the conclusion of cultural or trade agreements.⁴⁹⁰ When the GDR’s foreign policies towards the Global South shifted to development aid and influencing the decolonizing world towards implementing socialist systems, the aim became to train foreign students as leadership cadres to contribute to social and political change after returning to their own countries.⁴⁹¹ Since the education of foreign

⁴⁸⁶ BArch DR1/12950. *Arbeitsbericht 1971-1975*.

⁴⁸⁷ Lamm, Kupper. 1976. p.78

⁴⁸⁸ Elsner, Eva-Maria. Elsner, Lothar. 1994. *Zwischen Nationalismus und Internationalismus. Über Ausländer und Ausländerpolitik in der DDR 1949-1990*. Rostock: Norddeutscher Hochschulschriften Verlag, p.10

⁴⁸⁹ Mac Con Uladh, Damian. 2005. “Studium bei Freunden? Ausländische Studierende in der DDR bis 1970”. 175-220. Müller, Christian Th. Poutrus, Patrice G. 2005. *Ankunft – Alltag – Ausreise. Migration und interkulturelle Begegnung in der DDR-Gesellschaft*. Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, p.176

⁴⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.178

⁴⁹¹ Wiedmann, Roland. "Strukturen des Ausländerstudiums in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik". In: Illy, Hans F. Schmidt-Streckenbach, Wolfgang. 1987. *Studenten aus der Dritten Welt in beiden deutschen Staaten*. 67-100. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, p.70

students in East Germany was intended to influence elites in the Global South and push development towards socialism, the GDR was adamant about them returning to their home countries after completing their courses. The GDR also emphasised that in contrast to Western scholarship programmes, their system did not contribute to the intellectual drain of developing countries.⁴⁹²

A study stay in the GDR as a foreign student or trainee always followed the same steps. When coming to the GDR, foreign students first completed a language course at the Herder Institute in Leipzig, which usually lasted around a year.⁴⁹³ Only then did the students begin their actual studies at East German universities.⁴⁹⁴

When the East German ITI centre began inviting foreign theatre artists to visit East German theatres at the end of the 1960s, this system was already well established, and the ITI was able to make use of these structures. The GDR centre had granted its first scholarship to the Venezuelan ITI centre as part of the 1967 friendship agreement. This study visit was originally planned for 1968, but was postponed to 1969. The ITI centre offered scholarships not only other national centres of ITI as part of an exchange agreement, but also to other foreign partners and to artists recommended to them by other East German theatre experts. Amal Allana, the daughter of Ebrahim Alkazi, the director of the National School of Drama in New Delhi, was the first foreign guest student the GDR ITI placed in East German theatres.⁴⁹⁵ She stayed at the Dresden State Theatre and then at the Weimar National Theatre, where she met and worked with Fritz Bennewitz. During her scholarship in the GDR, Allana accompanied Bennewitz to New Delhi and worked on his guest production at the NSD as a costume and stage designer.⁴⁹⁶ This very significant support she provided to Bennewitz already proved that the scholarship programme was successful in strengthening the GDR ITI's relations with theatre artists in the Global South.

The second scholarship holder invited to the GDR by the East German ITI centre was Nelly Garzon of the Venezuelan centre. As Orsini's assistant in the ITI centre, she was already familiar to the members of the GDR ITI from various ITI events. Her stay in the GDR is especially well documented. The programme designed for Garzon was

⁴⁹² Mac Con Uladh. 2005. p.206

⁴⁹³ Wiedmann. 1987. p.77

⁴⁹⁴ Mac Con Uladh. 2005. p.177

⁴⁹⁵ BArch DR1/12950. 1970/01/25. *Arbeitsplan 1969. Bericht über die Realisierung der Vorhaben*, p.3

⁴⁹⁶ See also Chapter 5.

based on a curriculum vitae that outlined not only her professional background, but also her personal interests, and the larger cultural policy context of her stay: Garzon had studied at the 1963 Drama School of the Universidad Central de Venezuela. Since the drama school had only been founded in 1963, there had been a lot of experimentation in the early days and the drama students had needed to constantly adapt to new methods. While the theoretical lessons had been good, the practical training had therefore been lacking. The stay in the GDR consequently provided an opportunity for Garzon to supplement the deficits of her training. During her time at the drama school, Garzon had begun working with Humberto Orsini at his experimental ensemble Teatro Estudio 67 as an actress and assistant director, after which she became his assistant at the Venezuelan ITI centre as well. The curriculum vitae also emphasised that the plays at Teatro Estudio 67 successfully appealed to a working-class audience and thus provided a contrast to the situation of Venezuelan theatre in general:

Einen so regelmäßigen Spielplan wie bei uns kennt man dort nicht, weil immer nur eine bestimmte Bevölkerungsschicht die Theater besucht, sie können ihre Theater nicht regelmäßig füllen. Die Arbeiter gehen nicht hin. Eine sehr wichtige Aufgabe ist es im Moment, alle Bevölkerungsschichten für das Theater zu gewinnen, was aber ohne finanzielle Unterstützung durch den Staat nicht einfach ist.⁴⁹⁷

With this detail, the ITI centre attached a political purpose to Garzon's stay in the GDR: the support for the struggling workers' theatre in Venezuela.

The ITI centre drafted a three-phase programme for Garzon's stay in the GDR and contacted the theatres concerned to work out Garzon's employment.⁴⁹⁸ In addition to her internships and courses, the centre also intended to introduce Garzon to as many aspects and key figures of East German theatre as possible. Like all other foreign students, Nelly Garzon's time in the GDR began with a three-month language course at the Herder Institute in Radebeul in the autumn of 1969, before she was to begin interning at various Berlin theatres. While she was still completing her language course, the ITI centre advised her to make contact with the theatre in nearby Dresden as soon as her German language skills permitted. In advance, Ebermann informed Hans Dieter Mäde, the general director of Dresden State Theatre, who had already looked after Allana, about the new guest and asked him to support her:

⁴⁹⁷ BArch DR107/24. *Lebenslauf und Plan für DDR-Aufenthalt*, p.1

⁴⁹⁸ BArch DR107/24. 1969/12/04. Letter to Hólan.

Die erste Hilfe wäre natürlich die Gewährung von Freikarten, später aber sollte man sie auch zu einigen kurzen Gesprächen einladen, in denen man sie über die kulturpolitische Konzeption der Dresdner Theaterarbeit informieren könnte. Zu einer regelrechten Hospitation wird vermutlich keine Zeit bleiben, da Frau Garzon [sic] tagsüber alle Kräfte auf den Intensivkursus konzentrieren muss. Vielleicht kann man jemanden aus der Dramaturgie für die gelegentliche Betreuung von Frau Garzon [sic] in ähnlicher Weise verantwortlich machen, wie es wohl auch im Falle von Fräulein Alkazi geschehen ist.⁴⁹⁹

Afterwards completing her German language course, Garzon worked at the Volksbühne in Berlin from December 1969 to March 1970. There she attended all talks and rehearsals of Benno Besson's production of *The Good Person of Szechuan*. Generally, the ITI centre tried to find personal supervisors for Garzon at every theatre where she was a guest or where she was introduced. To that end, Ebermann asked Karl Hólan, the artistic director of the Volksbühne to select a suitable supervisor.⁵⁰⁰ Theatre director Karl Gassauer was instructed to introduce Garzon to the directing team and all relevant staff of the Volksbühne, to provide her with the necessary material on the production and to refer her to specialist literature.⁵⁰¹

The ITI centre was also adamant to introduce Garzon and Orsini to the staff of the BE. Ebermann first approached BE dramaturge and ITI member Joachim Tenschert. Tenschert, who had previously met Orsini in Havana, assured him that Orsini would find "the friendly and comradely reception deserved for his work and his attitude" at the BE. Tenschert suggested that the matter be addressed to Helene Weigel directly, and that Orsini should also meet dramaturge and Brecht editor Werner Hecht as well as the party committee of the Berlin Ensemble.⁵⁰² Ebermann thus turned to Weigel,⁵⁰³ who agreed to meet Garzon and Orsini, but also expressed the opinion that further involvement in the work of the Berlin ensembles would hardly be possible.⁵⁰⁴

During her stay in Berlin, Garzon was also to attend a special lecture series at the Humboldt University by Ernst Schumacher, theatre scholar, critic and member of the East German section of the International Association of Theatre Critics. The lectures were aimed at "students and trainees from developing countries" and dealt "with the problem of how Brechtian theatre methods can be applied in developing countries -

⁴⁹⁹ BArch DR107/24. 1969/09/18. Letter to Mäde.

⁵⁰⁰ BArch DR107/24. 1969/12/04. Letter to Hólan.

⁵⁰¹ BArch DR107/24. 1969/12/12. *Studienprogramm für Nelly Garzon*, p.1

⁵⁰² BArch DR107/24. 1969/09/26. Letter from Tenschert.

⁵⁰³ BArch DR107/24. 1969/12/04. Letter to Weigel.

⁵⁰⁴ BArch DR107/24. 1969/12/09. Letter from Helene Weigel to Ebermann.

under different conditions in each case.” In addition, she was supposed to further improve her German with a second language course.⁵⁰⁵

For the second phase, from April to July 1970, Garzon was delegated to one of the larger municipal theatres outside of Berlin. The theatres of Leipzig, Halle or Weimar were considered suitable candidates, depending on the productions planned. The intention of this internship was to provide an insight into theatre life in the GDR beyond the theatre capital Berlin. This was to show Garzon that, in accordance with the claim of GDR cultural policy, the municipal theatres reflected the specific social reality in their respective district and maintained relations with the working-class audience.

In the third phase, from September 1970 until July 1971, was tailored to Garzon’s personal needs and wishes. The GDR centre had learned from Nelly Garzon’s curriculum vitae that her acting training in Caracas had been incomplete, especially in regards to practise. Thus, Garzon was to return to Berlin, attend the entire course of the first year students at the State Acting School and take part in the demonstrations. In terms of cultural policy objectives, this part of her visit was explained thus: “Sicher wird dieser Teil ihres Studiums deshalb wichtig sein, um ihre Fähigkeiten auch auf pädagogischem Gebiet zu trainieren.“ When they designed the programme, the staff of the ITI centre had not yet decided at which theatre in East Berlin she was to intern during this third phase. The plan was to keep this decision open and make it dependent on her own wishes as well:

Es müssten auch ihre eigenen Erfahrungen und Wünsche nach den ersten beiden Perioden Berücksichtigung finden, die möglicherweise darauf hinauslaufen, keine weitere Inszenierung komplex zu verfolgen, sondern ein bestimmtes Teilgebiet der Theaterarbeit genauer zu studieren.

The ITI centre did insist, however, that during this third period, Garzon’s contact with the BE needed to become “more systemic”. It also recommended that she should attend further theatre studies courses at the Humboldt University if her command of the German language was sufficient.⁵⁰⁶

The GDR ITI remained very flexible and also willing to substantially extend the scholarship beyond what was stipulated by the friendship agreement with the Venezuelan centre. According to the exchange agreement the East German centre was obligated to host one scholarship holder for one and a half years, however, shortly after

⁵⁰⁵ BArch DR107/24. Ebermann. 1969/12/12. *Studienprogramm für Nelly Garcon*, p.1

⁵⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p.2

Nelly Garzon's arrival, the ITI centre decided to grant a second scholarship to Orsino. In September 1971, Nelly Garzon's husband Omar Gonzalo, also an actor and assistant director, went on a lengthy trip to Europe, before he would eventually begin to study in Paris in September 1971. He visited Garzon in East Berlin to watch several performances during the Berliner Festtage, after which he asked to stay in the GDR for a few months to gain further insights into East German theatre by attending rehearsals or acting courses. After consultation with Orsino, the ITI centre approached the MfK to apply for an extension of stay for Gonzalo. Ebermann argued that Gonzalo's visit was associated with few additional costs: he did not expect a scholarship or financial support and could live in the apartment assigned to Garzon. The only additional expense required for Gonzalo's stay was the cost of a German language course.⁵⁰⁷ When, according to the original plan, Nelly Garzon's stay was to end in July 1971 at the end of the academic year at the State Acting School, she requested an extension of her stay for another year. After consultation with Orsini, the ITI centre decided instead to extend her stay for half a year, until the end of December 1971.⁵⁰⁸

The ITI centre was likely willing to expand the scope of their scholarship agreement with the Venezuelan centre to such a significant degree because it considered relations with the Venezuelan ITI to be particularly important. The Venezuelan example also showed how the GDR centre itself benefitted from this investment. The friendship agreement and the scholarships granted to Orsini and Garzon helped to strengthen the long-term relations with the Venezuelan centre. Both stayed in regular contact with the GDR centre, returned to East Germany as guests of various ITI events and also invited East German theatre artists to the events of their own centre. As one of the more active national centres in Latin America and the Global South in general, the Venezuelan ITI played a major role in ITI's efforts in the 1970s to promote 'Third World' theatre. It hosted two major ITI theatre festivals, the 3rd Theatre Festival and Conference of Third World Theatre in 1976 and the Theatre of Nations Festival in 1978.⁵⁰⁹ Because of his political leaning, Orsini was also a reliable ally of the East German centre in the ITI's Committee of Third World Theatre, of which he eventually became president.

⁵⁰⁷ BArch DR107/24. 1970/10/22. Letter to Greiser.

⁵⁰⁸ BArch DR107/24. 1971/07/15. Letter to Greiser.

⁵⁰⁹ Kollektiv des Zentrums DDR des ITI. 1984. *25 Jahre Mitgliedschaft des Zentrums DDR des Internationalen Theaterinstituts*. p.53, 55

Another well documented example of an ITI scholarship was that of Bode Osayin. Osayin had been trained at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts at the University of Ibadan, where he participated in theatre productions and wrote his own plays. He was granted a scholarship and stayed in the GDR for a study visit in 1974/5. The course of Osayin's stay bears strong similarities to the programme designed for Garzon: After completing his language course, Osayin worked at four different East German theatres between December 1974 and 1975. First, he interned at the BE from December 1974 to March 1975 in a production of Brecht's *Mr Puntilla and his Man Matti* directed by Peter Kupke. He was "fully involved in the rehearsal process and put down his impressions in a written report at the end of the rehearsals." From March to June 1975, he stayed at the Hans Otto Theatre in Potsdam, where he was involved in Ute Birnbaum's production of George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* and learned about the specific tasks of a 'republic theatre' outside of Berlin. In July and August, Osayin was delegated to the State Theatre Sachsen, where he worked at the Felsenbühne Rathen, an open-air theatre. There he was not part of a rehearsal process, but instead experienced "the daily work of a theatre operating under such special conditions" and "was also called upon to provide practical assistance." As he had expressed the desire to gain insight into "the work of a music theatre", he spent the last phase of his stay at the German State Opera in Berlin. At the State Opera, he first attended the final rehearsals of the production of *The Devils of Loudon* by Krzysztof Penderecki, and then, since he was especially interested in ballet, the rehearsals of the ballet *Coppelia* by Leo Delibes. At the end of his stay, Osayin was offered to go on a two-week tour of the GDR to gain further impressions of East German theatre. During it, he visited Leipzig, Dresden, Weimar, Meiningen, Karl-Marx-Stadt and Rostock. He then travelled back to Nigeria at the end of 1975 to resume his work at the university in Ibadan. The GDR centre evaluated his stay positively:

Aus den Gesprächen mit ihm konnten wir entnehmen, daß er in dem einen Jahr sehr viel gelernt hat. Er war äußerst dankbar für die ihm gebotenen Möglichkeiten und wir haben die Hoffnung, daß sich seine Erkenntnisse auch auf seine zukünftige Tätigkeit positiv auswirken werden.⁵¹⁰

Osayin returned to the GDR in 1976 to participate in the colloquium on *Theatre and Social Reality* organised by the ITI centre.

⁵¹⁰ BArch DR1/22792. 1976/01/10. *Aktennotiz über den Aufenthalt von Herrn Bode Osanyin aus Nigeria in der DDR.*

Comparing and contrasting Osayin's stay in the GDR with that of Garzon highlights some similarities that can perhaps be considered the basic structure of these study visits. With a standard length of stay of one and a half years, the insight that scholarship holders gained into East German theatre was quite extensive. Both spent the first phase of their stay at a major East Berlin theatre, the Volksbühne and the BE, in a production of a Brecht play. In the second phase, they then went to a theatre outside Berlin. In both cases, the GDR centre mentioned here the special tasks of a republic theatre, which were to be the focus of this period. Afterwards, both guests returned to Berlin for a final phase that was designed to address their personal interests: Garzon attended the acting school, Osayin rehearsals of music and dance theatre.

There is no comprehensive list of all scholarships granted by the ITI centre of the GDR. While the scope of the programme can only roughly be estimated, it seems likely that the capacities of the scholarship programme were quite limited. In January 1972, Joel Adedeji inquired about a possible scholarship for his student Shadrack Agbagbara in the course of the Berliner Ensemble that year⁵¹¹ Kohls replied to him that Agbagbara could only be accommodated from the second half of 1973 onwards: "Within such a short time we are not able to lodge students from the Third-World-Countries, the capacity being exhausted."⁵¹² A report on the activities of the GDR centre stated that the East German ITI had hosted scholarship holders from India, Lebanon, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Venezuela between 1971 and 1975. The ITI centre's work plan for the second half of 1975 mentioned the arrival of two scholarship holders, one from Nigeria and one from Venezuela.⁵¹³

When the West German ITI centre became more active in the 1970s and launched an internship programme for theatre artists from developing countries in collaboration with the Goethe Institute in late 1971,⁵¹⁴ the members of the East German centre considered it a deliberate competition and imitation of their own efforts. Kohls remarked:

Ihr Anliegen war es, unsere seit Jahren in der Praxis bewährte Methode, Theaterleute aus den Entwicklungsländern auf Grund von bilateralen Abkommen zu längeren Studienaufenthalten in die DDR einzuladen, nachzuahmen.

⁵¹¹ BArch DR107/50. 1972/01/14. Letter from Adedeji.

⁵¹² BArch DR107/50. 1972/01/31. Letter to Adedeji.

⁵¹³ BArch DR1/22792. 1975/07/01. *Arbeitsplan 1975 (2. Halbjahr)*.

⁵¹⁴ ITI. Protokolle 2. 1971/01/20. *Protokoll des Gesprächs zwischen ITI und Auswärtigen Amt am Freitag, 15. Oktober 1971*.

Offensichtlich hat die Regierung der BRD jetzt entsprechende Mittel auch für das Gebiet des Theaters zur Verfügung gestellt.⁵¹⁵

Despite both being geared towards theatre artists from the Global South, the two scholarship programmes differed significantly. The East German scholarships had a very limited capacity and a programme carefully designed to convey specific impressions of East German theatre in accordance with cultural policy. The advanced training programme of the West German ITI centre invited young theatre artists to study at two or more German theatres for three to five months, a considerably shorter period. Since the guests were expected to participate in the work at the respective theatres, basic knowledge of German was also required. Instead of offering special language courses, the FRG centre referred potential candidates to study German at the Goethe Institutes. From 1971 to 1977, about 30 theatre people, among them actors, directors, dancers, stage designers and technicians, were part of the scholarship programme, which suggests a much larger scope than the East German one.⁵¹⁶ In 1972, for example, seven theatre people from Argentina, India, Israel, the Philippines and Turkey interned at West German theatres as part of the ITI programme.⁵¹⁷ For the scholarship holders, the competition provided a potential opportunity to take advantage of both programmes. Osayin notably came to the GDR after having participated in the training programme organised by the FRG centre.⁵¹⁸ This was beneficial to the GDR centre because it allowed them to avoid the expensive airfare by inviting theatre artists from the Global South whose travel expenses to Germany had already been covered by the West German centre. A remark from Joachim Werner Preuß of the FRG centre in a letter to the Goethe Institute suggests that this was not a one-off occurrence: “[S]iehe auch der nachweisbare Erfolg der DDR, unsere Hospitanten (mit unseren Reisekosten!) für längere Aufenthaltszeiten in die DDR zu holen).“⁵¹⁹

Despite such attempts to circumvent financial limitations caused by high travel costs, the deteriorating financial situation in the GDR also affected the granting of scholarships. This meant that by the end of the 1970s, the GDR ITI was no longer able

⁵¹⁵ BArch DR1/22797. 1975/06/07. *Bericht über den XVI. Weltkongreß des Internationalen Theaterinstituts in Berlin (West) vom 1.-6.6 1975*, p.18

⁵¹⁶ ITI. DW. 1977/01/25. *Rundschreiben von Joachim Werner Preuß an die ITI-Zentren*.

⁵¹⁷ ITI. Protokolle 2. 1973/01/08. *Geschäftsbericht 1972*, p.5

⁵¹⁸ Joachim Werner Preuß mentions Osayin's stay in West Germany in a letter to the Goethe Institute headquarters in Munich. In: ITI. Goethe Institut Korresp. 1974/07/25. Letter to Schalich-Wagner.

⁵¹⁹ ITI. Dritte Welt 1971-1973. 1976/01/15. Preuss to Nagel, Vetter and Hüdepohl.

to offer scholarships as before, not even to candidates that had been directly proposed by a member of the centre itself. In 1978, Joachim Fiebach had suggested to Yemi Ogunbiyi, who taught German theatre at the University of Ife, that his teaching of the subject would benefit immensely from a visit to the GDR.⁵²⁰ The GDR embassy in Nigeria contacted the GDR centre to inform them that Ogunbiyi was incapable of bearing the travel expenses himself.⁵²¹ The ITI centre asked the MfK to fund Ogunbiyi's visit,⁵²² but the request was denied.⁵²³ Similarly, the ITI centre of the GDR invited two PETA members to the GDR in 1979, provided that the travel expenses were paid by the theatre artists themselves.⁵²⁴ When Fritz Bennewitz invited PETA actor Joel Lamangan for a 6-month study visit to the GDR in 1981, he also had to clarify: "Unfortunately we will not be able to provide him with necessary travel funds from Manila to Germany and back."⁵²⁵

Since it was almost impossible to finance stays or shorter visits, the ITI centre increasingly depended on guests being willing to pay for their stays themselves:

Bei der schwierigen Valutasituation der DDR, den schwierigen Bedingungen zur Unterbringung der Gäste in den Städten, wo unsere wichtigen Theater sich befinden, ist die Hospitation auf eigene Kosten eine der wenigen Möglichkeiten, Aktivitäten durch das ITI überhaupt nachzuweisen.⁵²⁶

Scholarships for theatre artists from the Global South could no longer be granted under these circumstances. The reports on the centre's activities in the latter half of the 1970s only mention Western visitors with scholarships from their own countries.⁵²⁷ When the ITI centre of the GDR published an overview of its activities in 1983, the scholarships were no longer mentioned.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁰ BArch DR1/10199. 1979/02/28. Letter from Yemi Ogunbiyi to the GDR embassy in Nigeria.

⁵²¹ BArch DR1/10199. 1979/03/20. Letter from Wittig.

⁵²² BArch DR1/10199. 1979/03/29. Letter to Hälker.

⁵²³ BArch DR1/10199. 1979/04/10. Telegramm from MfK to embassy in Lagos.

⁵²⁴ BArch DR1/10199. 1979/01/31. Letter to Remedios I. Rikken.

⁵²⁵ BArch DR1/10199. 1981/06/06. Letter from Bennewitz.

⁵²⁶ BArch DR107/30. 1979/05/24. Letter to Greiser.

⁵²⁷ BArch DR1/12950. *Rechenschaftsbericht 1978-1980*, p.18

⁵²⁸ Kollektiv des Zentrums DDR des ITI. 1984. *25 Jahre Mitgliedschaft des Zentrums DDR des Internationalen Theaterinstituts*, p.53, 55

5 East German Theatre Directors for the Third World

The activities of ‘socialist experts’ were another cornerstone of the GDR’s foreign policy towards the Global South. Experts were sent by the GDR to developing countries as part of cultural agreements, foreign trade, and development aid. For the most part, they were scientists, teachers and medical staff, or engineers, technicians and trainers who helped with the installation, operation and maintenance of equipment supplied by the GDR and facilities built by the GDR. The assignment of the experts had both direct and indirect effects. The direct effect was the specialist support and the content imparted by the experts. Furthermore, the experts in developing countries could convey ideological and political ideas through their teaching. Depending on whether the expertise was technical, political, or artistic, this was more or less opportune. Indirectly, the presence of the East German experts helped to generate sympathy for the GDR in the respective professional circles, which took part in the GDR’s projects and benefited from East German expertise.¹³⁰⁰

Among the East German theatre directors who were sent abroad by the GDR centre of the ITI, Fritz Bennewitz stands out for several reasons. He got involved with the ITI early in 1961, and remained a key figure throughout the centre’s history. From 1969 Bennewitz was a member of the directorate of the GDR centre, and became its vice president in 1984 until the centre’s eventual dissolution in 1990. He was the first theatre director the GDR ITI chose to send abroad to direct guest productions in the Global South. Since he worked on about 50 theatre productions abroad,¹³⁰¹ his efforts also became regarded as exemplary, and shaped the GDR centre’s endeavours regarding ‘Third World’ theatre to a significant degree.

Although the influence of his work received little attention for a long time, Bennewitz is no longer an unstudied figure. In the literature on GDR theatre, Bennewitz is most often mentioned in the context of the East German reception of Shakespeare or the German classics. Bennewitz’s production of *Faust* in 1965 and 1967, arguably his most influential work in the GDR, received the most attention. David G. John looked at *Faust* in his book *Bennewitz, Goethe, Faust* in which he analyses and compares all

¹³⁰⁰ Lamm. Kupper. 1976. p.74.

¹³⁰¹ An overview over all plays staged by Bennewitz can be found Appendix 3 of John, David Gethin. 2012. *Bennewitz, Goethe, Faust: German and intercultural stagings*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, p.277-284

of Bennewitz's Faust stagings in both the GDR and abroad. Guido Böhm examined the production in the context of East German discourse about the classics both in his article *Das 'Drama der Geschichte' als sozialistisches Theaterereignis? Fritz Bennewitz inszeniert Goethes Faust I und II am Nationaltheater Weimar 1965 und 1967* and in his book *Vorwärts zu Goethe? Faust-Aufführungen im DDR-Theater*. A collaborative research project by Jörg Esleben, David G. John and Bennewitz's friend and ITI colleague Rolf Rohmer has in the last decade attempted to shine a light on Bennewitz's international work, which, up until that point, had been largely unstudied. In addition to various articles, this project resulted in two major publications: Apart from John's analysis of the domestic and international *Faust* productions, *Fritz Bennewitz in India. Intercultural Theatre with Brecht and Shakespeare* by Joerg Esleben offers an extensive collection of translated texts from Bennewitz's private estate, essays, and interviews with his Indian working partners. Thanks to these efforts, Bennewitz's work as a theatre director outside of East Germany is well documented through exhaustive translations of Bennewitz's private letters.

Since these publications focus on Bennewitz's personal letters detailing his artistic process during his productions, the role that the ITI played in Bennewitz's career is only mentioned in passing. This chapter therefore serves as a supplement by looking not primarily at Bennewitz's artistic achievements as an international theatre director but at the circumstances that made it possible. It looks at Bennewitz's work specifically as an export of GDR cultural policy, which was promoted because it was considered useful to the GDR's foreign representation. This requires examining both how Bennewitz was promoted and built up into an expert figure by the ITI centre, and how his work abroad related to the theatrical discourses on both Brecht and the classics in the GDR.

5.1 From Student to Expert. The Beginnings of Bennewitz's Involvement with the ITI

While Bennewitz became known mainly for his guest performances in South and Southeast Asia and as the GDR ITI's expert on Third World theatre, his involvement with the centre began much earlier and did not yet hint at the role he would play in later years.

Apart from Congress delegations, Bennewitz was the first theatre artist to be sent abroad by the East German ITI centre to benefit from ITI's international exchange

of theatre knowledge. This first trip was undertaken in spring 1961, two years after the GDR had joined the ITI, and only a few months before the Berlin Wall would substantially obstruct foreign travel. It was financed via a scholarship programme established by the ITI's ExCom to facilitate theatre artists to study theatre life abroad. The GDR centre informed the Ministry of Culture (MfK) about this offer and was originally considering sending a scholarship holder to the United States. The MfK in turn asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MfAA) for its assessment.¹³⁰² The MfAA approved of the scholarship but not of the USA as the destination, and suggested England as an alternative:

Selbstverständlich soll man dieses Stipendium in Anspruch nehmen und wir glauben, dass es zweckmäßig wäre, einen geeigneten Theaterfachmann nach England zu entsenden, etwa mit dem Auftrag, die gegenwärtige Bedeutung und den Stand des Shakespeare-Theaters zu studieren. Gerade in Verbindung mit den in der DDR vorbereiteten und noch in Vorbereitung befindlichen Neuübersetzungen Shakespeares und der grossen Pflege, die das dramatische Schaffen Shakespeares bei uns findet, dürfte solch ein Auftrag von echtem Interesse für das Theaterleben sein.¹³⁰³

These specifications made Bennewitz an ideal candidate: Bennewitz had already staged Shakespeare several times at the beginning of his career at the Meiningen Theatre, *Twelfth Night* in 1958 and *Hamlet* in 1959. After his first directing position in Meiningen, Bennewitz had just begun working as a director at the National Theatre in Weimar in 1960.¹³⁰⁴ The National Theatre in Weimar, where Bennewitz worked and lived for the longest time during his career in the GDR, was in the centre of East German discourse about not only the Weimar Classicism, but Shakespeare as well, which were both discussed in the context of *Kulturelles Erbe*, cultural heritage.

Shakespeare had played an important role in German theatre life since the 18th century, partially because of the influence he had had on the intellectuals and artists of the Enlightenment. On the occasion of his 300th birthday in 1864, the German Shakespeare Society had been founded in Weimar, making it the oldest literary society in Germany. Because of how he had impacted a formative period of German cultural history, Shakespeare was also a contested figure in divided Germany. In 1963, shortly before the 400th anniversary, the German Shakespeare Society split. Since Weimar had

¹³⁰² BArch DR1/20438. 1960/08/04. Letter to Engel.

¹³⁰³ BArch DR1/20438. 1960/09/01. Letter to Kohls.

¹³⁰⁴ For a biography of Bennewitz, see: John. 2022. p.17-43

been the historical seat of the Shakespeare Society and was now in the Eastern part of Germany, a second West German version was established in Bochum.¹³⁰⁵

In Weimar, Bennewitz became an active participant and eventual long-term board member in the East German Shakespeare Society. At the annual Shakespeare Days held by the Society, Bennewitz regularly staged various plays by Shakespeare in cooperation with literary scholar Anselm Schlösser. For example, in 1964, during the festival week commemorating Shakespeare's 400th birthday, Bennewitz's production of *Twelfth Night* was performed on the last day of the celebrations.¹³⁰⁶ From 1969 to 1973, there were Bennewitz productions at the Shakespeare Days every year.¹³⁰⁷ This also often made his productions the topic or starting point of discussion during the meetings of the Shakespeare Society. Because he was a young theatre director at the beginning of his career with interest in and experience with Shakespeare, the East German ITI centre selected Bennewitz for their scholarship. In this regard, Bennewitz's involvement in the ITI differed from those of the directorate members. He was chosen to work with the ITI not because he was already an established theatre artist in the GDR, nor because he represented one of the world-famous theatres of East Berlin. In 1964, although he had worked as a theatre director for nine years, Bennewitz was still considered a young and upcoming artist.¹³⁰⁸ He was sent abroad as a student first and was only recruited to work with the ITI centre much later.

The East German ITI centre chose England as his destination, and made "all the necessary travel and residence arrangements for him with the General Secretariat of the ITI in Paris and the British centre in London."¹³⁰⁹ Bennewitz went to England in May and June 1961. In his report to the MfK, he recounted that the East German and British centres had intended Shakespeare to be the sole focus of Bennewitz's visit and had

¹³⁰⁵ Frenk, Joachim. 2020. "Commemorating Shakespeare(s) across the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States and France from the eighteenth- to the twenty-first centuries" In: *European Journal of English Studies*. 24(2). 162–176, p. 167-8

¹³⁰⁶ Deutsche Shakespeare Gesellschaft. 1964. *Einladung zur Jubiläums-Festwoche*.

¹³⁰⁷ *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1969, *Elisabeth von England* by Ferdinand Bruckner in 1970, *Richard II.* in 1971, Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* in 1972, and *Hamlet* in 1973. (Deutsche Shakespeare Gesellschaft. 1969-1973. Information. *Shakespeare-Tage Weimar*. Weimar: VEB Buchdruckerei)

¹³⁰⁸ See, for example, the report on Bennewitz in *Theater der Zeit*: Rabe, Helmut. 1964. "Ausgangspunkt und Ziel. Der Regisseur Fritz Bennewitz und seine Shakespeare-Interpretationen" In: *Theater der Zeit*, 1964(8). 13-14.

¹³⁰⁹ BArch DR1/18371. *Bericht über die Arbeit des Sekretariats des Zentrums DDR des ITI vom 1. Januar bis 30. Juni 1961*, p.2

originally planned for him to visit only Shakespeare performances and rehearsals at the Old Vic and the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford-upon Avon. When it proved impossible to have Bennewitz attend rehearsals as planned, the representatives of the British ITI centre instead expanded the programme “to include as broad an overview as possible of London theatre life and a visit to a provincial theatre.”¹³¹⁰ The focus on Shakespeare nevertheless remained: of the 23 performances Bennewitz attended, 9 were of Shakespeare plays.¹³¹¹

In addition to his travel cadre report for the MfK, Bennewitz shared his impressions of English theatre through various outlets: He spoke about his experiences in England in a lecture jointly organised by the Shakespeare Society and the Cultural Association of the GDR.¹³¹² In 1962, he wrote an article about his trip for *Theater der Zeit*. In it, he recounted the performances he had seen and shared his newly gained knowledge about the organisational structure of the English theatres, their economic situation and current debates such as the question of the planned but not yet built National Theatre in London.¹³¹³ The article also indicates how impressions of Shakespeare theatre in England that Bennewitz gained during his trip impacted his work as a theatre director. Bennewitz was deeply impressed by Franco Zeffirelli’s *Romeo and Juliet* (1960) at the Old Vic.¹³¹⁴ His own version of the play in 1963 owed much to the Zeffirelli production, with several scenes clearly inspired by it. Outside observers, especially West German theatre critics, noted during the Shakespeare Days in Weimar that the impact of Bennewitz’s Shakespeare performances was “partly due to Western influences.”¹³¹⁵

Bennewitz’s next trip abroad was to be in the same vein as his first. On the occasion of the Shakespeare quadricentennial, Bennewitz was again invited by the British ITI centre to attend the Summer School in London. However, the GDR’s political agenda made his participation impossible. The MfK wanted to use the

¹³¹⁰ BArch DR1/20438. Copy of “*Bericht über meinen Aufenthalt in Grossbritannien vom 15. Mai- 11.Juno 1961*“. p.1

¹³¹¹ BArch DR1/20438. List of performances attended.

¹³¹² Deutsche Shakespeare Gesellschaft. 1961. *Rundschreiben August 1961*.

¹³¹³ BArch DR1/20438. Copy of “*Bericht über meinen Aufenthalt in Grossbritannien vom 15. Mai- 11.Juno 1961*“, p.2

¹³¹⁴ Bennewitz, Fritz. 1962. “England auf dem Weg zum Nationaltheater“ In: *Theater der Zeit*. 1962(9). 65-74, p.72-3

¹³¹⁵ Habicht, Werner. 2006. “Shakespeare and the Berlin Wall” In: *Shakespeare in the World of Communism and Socialism*, edited by Irena R. Makaryk and Joseph G. Price. 157-176. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

opportunity to protest against the tightened regulations of the Allied Travel Office after the construction of the Berlin Wall. Bound by this requirement, Bennewitz had to repeatedly point out the visa regulations to the British centre, thus delaying the granting of the visa for too long despite repeated requests from the British ITI to apply for the visa via the Travel Board.¹³¹⁶ While in other cases the GDR after some protest begrudgingly accepted the use of the ATO, Bennewitz's visit to Britain was no reason for such an exception. It is possible that the trip was found no longer that important after the split of the German Shakespeare Society, after which the GDR tried to break away from West European Shakespeare reception programmatically. The quadricentennial celebrations of the Shakespeare Society in Weimar had been a clear attempt to do so.¹³¹⁷

Bennewitz was part of the delegation to the World Congress in Tel Aviv in 1965, and represented the GDR in the debate on the Congress topic "Contemporary production of classical works." In his contribution, he tried to convey the principles of the current East German reception of the classics that also had informed his *Faust* production:

Ich habe in meinem Diskussionsbeitrag zu beschreiben versucht, daß unser Bedürfnis nach der Klassik Ausdruck eines gesteigerten, durch historische Erfahrungen gereiften Geschichtsbewußtseins ist - oder, um es dem Gegenstand angemessener, emotionaler zu sagen: unseren historischen Selbstbewußtseins.¹³¹⁸

Wichtiger und entscheidender ist schon die Geschichte eines Volkes selbst, die Existenz einer Nationalliteratur, in der meistens internationale Literaturen befruchtend aufgehoben sind. Im Verhältnis zur Geschichte selbst schien sich zu zeigen, wie jung eine Nation sein kann.¹³¹⁹

His position was in stark contrast to those of the American directors Alan Schneider and Richard Schechner, which Bennewitz described as "devoid of history" but also as "equally sensible, practical and pragmatic".¹³²⁰ Later in the same year, Bennewitz's *Faust I* premiered on October 7th, *Tag der Republik*, the national holiday commemorating the founding of the GDR. With this production, which was quite

¹³¹⁶ This correspondence between Bennewitz, the MfK and the British ITI centre can be found in: BArch DR1/20493.

¹³¹⁷ Meyer, Silke. 2006. *Checkpoint Shakespeare. Shakespeare-Rezeption in Deutschland als deutsche Nationsgeschichte 1945-1990*. Düsseldorf: Grupello, p.286ff

¹³¹⁸ Bennewitz, Fritz. 1965. *Klassiker ohne Distanz. Gedanken und Bericht vom XI. Weltkongress des ITI*. In: Theater der Zeit. 1965(24), p.9

¹³¹⁹ *ibid.* p.11

¹³²⁰ *ibid.* p.11

explicitly linked to the GDR's cultural policy,¹³²¹ Bennewitz had cemented himself as a notable director of the classics in East Germany.

In early 1967, Bennewitz was invited to Britain again, this time for the international congress on "Theatre and Adult Education" in Nottingham, organised by the British centre with the help of UNESCO. The reason for the assignment was, according to his travel directives:

Gen. Fritz Bennewitz zählt zu den profiliertesten Regisseuren unserer Republik und hat sich besonders durch seine Shakespeare-Interpretation sowie durch die Inszenierungen von Brechts ‚Tage der Commune‘ internationale Anerkennung erworben.¹³²²

Up until that point, Bennewitz had not been very involved in the administrative issues and internal politics of the ITI. Unlike the staff of the ITI centre, he attended ITI events primarily to engage in artistic exchange with fellow theatre directors and to learn from international experiences. But as he became more involved with the ITI, he also took over duties as a representative of the GDR centre itself. For example, his directives for Nottingham also emphasised the participation of famous theatre figures such as Roger Planchon, Jean Vilar, Vittorio Gassman, Arnold Wesker and Martin Esslin. Bennewitz was instructed to "establish contact with Vilar, Planchon and Wesker with the aim of inviting them to visit the GDR and to win them over for a guest production in the GDR".¹³²³ He was also to "negotiate further cooperation between the British ITI and the ITI of the GDR" and "further consolidate the already existing contacts with English theatre scholars, especially in the field of Shakespearean studies."¹³²⁴

Since his early involvement with the ITI centre had mainly involved Shakespeare and the classics, and had focussed on English theatre, Bennewitz was not yet involved with the ITI centre's efforts towards the Global South throughout most of the 1960s. This is evidenced by the fact that Bennewitz was not yet sent to events on the theatre of the Global South during this time. Instead, Ebermann and Käthe Rüllicke-Weiler took part in the East-West Theatre Seminar in New Delhi in 1966, one of the first events at the ITI to deal with Asian theatre.¹³²⁵

¹³²¹ John. 2011. p.71-72

¹³²² BArch DR1/19834. *Direktive für die Teilnahme des Genossen Fritz Bennewitz an dem Internationalen Seminar zum Thema "Das Theater, die Gesellschaft und die Erwachsenenbildung"*, p.1

¹³²³ *ibid.*, p.1

¹³²⁴ *ibid.*, p.2

¹³²⁵ BArch DR1/22790. *Bericht vom Aufenthalt einer Delegation des ITI-Zentrums DDR in Indien (23.10.-12.11.1966)*.

5.2 Bennewitz's First Trips to the Global South

Subsequently, in the late 1960s the focus of Bennewitz's travels abroad changed significantly. From being an East German Shakespeare director sent primarily to Western countries as a student himself he eventually became the ITI centre's expert on directing in the countries of the Global South, especially South and Southeast Asia.

The East German centre began thinking about sending theatre experts abroad in the late 1960s. The contacts that the GDR ITI established with various theatre artists in those years were the basis of this project. Through them, Bennewitz already met with theatre artists from the Global South in the GDR during this period, many of them from India. The GDR centre of the ITI assisted foreign artists who often visited East Germany as part of a longer journey through (Eastern) Europe. In July 1967, for example, Kohls wrote to Bennewitz to inform him of the visit of the Indian director Sombhu Mitra and to ask him to accommodate Mitra during his three-day stay in Weimar.¹³²⁶ When the GDR increasingly invited young theatre artists to the GDR as scholarship holders to learn about East German theatre, some of them also stayed at the National Theatre in Weimar, such as Amal Allana and Madhav Khadilkar.¹³²⁷ Bennewitz would later work with all three of them again in India.

The first steps towards sending East German theatre experts to the Global South were taken in the friendship agreement with the Venezuelan centre, which included the trip of a theatre director to Caracas in 1969. The Brecht Dialogue was central to this development as well, not only because it served as an occasion to consolidate relations and exchange programmes with theatre experts of the Global South.¹³²⁸ Bennewitz was also a visible participant in the Brecht Dialogue: He moderated the panel discussion of directors and actors, arguably the most prestigious of the various 'dialogues' because it featured famous foreign and East German theatre artists.¹³²⁹ Apart from this participation in the Brecht Dialogue itself, the Weimar National Theatre staged two guest performances in Berlin of productions directed by Bennewitz: Brecht's *Life of*

¹³²⁶ BArch DR107/59. 1967/07/05. Letter to Bennewitz.

¹³²⁷ BArch DR107/4. *Bericht Arbeitsaufenthalt in Indien im Rahmen des Kulturarbeitsplans Indien-DDR, 4.10.-4.12.1973*, p.2

¹³²⁸ See also: 7.1.1

¹³²⁹ Hecht, Werner. 1969. *Brecht-Dialog 1968: Politik auf dem Theater*. München: Rogner & Bernhard, p. 147

Galileo and *Life of Edward the Second*, Brecht's adaptation of the Marlowe play.¹³³⁰ The Brecht Dialogue therefore introduced Bennewitz as a director of Brecht plays to the international guests. Shortly afterwards, Bennewitz was sent abroad for his first assignment as a guest director. With his stage designer Franz Havemann, he visited Iași in Romania to stage *Life of Galileo*.¹³³¹ Since the ITI centre of the GDR was in general not responsible for artistic exchange with other socialist countries, it was not involved in the planning of this trip. It was, however, the start of Bennewitz's work as a theatre director abroad.

As a result of the contacts established in the previous years, the GDR centre's work plan for 1969 included plans to send three East German theatre directors to various countries of the Global South: Venezuela, the Philippines and India for guest productions. For the GDR ITI, these trips were unprecedented. Procedures to deal with both the expectations from their foreign partners and foreign governments had yet to be established. In the late 1960s, the lack of diplomatic recognition of the GDR was still a considerable hurdle as well. Two of these three initial attempts to send theatre experts to the Global South failed. The trip to India, the one that succeeded, naturally created a new standard to follow.

The trip to the Philippines had been initiated by Cecile Guidote. She had already made contact with the East German centre of the ITI at the World Congress in New York in 1967, expressed her interest in cooperation and had thus been invited to the Brecht Dialogue. During talks at the Brecht Dialogue, Guidote and the members of the ITI agreed "to send a two-man team from the GDR to Manila to stage a Brecht play."¹³³² In a letter from Ebermann to Gysi in January 1969, he pointed out that, according to Guidote, the theatre director chosen to be sent to the Philippines should preferably "come from the ranks of the Berliner Ensemble or must have worked there." This was considered necessary to counter similar West German endeavours. Guidote had informed Ebermann that PETA had also received offers from the West German Goethe Institute, which offered to send a director like Harry Buckwitz to Manila, who was known for his Brecht stagings and film adaptations in the FRG. In order to fend off this

¹³³⁰ Schumacher, Ernst. 1977. "Gastspiele anlässlich des Brecht-Dialogs 1968. Ursprünglich veröffentlicht in Berliner Zeitung vom 20.2.1968" In: *Ernst Schumacher: Brecht-Kritiken*, edited by Christa Neubert-Herwig. 124-27. Berlin: Henschelverlag, p.124-5

¹³³¹ Bennewitz mentions the trip in: Bennewitz, Fritz. 1973. "Erfahrungen mit Brecht im Ausland" In: *Theater der Zeit*, 1973(5). 41-42.

¹³³² BArch DR107/51. 1969/01/29. Letter from Ebermann to MfK, p.1

West German enterprise, the GDR needed to outdo it in expertise with a former Brecht collaborator, so Bennewitz was not initially considered. Instead, Ebermann suggested theatre director Kurt Veth, who had worked in the BE during Brecht's lifetime, already had experience abroad and a good command of English.¹³³³ The trip was planned for 1970, but ultimately cancelled because of the MfAA's disinterest in the Philippines.¹³³⁴

The second planned trip of a theatre director to Caracas was to take place within the framework of the friendship agreement between the East German and the Venezuelan ITI centres. This director was to complete a production with a Venezuelan ensemble, but was also to be capable of holding lectures and seminars on topics like "theatre work in the GDR, Brechtian methods, etc."¹³³⁵ Even before the Brecht Dialogue, Bennewitz had already been selected for this assignment. In a letter to the International Relations Department in the MfK Ebermann went into detail about Bennewitz's directives: He was to stage Brecht's *Arturo Ui*, "where the scenic-practical work [was] to be supplemented by thorough information given to the ensemble about the nature and method of Brecht's theatre work as well as about the political background of the 'UI' parable and its current significance." In addition to this, Bennewitz was to open a stage design and photo exhibition on theatre work in the GDR, give public lectures in Caracas and Maracay and conduct a "theatre academy" "for interested progressive directors and actors on the function of the first German peace state, the cultural policy of the GDR, the significance of the Brechtian theatre model, etc."¹³³⁶ While this trip had already been agreed upon ahead of the Brecht Dialogue, its realisation in the planned timeframe was still unsure. The members of the GDR ITI therefore used the occasion of the Brecht Dialogue to discuss the terms of the friendship agreement with Orsini again. Orsini stated difficulties with acquiring a visa for a GDR citizen as a reason for the delays. The ITI centre became especially worried when Orsini was vocally unimpressed by the Bennewitz productions he saw during the Brecht Dialogue:

Orsini sah sich aus eigener Initiative alle 3 Bennewitz-Inszenierungen zum BRECHT-DIALOG an, war aber (wie er anderen gegenüber äußerte) von den Regie-Leistungen seines künftigen Gastes nicht gerade begeistert, ja, er äußerte unverhohlene Enttäuschung. Dieser nicht unwichtige Faktor vergrößerte nur die

¹³³³ BArch DR107/51. 1969/01/29. Letter from Ebermann to MfK, p.2

¹³³⁴ BArch DR1/8852. 1969/01/10. *Arbeitsplan 1969*, p.3

¹³³⁵ BArch DR1/23732. Letter to Liebscher, p.1

¹³³⁶ *ibid.*, p.2

Ungewißheit, ob von venezolanischer Seite aus unsere Vorleistungen endlich honoriert werden.¹³³⁷

Ultimately, the trip to Caracas did not come to fruition. The cited reason for the failure was that the Venezuelan embassy in Warsaw had “apparently deliberately” delayed the granting of a visa to an East German citizen.¹³³⁸ While such visa problems were still a regular issue in the late 1960s, it is also likely that Orsini did little to advocate for Bennewitz to the authorities

The last planned assignment of an East German theatre expert to a country of the Global South was the trip to India to stage Brecht at the National School of Drama (NSD) in New Delhi. It had not been part of a friendship agreement with the Indian ITI centre, but was set up by Ebrahim Alkazi, the director of the NSD. During the Brecht Dialogue, Alkazi declared that he would incorporate Brecht in his school’s curriculum.¹³³⁹ He spoke with members of the ITI centre and the MfK about the ways in which the GDR could support him in this regard.¹³⁴⁰ In June 1968, further talks took place between Alkazi and the GDR’s trade mission in India in order to concretise the theatre exchange envisaged during the Brecht Dialogue. In the file note on the conversation, which was forwarded to the MfK and the MfAA, it was specified that the NSD was interested in “2 GDR instructors from the Berliner Ensemble sent to India for 3 months”. Their tasks were to be the “theoretical improvement of the Brechtian method” and the “practical guidance on the staging of Brecht plays”. The note also mentioned that Alkazi and Ebermann had already spoken with Tenschert and Benkau¹³⁴¹ of the BE about this plan,¹³⁴² presumably because they were the preferred candidates for the trip.

The project gained urgency after the GDR perceived West German competition in New Delhi: In December 1968, the GDR trade mission in India informed the MfK and MfAA about the ‘West German’ Brecht production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*,

¹³³⁷ BArch DR1/10653a. Notes on *Brecht-Dialog 1968*, p.11

¹³³⁸ BArch DR1/8853. 1970/01/25. Report on *Arbeitsplan 1969*, p.2.

¹³³⁹ Allana, Amal. 2018. “Released into the Future. (Re)Claiming Brecht in India” In: *Recycling Brecht*, edited by Tom Kuhn and David Barnett. 121-135. Rochester, New York; Woodbridge, Suffolk: Camden House, p.127

¹³⁴⁰ BArch DR1/10653a. Notes on *Brecht-Dialog 1968*, p.11

¹³⁴¹ Joachim Tenschert is misspelled as “Tauschert“ in this document, but from the other material in the files it becomes obvious it is meant to be him. I could not find out who Benkau was.

¹³⁴² BArch DR1/18795. Somburg. 1968/06/02. Note about a conversation with Ebrahim Alkazi. p.1

which was staged at the NSD in November 1968. The director was Carl Weber, Brecht's former assistant director and dramaturge at the BE. Weber had, however, left the GDR after the building of the Berlin Wall and was now working in the FRG, the USA and other Western countries. In his New Delhi staging, Weber followed Brecht's Modelbook production at the BE very closely.¹³⁴³ As Amal Allana recalled, this production by Weber went down in Indian theatre history as the first "authentic" Brecht production. It introduced the NSD students and the New Delhi audience both to a new kind of episodic writing and a new kind of acting:

[F]or the actors exposed so far to a Stanislavskian approach, it was a learning curve to understand the difference between 'being' the character and 'demonstrating' and 'showing' the character. To their amazement, actors discovered that the principles of *Verfremdung* had indeed always been practiced in our own traditions... and that it was easier to inculcate a Brechtian acting style through this more familiar connection.¹³⁴⁴

According to Allana, the production generated an "enormous fallout" and exposed a large number of Indian theatre professionals to the orthodox Brechtian style.¹³⁴⁵ The GDR diplomats noted that the West German embassy was using the occasion "for large-scale Brecht propaganda": There was a press conference, where Weber was introduced and the stylistic aspect of the production such as costumes and half-masks were explained. A full-page interview with Weber in one of the Indian newspapers was - according to the note of the GDR trade mission - "entirely due to West German influence".¹³⁴⁶ The success of Weber's production at the NSD alarmed the officials of the MfK and spurred them into action. The International Relations Department of the MfK approached the Theatre Department with a request to "select 2 theatre artists in cooperation with the iti."¹³⁴⁷

The 1969 work plan of the GDR ITI already specified that this trip would take place in 1970, but the two "GDR directors or lecturers" had not yet been chosen.¹³⁴⁸ At

¹³⁴³ The *Modellbücher* (modelbooks) were documentations of Brecht's own production of several of his plays that were intended as a model for further productions. While on the one hand, the modelbooks provided valuable insight into Brecht's theatre practice, they also were emblematic of a 'top down' approach that led to the perpetuation of Brechtian orthodoxy. See: David. 2016. "The Rise and Fall of Modelbooks, Notate and the Brechtian Method: Documentation and the Berliner Ensemble's Changing Roles as a Theatre Company" In: *Theatre research international* 41(2), 106-121

¹³⁴⁴ Allana. 2018. p.128

¹³⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p.128

¹³⁴⁶ BArch DR1/18795. 1968/12/04. Copy of letter to Bambor, p.1

¹³⁴⁷ BArch DR1/18795. 1969/02/05. Letter from Bambor to Hafranke.

¹³⁴⁸ BArch DR1/8852. 1969/01/10. *Arbeitsplan 1969*, p.3

that time, the GDR was still determined to send a former student or collaborator of Brecht. On one hand, the NSD was primarily interested in Brecht, on the other, the GDR now needed to defend its claim to Brecht as its national poet against the FRG. As one of Brecht's students, Weber was naturally considered an authority on Brecht, and any East German expert was expected to be at least his equal. A handwritten comment by a ministry official read: "Ich schlage Pintzka vor."¹³⁴⁹ Wolfgang Pintzka had been an assistant director at the BE. As already established in the initial discussions, Tenschert was to be the second Brecht specialist sent to New Delhi. As the BE's chief dramaturge, Tenschert fulfilled the NSD's requirements of an established Brecht expert. Thus, Bennewitz was not initially considered as a candidate for this trip, even if he had already been chosen for a similar guest production in Venezuela. Although Bennewitz had already staged Brecht several times in Meiningen and Weimar and had earned some attention with his guest productions at the Brecht Dialogue, he was by no means considered a renowned Brecht specialist compared to the former Brecht students and collaborators of the BE. Before 1968, he had been primarily known as a director of Shakespeare and the Weimar classics.

The plans for sending Brecht experts to New Delhi were further fleshed out by the ITI centre, the ministries and the trade mission. Temporarily, there were plans, at the request of the NSD, to perform *Mother Courage* and to prepare a translation into Hindi especially for this purpose.¹³⁵⁰ In the end, the *Threepenny Opera* was chosen instead. By October 1969 at the latest, it was certain that Bennewitz would accompany Tenschert to New Delhi.¹³⁵¹ At the same time, and presumably for this occasion, Bennewitz was also appointed to the directorate of the ITI centre.¹³⁵² Due to other commitments, Tenschert was only given four weeks off for this trip to India and therefore had to cancel the trip in January,¹³⁵³ about a month before his planned departure. At short notice the ITI centre tried to find an adequate replacement for

¹³⁴⁹ BArch DR1/18795. 1969/02/05. Letter from Bambor to Hafranke.

¹³⁵⁰ BArch DR1/18795. 1969/19/27. Letter from Ebermann to Alkazi.

¹³⁵¹ *ibid.*

¹³⁵² In the directorate meeting on September 2th 1969 the co-optation of Bennewitz and Besson was confirmed, in the meeting on in December 1969 Bennewitz was welcomed as a new member of the Centre. See: ITI. Dir1. 1969/12/30. *Protokoll der Direktoriumssitzung vom 20.12.1969*, p.1; and ITI. Dir1. 1969/09/30. *Protokoll der Direktoriumssitzung vom 20.9.1969*. p.1

¹³⁵³ ITI. Drucksachen. 1969/12/30. 30.12.1969. *Protokoll der Direktoriumssitzung vom 20.12.1969*, p.4

him,¹³⁵⁴ but was unsuccessful. It was then decided that Amal Allana, who was still in the GDR as part of her scholarship, should accompany Bennewitz to New Delhi instead. As a result of these complications, instead of two BE members, Bennewitz travelled to India with Allana to work on the production of *The Threepenny Opera* at the NSD for two months from February 18th to April 19th 1970.¹³⁵⁵ On Bennewitz's suggestion, Allana became the set and costume designer for the production.¹³⁵⁶

Since the ITI centre of the GDR did not have its own exchange agreement with the Indian ITI, the trip was facilitated by the Indo-GDR Cultural Exchange Programme, first established between the GDR and India in 1970.¹³⁵⁷ It would become the basis for Bennewitz's work in India over the next two decades, since it stipulated the regular sending of an East German theatre director to India.¹³⁵⁸

The GDR diplomats in New Delhi closely observed the Indian reactions to Bennewitz's visit. Clippings from Indian newspapers that reported on Bennewitz and his *Threepenny Opera* were collected and translated in order to assess the success of the trip.¹³⁵⁹ The reviews compiled by the MfK were mostly positive, with some recurring criticisms unrelated to Bennewitz's direction: *The Hindustan Times* complains about the "disastrously casual attitude towards the translation of a play" while conceding Bennewitz's production to be "interesting, intricate, funny and with enough inventive stage business".¹³⁶⁰ R.S. Yadav in *The Century* also criticised the "linguistic pitfalls of the translation" at length, but praised the fact that, nevertheless, "the young cast of this play [did] wonderfully well in conveying the message of the playwright, and so of course did the director's skill which was only too evident from the well-knit and gripping business of the play on the stage."¹³⁶¹ There were very few direct comparisons with the preceding and ground-breaking Brecht production by Carl

¹³⁵⁴ BArch DR1/18795. 1970/01/16. Letter from Ebermann to MfK, p.1

¹³⁵⁵ Bennewitz writings and impressions of this first visit to India have been documented in: Esleben, Joerg. 2016. *Fritz Bennewitz in India. Intercultural Theatre with Brecht and Shakespeare*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, p.25-33

¹³⁵⁶ BArch DR1/18795. 1970/01/16. Letter from Ebermann to MfK, p.1-2

¹³⁵⁷ BArch DR1/8853. *Arbeitsbericht über Aufenthalt in New Dehli, 18.2. bis 19.4.1970*. p.1

¹³⁵⁸ See for example a letter from the NSD to Bennewitz from 30.4.1982 which explicitly stated that Bennewitz's visit to the school was the "implementation of the Item No.67 of the Indo-GDR Cultural Exchange Programme for the year 1982-84." (BArch DR1/11299 Vol.1. 1982/04/30. Letter from Shah.)

¹³⁵⁹ These newspaper cuttings can be found in: BArch DR1/18795.

¹³⁶⁰ Nath, Rajender. 1970. "The three penny Opera" In: *Hindustan Times*. April 20.

¹³⁶¹ Yadav, R.S. 1970. "Brecht: Bennewitz and the Three Penny Opera" In: *The Century*. June 20.

Weber. Only one of the articles that the MfK collected even mentioned it directly: “In ‘Chalk Circle’ we saw the translation of Brecht’s grammar; in Bennewitz’s direction we share the Brechtian spirit at its best.”¹³⁶² While this statement highlighted the differences between the two productions – Weber’s strict adherence to the Brechtian models and Bennewitz’s looser but engaging approach – it did not unequivocally favour one or the other. Nonetheless, Bennewitz recalled this wording and other comparisons with the West German production in a 1972 interview¹³⁶³ to prove the success of his 1970 staging. This illustrates that the inner-German competition for Brechtian expertise was an important criterion by which Bennewitz directed his work and by which his production was judged. Like Weber, Bennewitz was also given the opportunity to talk about Brecht, epic theatre and social context in the Indian press, for example in an interview conducted by Alkazi in the *Hindustan Times*.¹³⁶⁴

Just as the reviews of the play were largely positive, the ITI centre of the GDR also received positive feedback from the NSD itself. Allana wrote to Ebermann reporting on the positive reception of Bennewitz at the NSD:

Aber ich kann wirklich nicht erklären, wie viel die Studenten von ihm gelernt haben. Er hatte Kontakt mit jedem. Alle haben ihn ins Herz geschlossen als einen von uns. Er fühlte sich immer zu Hause hier und ich glaube, daß niemand das Gefühl hatte, daß er ein Ausländer war. Er hat indische Kleider getragen, hat gegessen was wir auch essen, hat mit uns getanzt und gesungen und immer sehr unformal.¹³⁶⁵

The trade mission of the GDR in India also considered Bennewitz’s visit to New Delhi a cultural and political success:

Es kann eingeschätzt werden, daß sowohl das Auftreten des Gen. Bennewitz an der Schule als auch die Aufführungen des Stückes in der Öffentlichkeit sehr erfolgreich für die DDR waren. Gen. Bennewitz hat es verstanden, die Studenten zu einem Kollektiv zu formen und in die Lage zu versetzen, gute schauspielerische Leistungen zu vollbringen. Sein Auftreten hat bei Studenten und Leitung der Schule einen sehr guten Eindruck hinterlassen.¹³⁶⁶

Due to the positive reactions to his trip to New Delhi as the first director the ITI centre of the GDR had sent to a country of the Global South, Bennewitz became the centre’s expert on theatre work in emerging countries almost instantly. His work as a director at

¹³⁶² *Enjoyable theatrical experience* found in: BArch DR1/18795.

¹³⁶³ “Teaching and Learning – Prof. Fritz Bennewitz interviewed.” cited from: Esleben. 2016, p.31

¹³⁶⁴ 1970 “Brecht’s Epic Theatre. Interview with Bennewitz by Alkazi”. June 7. found in: BArch DR1/18795.

¹³⁶⁵ BArch DR1/8853. 1970/04/04. Copy of letter from Amal Alkazi to Ebermann.

¹³⁶⁶ BArch DR1/18795. 1970/05/12. *Bericht über den Aufenthalt des Schauspielers Fritz Bennewitz*. p.1

the NSD soon became known within the ITI World Federation as well. Accordingly, Bennewitz represented the GDR during the meeting on the planned Committee for Third World Theatre at the World Congress in London 1971. At the end of the year, he travelled to the 1st Third World Theatre Festival and the attached ITI conference in Manila. In November 1972, he attended the Working Committee meeting in Mumbai, where he was elected as a consultant to the CTWT. In this new role, he subsequently attended all meetings of the CTWT until its restructuring in the mid-1980s.

His involvement in the CTWT also facilitated Bennewitz's return to India in 1973. Whereas all the details of his first visit had been decided by the GDR ITI, the MfK and the NSD, the course and content of this stay were clearly more determined by Bennewitz himself: During his stay in Mumbai in 1972 for the CTWT meeting, he met the theatre director and actress Vijaya Mehta, who had recently adapted Brecht's *The Good Person of Szechwan* into Marathi language theatre. Together, Bennewitz and Mehta decided to stage a play in co-production, were able to win the Mumbai Marathi Sahitja Sangh cultural association as the organiser and gained the permission of their governments for their projects.¹³⁶⁷ Initially, the GDR suggested that this time Bennewitz would not stage Brecht but *Katzgraben* by Erwin Strittmatter, a play about the transformation of an East German village through the collectivisation of agriculture in the GDR. Using a rough translation into English and Marathi, Mehta checked the suitability of the play and found that knowledge of the GDR's people-owned agriculture was not sufficiently present among the Indian audience but necessary to understand the meaning and intention of the play. *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* was chosen instead.¹³⁶⁸

After and likely because of the criticism that the various Indian theatre critics had levelled at the translation of *The Threepenny Opera* in 1970, this time the Marathi poet Chintamani Tryambak Khanolkar was commissioned to translate and adapt the play as *Ajab Nyaya Vartulscha*. In August 1973, Mehta travelled to Berlin to meet with Bennewitz. Together, they retranslated the Marathi version into German to check its accuracy and make some changes accordingly.¹³⁶⁹ On this occasion they also already discussed and agreed on the concept of their production "with detailed breakdown of the fable in each scene."¹³⁷⁰ This would make their collaboration easier later. In

¹³⁶⁷ BArch DR107/4. *Bericht Arbeitsaufenthalt in Indien im Rahmen des Kulturarbeitsplans Indien-DDR, 4.10.-4.12.1973*, p.1

¹³⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p.1-2

¹³⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p.2

¹³⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p.3

October, Bennewitz travelled to India for two months to direct the Marathi version of the *Chalk Circle* in collaboration with Mehta. During this trip, Bennewitz gave lectures and interviews, took part in press conferences, and met with theatre groups and writers, especially in Mumbai itself. After completing rehearsals at the end of November, Bennewitz travelled to Kolkata, where he watched theatre performances and met with theatre practitioners in the city, among them Utpal Dutt and his People's Little Theatre. *Ajab Nyaya Vartulscha's* production was successful enough that, at Bennewitz's request,¹³⁷¹ it was also invited to the *Berliner Festtage* in the GDR and to other East German cities, and during this European tour it also put on guest performances in Switzerland. This is significant because it gave Bennewitz's work, which often attracted a lot of attention in the respective country or region but did not usually reach an international audience, a wider sphere of influence.

While this second trip did come about through the cultural agreements between the GDR and India and was based on contacts made at the ITI event in Mumbai in 1972, Bennewitz's past experiences and prior knowledge of Indian theatre allowed him to have a say in where and with whom he worked on which plays. His work in Mumbai in 1973 was in many ways indicative of his future artistic trajectory. During his time in India, he had received invitations from various Indian theatres to carry out similar projects there. During his time in Kolkata, for example, he was asked to direct a Bengali production of *Mother Courage*.¹³⁷² Many of these and other collaborations with Indian theatre groups were realised in the following decades. In total, Bennewitz worked on almost 40 productions in India from 1970 until his death in 1995.¹³⁷³ His collaboration with Mehta also became a constant in his career. Mehta repeatedly came to the GDR to work with Bennewitz on adapting and staging Indian classics for a German audience, such as *Mudrarakshasa* (as *Des Kanzlers Siegelring*) in 1976, *Hajavadana* (as *Die vertauschten Köpfe*) in Weimar in 1984 and *Shakuntala* in Leipzig in 1980.¹³⁷⁴ These productions notably represent one of the few clear examples of an actual two-way transfer of theatrical exchange of knowledge and practice facilitated by the East German centre.

¹³⁷¹ *ibid.*, p.6

¹³⁷² *ibid.*, p.5

¹³⁷³ John. 2012. p.283

¹³⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p.277-84

Bennewitz was very confident of the production of *Ajab Nyaya Vartulscha*, which in his mind had model character not only for his own future work but similar intercultural theatre productions in general. In an additional report on his trip, he stated: “Die Arbeit und Auffuehrung[sic] sollte dem Kommité[sic] Dritte Welt im iTi als Beispiel und Diskussionsveranstaltung vorgeschlagen werden, da sie dem Sinn und Buchstaben der Shiraz-Resolutionen entspricht.”¹³⁷⁵

Several members of the CTWT were evidently receptive to Bennewitz’s assessment of the value of his work. Once his reputation as a director for this kind of intercultural theatre work was established, his work on the *Chalk Circle* took on a life of its own and expanded to more and more countries. The international diplomatic recognition of the GDR in the 1970s enabled this process, because it made travel to non-Eastern Bloc countries much easier and allowed the realisation of trips that had failed before.

As early as 1972, Guidote invited Bennewitz to Manila to give a workshop or seminar and to direct a Brechtian play for the PETA Kalinangan Ensemble.¹³⁷⁶ In 1974, Bennewitz was able to travel to the Philippines at PETA’s invitation to speak about his experience of adapting the *Chalk Circle* into Marathi theatre. On this basis, and following the participation of PETA member Lutgardo Labad at the GDR ITI seminar in 1976, Bennewitz went to Manila again in 1977 to do another adaptation of the *Chalk Circle*.¹³⁷⁷ The play was translated and adapted into Tagalog by Franklin Osorio and Lito Tiongson under the title *Ang Hatol Ng Guhit Na Bilog*. As in India, the *Chalk Circle* marked only the beginning of Bennewitz’s theatrical engagements in the Philippines. Bennewitz returned in 1978 to continue working on the production.¹³⁷⁸ He was reinvited to stage *Life of Galilei* in 1980, and a total of 13 performances in the Philippines until his death.¹³⁷⁹

Contacts with Ellen Stewart and Guidote through the ITI and specifically the CTWT also led to Bennewitz being invited to New York by La MaMa and the Third World Institute for Theatre Arts and Studies (TWITAS) in 1977 to direct the *Chalk*

¹³⁷⁵ BArch DR107/4. *Anhang zum Indien-Arbeitsbericht*, p.1

¹³⁷⁶ BArch DR107/51. 1972/06/17. Letter from Guidote to Bennewitz, p.1

¹³⁷⁷ BArch DR1/10653a. 1977/12/10. *Bericht über Aufenthalt in der Republik der Philippinen*. p.1-2

¹³⁷⁸ BArch DR1/10653a..1978/12/30. *Bericht zum Arbeitsaufenthalt von Prof. Fritz Bennewitz in der Republik der Philippinen vom 20.11. bis 22.12.1978*, p.1

¹³⁷⁹ John. 2012, p.284

Circle again. He returned to La MaMa in 1978 to stage *Faust I*,¹³⁸⁰ and the *Chalk Circle* once more in 1979, this time in a version for children. In addition to, and sometimes as part of these guest directing engagements, Bennewitz was invited on lecture tours to talk about Brecht, the theatre of the GDR and his previous international productions. Not all invitations to all countries could actually come to fruition. Despite Orsini's earlier scepticism towards Bennewitz at the Brecht Dialogue, the Venezuelan ITI centre now expressed interest in Bennewitz as well. He was invited to Venezuela for the Festival of Third World Theatre in 1976 and to a workshop for young directors in 1977 both without success. In 1978, he finally came to Caracas to give a seminar on Brecht at the Theatre of Nations Festival. The main subject of this seminar, according to Bennewitz, were "theoretical and practical exercises and demonstrations for adapting of the CIRCLE into the historical, national and cultural conditions of Latin American countries." Like with his first visit to the Philippines, these were intended as preparation for further stagings in various countries of Latin America. According to his report of the TdN, Bennewitz had already planned more *Chalk Circle* productions for Venezuela and Mexico for the following year,¹³⁸¹ which never took place.

The predominance of Brecht in the first decade of Bennewitz's international career was predicated both by the NSD's original call for a Brecht expert, the current international interest in Brecht and Bennewitz's own insistence on the importance of the 1973 *Chalk Circle* production. His initial involvement in the ITI as an East German Shakespeare director was temporarily forgotten in view of his early successes in India, which were considered significant in terms of cultural policy. The shift away from an almost exclusive focus on Brecht began slowly in the late 1970s, with the first step being his production of *Faust I* at La MaMa. Shakespeare only became part of Bennewitz's international repertoire again in the 1980s. When Bennewitz returned to the NSD in 1981, he was originally supposed to stage another production of Goethe's *Faust*. Due to the short duration of the trip and the lack of necessary preparations at NSD, however, this proved impossible.¹³⁸² As an alternative, Bennewitz suggested A

¹³⁸⁰ A detailed discussion of Bennewitz's New York stagings of *Faust* with ethnic minority actors can be found in David G. John's book, which compares this staging with Bennewitz's other *Faust* adaptations. A notable element of the productions was Bennewitz's casting of Gretchen with the black actress Christine Campbell. See: John. 2012. p.183-203

¹³⁸¹ BArch DR1/13017. 1978/08/14. *Bericht: Delegations- und Arbeitsaufenthalt Prof. Fritz Bennewitz in Caracas, Venezuela, vom 4. Bis 30. Juli 1978*, p.6.

¹³⁸² BArch DR1/10763. 1981/09/16. Letter to Greiser.

Midsummer Night's Dream.¹³⁸³ As Esleben points out, in adapting Shakespeare, Bennewitz had to deal with “another, far older process of integration of a Western canonical dramatist into Indian culture.”¹³⁸⁴ Shakespeare had been a key cultural figure in British colonisation in India and had played an equally influential but different role than in Germany. Despite initial difficulties, Bennewitz ultimately considered the production a success¹³⁸⁵ and the reviews agreed with him.¹³⁸⁶ After a decade in which he had almost exclusively directed Brecht abroad, Bennewitz began to stage Shakespeare plays again more and more often: *Othello* in 1983, *Hamlet* in 1984/5, *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night* in 1990 in New Delhi, *Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1985 and *Taming of the Shrew* in 1987 in Bhopal and again *Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1990 in Heggodu, as well as *Macbeth* in Manila in 1984 and *Midsummer Night's Dream* in Visayan.¹³⁸⁷

With his initial successes, Bennewitz had proven himself to the officials of the MfK as an important asset of the GDR's foreign representation. This and the general relaxation of political control of the arts in the GDR in the 1980s allowed him more independence. Compared to his first trips to India, his travel directives in the 1980s became relatively brief and were often little more than a rough outline of his itinerary.¹³⁸⁸ Bennewitz made use of his own contacts and informed the MfK of his arrangements, invitations and travel plans.¹³⁸⁹ Even the collections of newspaper clippings that the MfK used to keep track of the effectiveness of his visits are no longer to be found in the files on his later travels. Reports from the GDR embassy in India show how pleased the diplomats continued to be with Bennewitz's work in terms of cultural policy. Thus, the report about Bennewitz's stay in India in 1983 read:

Zusammenfassend kann eingeschätzt werden, daß der Aufenthalt von Gen. Prof. Bennewitz 1983 in Indien wiederum bestätigt hat, daß Prof. Bennewitz einen hoch zu schätzenden Beitrag bei der Vermittlung der sozialistischen

¹³⁸³ BArch DR1/10763. 1981/05/11. Letter to Huber.

¹³⁸⁴ Esleben. 2016. p.104

¹³⁸⁵ *ibid.* p.113

¹³⁸⁶ *ibid.* p.114

¹³⁸⁷ See: John. 2012. p.283-4. There are several other Shakespeare productions in Bennewitz's list of works that are listed without dates and are therefore difficult to categorise.

¹³⁸⁸ BArch DR1/11299. 1982/06/08. *Direktive für den Arbeitsaufenthalt von Prof. Fritz Bennewitz im Zeitraum vom 16.08.1982 bis 16.01.1983 in Indien und Sri Lanka.*

¹³⁸⁹ An example of this was the plan he provided to the MfK on foreign projects for the years 1983/4, according to which Bennewitz was to be abroad almost non-stop from the beginning of August 1983 to the end of April 1984. Not all these trips were realised according to Bennewitz's plan; a visit to New York for another Brecht production at La MaMa/TWITAS, for example, would not take place. BArch DR1/11299. 1982/03/08. *Auslandsprojekte 1983/84.*

Schauspielkunst der DDR in Indien geleistet hat. So ist es auf sein langjähriges Wirken in Indien mit zurückzuführen, daß das Theater der DDR, insbesondere das Brecht-Theater, in Kreisen der künstlerischen Intelligenz und kunstinteressierter Bürger große Wertschätzung genießt und Gen. Prof. Bennewitz eine hohe Achtung erworben hat. [...] Im Rahmen der Möglichkeiten, die das Theater zu bieten vermag, trägt Gen. Prof. Bennewitz somit in beachtlichem Maße zur Vertiefung der Freundschaft und Verständigung zwischen der DDR und Indien bei.¹³⁹⁰

Due to the GDR's travel cadre system, his trips nevertheless continued to be organised by the MfK according to its cultural-political assessments. In 1982, for example, the MfK wanted Bennewitz to take part in the Kalidasa Festival in Ujjain during his stay in India to present a recording of his Leipzig co-production with Mehta of the Kalidasa play *Shakuntala*.¹³⁹¹ Due to important appointments in the GDR, Bennewitz wanted to leave early for his second stop in Colombo instead.¹³⁹² In a telegraphic correspondence, the officials of the MfK insisted on the completion of his objectives laid out in the directive and informed him that they considered his participation in the festival as urgently necessary for "foreign policy and foreign information reasons."¹³⁹³

Bennewitz continued his international theatre productions long after his consultative role in the CTWT had ended in 1985 and even after the GDR and its ITI centre no longer existed. Nevertheless, the ITI centre and the role it played in the GDR's foreign cultural policy had been crucial to his international career. The countries to which Bennewitz was sent from the 1970s onwards and in which he built his own contacts were those that had already been determined in the ITI centre's 1969 work plan. They were based on the contacts that the East German ITI had built in the second half of the 1960s at international and their own events.

5.3 The 'Chalk Circle' Project - Bennewitz's Artistic Approach to his Early International Productions

In the following, I will focus on Bennewitz's first productions abroad, to ascertain how and if the methods of his intercultural theatre projects aligned with GDR cultural politics. Bennewitz did revise some of his assessments of these early stagings later, and his approach changed over the more than 20 years that he directed mainly in South and

¹³⁹⁰ BArch DR1/11299. 1983/12/12. *Information zum Aufenthalt von Prof. Fritz Bennewitz in Indien vom 6.8.-13.12.1983*, p.2

¹³⁹¹ BArch DR1/11299. 1982/09/06. Letter from Hoffmann to Adameck.

¹³⁹² BArch DR1/11299. 1982/11/08. Telegram from the New Delhi embassy.

¹³⁹³ BArch DR1/11299. 1982/11/10. Telegram to the New Delhi embassy.

Southeast Asia. Since they earned him his prominence and position in the CTWT and enabled him to pursue his further international projects, they are nonetheless a very important part of his artistic biography.

Rohmer, John and Esleben defined Bennewitz's work as intercultural,¹³⁹⁴ a term he himself would at the time not have used, aiming to reclaim the term that has come to be associated with theatre practices criticised for their universalising and neo-colonialist tendencies. Bennewitz's stagings in South and Southeast Asia in the 1970s predate the use of this descriptor as well as the productions that were labelled as such. While Bennewitz wrote many notes and letters about his artistic process and considerations during his work abroad, he himself never developed a comprehensive theory for his version of intercultural theatre.¹³⁹⁵ He came to India for the first time with little knowledge of the traditions and trends of Indian theatre. The personal experiences he gained during his trips had a significant impact on him and caused his own ideas to constantly evolve. In the beginning, Bennewitz was mostly ignorant about other, especially Western, approaches to 'intercultural theatre'. Only later, when he was more experienced and was himself already considered an expert in ITI circles, did he begin to critically engage with the works of theatre directors like Peter Brook, Eugenio Barba or Richard Schechner. Still, his opinion of these alternative approaches remained mostly negative. He dismissed many of them as "ethnic show theatre" with little authenticity.¹³⁹⁶ To him, most Western interest in and use of indigenous theatre was the expression of a political agenda to disconnect traditional forms of theatrical expression from social and historical reality:

Der Einfluß imperialistischer Kulturpolitik [...] reitet das trojanische Pferd der Anbiederung, indem vom Einfluss des "westlichen" Theaters gewarnt wird (womit ausgerechnet die realistischen Traditionen dieses Theaters gemeint sind) und in Berufung auf die eigenen reichen Formen des asiatischen Theaters eine Neuauflage des absurden Theaters importiert wird. Durch diese Veranstaltungen wird ganz offensichtlich der Prozess der Entfremdung isoliert arbeitender Theaterschaffender vom Volk unterstützt. Ich habe in zahlreichen Diskussionen immer wieder diese verhängnisvolle Reduzierung von Theaterfragen auf Formprobleme erlebt.¹³⁹⁷

¹³⁹⁴ Rohmer. 2011; Esleben. 2016. p.14-8; John. 2012, p.9

¹³⁹⁵ Esleben. 2016. p.16

¹³⁹⁶ Bennewitz, Fritz. 1980. "Mit ‚Puntila‘ kontra ethnisches Show-Theater. Notizen zur Brecht-Rezeption in Indien." In: *Notate 1. Brecht Zentrum der DDR*, p.1

¹³⁹⁷ BArch DR107/4. *Bericht Arbeitsaufenthalt in Indien im Rahmen des Kulturarbeitsplans Indien-DDR, 4.10.-4.12.1973*, p.4

Accordingly, there was almost no exchange between Bennewitz and his Western colleagues. When, for example, Schechner was asked about Bennewitz, he replied that, while he had heard of Bennewitz and his work, he had not seen any of it.¹³⁹⁸ Bennewitz's work predated most Western approaches to intercultural theatre, but also never gained similar international recognition.

Bennewitz was convinced that his work represented a counter-model to these Western approaches. The *Chalk Circle* production of 1973 especially played a key role in his approach to intercultural theatre. While the *Threepenny Opera* of 1970 had provided him with first experiences of Indian theatre and earned him recognition both in ITI circles and from Indian theatre artists, Bennewitz regarded it at most as a starting point for his later work. With the *Chalk Circle* in 1973, on the other hand, Bennewitz was convinced that together with Mehta he had found a universal method for adapting Brecht's plays to different national cultures. In his report to the MfK, he declared:

Gleichzeitig ist dem Marathi-Theater ein Beispiel geschaffen worden für eine Bemühung, die den Theatern der Dritten Welt auch innerhalb ihrer Organisation im iTi [...] einer der vordringlichsten Aufgaben erscheint: die zeitgenössische Relevanz des traditionellen Theaters, die Erschließung der reichen Quellen des Volkstheaters für sozial relevante Themen und dadurch Belebung und Beförderung des Volkstheaters zu einem Theater des Volkes.¹³⁹⁹

The positive response to the production confirmed to him the validity of his general approach, and he wanted the ITI to recognize its model character. Additionally, to prove and develop his method, he aimed to extend it into a long-term project consisting of similar *Chalk Circle* adaptations in different countries, all of which would also involve a similar partnership between Bennewitz and theatre directors of the respective culture. He saw both the productions of the *Chalk Circle* at PETA in Manila and the Latin American seminar in Caracas as entries in this experimental series.¹⁴⁰⁰ These Brecht productions were the core of his work with and within the ITI.

To understand Bennewitz's style of Brecht adaptation in the Global South it is important to consider him not only as a director of Brecht, but also of Shakespeare and the German classics. Because even if it was not born out of a comprehensive theory of

¹³⁹⁸ John. 2012. p.9

¹³⁹⁹ BArch DR107/4. *Bericht Arbeitsaufenthalt in Indien im Rahmen des Kulturarbeitsplans Indien-DDR, 4.10.-4.12.1973*, p.6

¹⁴⁰⁰ BArch DR1/10653a. 1978/12/30. *Bericht zum Arbeitsaufenthalt von Prof. Fritz Bennewitz in der Republik der Philippinen vom 20.11. bis 22.12.1978*, p.1

intercultural theatre, Bennewitz's style of directing was closely interwoven with the East German theatrical discourse in which he was involved at home in the GDR.

There is a noticeable disconnect between Bennewitz's theatre work in and outside of the GDR. Bennewitz's work is usually either studied in the context of GDR reception of Shakespeare and the classics or focusses on his international productions. Even John's comparative analysis of his domestic and foreign stagings of *Faust* separates them neatly into two different sections. Accordingly, the assessments of his work also vary quite strongly, depending on whether it is viewed in the international or the domestic context. There is a telling contrast between John's and Böhm's evaluation of Bennewitz's significance as a theatre director. John stated: "In terms of his international theatre work with *Faust*, Brecht, Shakespeare, and many more plays and authors, I would claim that Bennewitz towers above any other German director, including Peter Stein."¹⁴⁰¹ Böhm argued that while this statement might be true in the international context, it would not be equally applicable when looking at the impact of Bennewitz's work in the GDR.¹⁴⁰² It can certainly be argued that Bennewitz was a more important and influential theatre artist abroad than in the GDR. In the latter half of his career, after his initial success in India and the Philippines, Bennewitz withdrew more and more from the daily activities and struggles of GDR theatre and focussed more and more on his international endeavours. Böhm speculated that Bennewitz's later work in the GDR, especially his later *Faust* productions, for that reason became reactive to ideas and trends set by others.¹⁴⁰³

There is some disagreement among scholars about the relation of Bennewitz's domestic stagings to official cultural policy. Concerning Bennewitz's *Faust* production in 1965, John argued that: "[i]t was not a 'party' *Faust* like Kayser's, for it explored as well the element of doubt in the protagonist, and with few exceptions, remained true to the aesthetic standards of its director. It can be argued that it signalled a break with the past and was a model for the future, a future that pointed to the next landmark in GDR *Faust* production, Adolf Dresen and Wolfgang Heinz's debunking of GDR optimism at the Deutsches Theater in 1968."¹⁴⁰⁴ Böhm disagreed about these supposedly subversive or groundbreaking elements. In his opinion and in contrast to John's analysis,

¹⁴⁰¹ John. 2012. p.7

¹⁴⁰² Böhm, Guido. 2015. *Vorwärts zu Goethe? Faust-Aufführungen im DDR-Theater*. Berlin, Theater der Zeit, p.147

¹⁴⁰³ *ibid.*, p.147

¹⁴⁰⁴ John. 2012. p.102

Bennewitz's *Faust* productions did not question the state of East German theatre or the GDR cultural policies at the time.¹⁴⁰⁵ Similarly, Brigitte Oels called the Bennewitz *Faust* of 1965 and 1967 a "political-ideological credo".¹⁴⁰⁶ According to Böhm, even in his later *Faust* production in 1981, Bennewitz only exercised comparatively mild criticism without ever making the SED the actual antagonist in his productions.¹⁴⁰⁷

Bennewitz was, as the literature about him has clearly shown, determined to support the development of socialism in the GDR with his artistic work. He was therefore, as Böhm, remarked, closely related to a previous generation of GDR theatre artists such as Wolfgang Langhoff.¹⁴⁰⁸ Bennewitz himself later emphasised that his *Faust* productions of the 1960s had not been a deliberate attempt to align himself with cultural policy, but the result of his own ideological convictions:

Ich habe nie den ‚Faust‘ inszeniert, um vorgegebene Meinungen zu legitimierten oder Thesen zu illustrieren. Wenn im Nachhinein diesem ‚Faust‘ das Prädikat einer hochrepräsentativen Klassiker-Interpretation gegeben wurde – im Sinne des damals vorherrschenden Erbeverständnisses, wir seien die Vollstrecker dessen, was die Klassiker erträumt hatten – dann, weil das meiner damaligen Befindlichkeit entsprach. Der ‚Faust‘ von 1965 gibt Auskunft über mich in der damaligen Zeit, ebenso wie die Inszenierungen von 1975 und 1981.¹⁴⁰⁹

Kurt Lennartz therefore insisted that it would still be unfair to regard Bennewitz as an agent of official cultural policy.¹⁴¹⁰ While Bennewitz's work was favoured by cultural policy, he did not use this status against other artists. When in 1968 the *Faust* production at the DT caused massive controversy, Bennewitz declined to condemn Dresen and Heinz. At a VT colloquium, he in contrast to hard-line directors like Karl Kayser and Hans-Dieter Mäde supported and defended the production and the artists involved, thereby "undermining the authorities' attempt to use his recent staging as a positive counter-example."¹⁴¹¹ His alignment with cultural policy nevertheless made him a suitable East German theatre expert to work within the ITI centre of the GDR.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Böhm. 2015. p.146

¹⁴⁰⁶ Oels, Brigitte. 1974. "Zur Kulturpolitischen Funktion des Theaters in der DDR" PhD thesis. (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg), p.157

¹⁴⁰⁷ Böhm. 2015. p.147

¹⁴⁰⁸ *ibid.* p.146-7

¹⁴⁰⁹ Lennartz, Kurt. 1992. "Heimsuchung Faust. Interview mit Fritz Bennewitz" In: Kurt Lennartz. *Vom Aufbruch zur Wende. Theater in der DDR*. Velber: Erhard Friedrich Verlag, p.36

¹⁴¹⁰ Lennartz, Kurt. 1992. *Vom Aufbruch zur Wende. Theater in der DDR*. Velber: Erhard Friedrich Verlag, p.34

¹⁴¹¹ Bradley; Laura. 2010. *Cooperation and Conflict. GDR Theatre Censorship, 1961-1989*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.91

As a director of the classics, Bennewitz's work was focused primarily on drama that served the collective cultural identity. Both the works of Weimar Classicism and Shakespeare were considered part of the *Kulturelles Erbe*, the cultural heritage that was to become the cornerstone of socialist society in the GDR.¹⁴¹² In Weimar and as a member of the Shakespeare Society, Bennewitz and his productions were part of the discussion of how to appropriate these works in a developed socialist society.

Wir selber wissen aus unseren eigenen Bemühungen um ein sozialistisches deutsches Nationaltheater, was für ein notwendiger und lebendiger Prozeß die Auseinandersetzung mit dem kulturellen Erbe unsere Nation ist, wie wesentlich das gegenwärtige Erlebnis vergangener Leistung durch richtige Interpretation historisches Bewußtsein und Selbstbewußtsein prägen kann.¹⁴¹³

Shakespeare was particularly noteworthy subject of this discourse, since he was claimed as an important figure of German cultural heritage despite not being German. How he was interpreted in this framework as part of a historical development can be seen most clearly in Alexander Arbusch's opening speech to the Shakespeare Society's celebration of the Shakespeare quadricentennial:

Shakespeare gestaltete in gewaltigen dramatischen Fresken den langen und schweren geschichtlichen Weg der Menschen seines Heimatlandes aus den Wirren der sich zersetzenden, von der Geschichte überholten Feudalordnung zur Nation. Die entsetzlichen Verbrechen, das Versagen menschlicher Bindungen und menschlichen Empfindens, die blutigen Greuel [sic] der Rosenkriege, in denen sich die alten Adelsgeschlechter gegenseitig ausrotten, waren Stufen zu der neuen gesellschaftlichen Einheit. In diesen Dramen fordert der Dichter, getragen von dem Gefühl nationaler Kraft und in ebenso poetisch wie starken Worten, die Zuschauer auf, den schwer errungenen Bestand der Nation, Voraussetzung des Friedens, zu verteidigen gegen alle Feinde von außen und von innen.¹⁴¹⁴

Because of this classification as *Kulturelles Erbe*, stagings of these works had to be affirmative, with the characters depicted as positive and optimistic socialist hero figures. In Bennewitz's 1965 production, Faust was a "resolute and fearless workers' hero".¹⁴¹⁵ From his report in *Theater der Zeit* about English Shakespeare productions in 1962, it is clear that Bennewitz's criticism was heavily informed by this understanding of *Kulturelles Erbe*. He was appalled by the production of *Hamlet* in Stratford-upon Avon, especially by the main character, a "neurasthenic Hamlet, whose

¹⁴¹² Böhm, Guido. 2014. "Das "Drama der Geschichte" als sozialistisches Theaterereignis? Fritz Bennewitz inszeniert Goethes Faust I und II am Nationaltheater Weimar 1965 und 1967" In: *Reenacting History: Theater und Geschichte*. 66-74. Berlin, Theater der Zeit, p.66

¹⁴¹³ Bennewitz. 1962. p.69

¹⁴¹⁴ Arbusch, Alexander. 1964. *Shakespeare. Realist und Humanist, Genius der Weltliteratur*. Berlin, Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, p.21

¹⁴¹⁵ Böhm. 2014. p.68

madness is clinical in nature.” Bennewitz was more favourable towards the Oxford production of the same play, but still missed the vigour characteristic of an East German interpretation:

In Oxford war zumindest der Versuch abzulesen, Konflikte und Verhalten des Helden nicht aus unfruchtbarem Psychologismus zu beziehen. Auch hier leidet Hamlet noch mehr, als er zu handeln versucht, aber er leidet nicht mehr aus krankhafter Schwäche, sondern daran, daß die Welt aus den Fugen ist. Aber er leidet und zaudert nicht nur.¹⁴¹⁶

As he explained during the Shakespeare Society's roundtable discussion on his own 1972 production of *Hamlet*, Bennewitz understood the events of the play within the framework of the historical development of social change:

In den vergangenen Jahren haben wir uns immer wieder damit auseinandergesetzt wie Mensch und Menschheit ihren eigenen Wert und ihre Würde durch geschichtsbildende Tätigkeit erfahren. [...] Hamlet erkennt, daß der vom Geist des Vaters gegebene Racheauftrag nur als weltverändernde historische Aufgabe erfüllt werden kann. In diesem Bewußtsein nimmt er den Auftrag an und fordert gleichermaßen seine Zeit, seine Welt und sich selber heraus. Hamlets Weg ist ein fortwährender Prüfungsprozeß und durch die Prüfungen ein Wachstums- und Reifeprozess zu der für jede individuelle und historische Tat notwendigen Bereitschaft.¹⁴¹⁷

Another central concept of East German Shakespeare reception was *Volkstümlichkeit*, a concept derived from the Soviet *narodnost*. English scholar Robert Weimann described *Volkstümlichkeit* as the sense of association with both the cause and the culture of the people,¹⁴¹⁸ to bring performances closer to the predetermined interests of a broad working-class audience.¹⁴¹⁹ Arbusch had explained in his opening speech at the Shakespeare Society, with a reference to the previous and forthcoming Bitterfeld Conference, that the works of national and world literature had to be made “truly and everyday accessible to the whole people” with the aim of “developing an educated nation.”¹⁴²⁰

¹⁴¹⁶ Bennewitz. 1962. p.72

¹⁴¹⁷ Deutsche Shakespeare Gesellschaft. 1973. *Shakespeare-Tage 1973*. Weimar: VEB Buchdruckerei, p.5

¹⁴¹⁸ Weimann, Robert.1998. “Shakespeare Redefined: A Personal Retrospect” In: *Redefining Shakespeare. Literary Theory and Theatre Practice in the German Democratic Republic* , edited by J. Lawrence Guntner and Andrew M. McLean. 121-138. Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, p.129

¹⁴¹⁹ Weimann, Robert. 2006. “Ideology and Performance in East German Versions of Shakespeare” In: *Shakespeare in the World of Communism and Socialism* , edited by Irena R. Makaryk and Joseph G. Price. 328-348. Toronto: University of Toronto Press

¹⁴²⁰ Arbusch. 1964. p.13

Brechtian theory became a new reference point for East German Shakespeare reception during the 1960s through the focus on popular theatre tradition. Inspired by Brecht's adaptation of *Coriolan*,¹⁴²¹ Weimann published his book *Shakespeare und die Tradition des Volkstheaters*. In it, he placed a strong focus on popular theatre and popular theatre influences in Elizabethan theatre, carefully tracing the historical roots of Shakespearean theatre and examining the dramatic *gestus* of Shakespeare's plays. In line with Brecht's dialectical approach but in contrast to Marxist-Leninist readings of class hegemony, he also proposed a view of the Elizabethan society "in a state of balance, transition or relative unity which did not privilege one group or social force over the other."¹⁴²² This reading, that was originally intended to oppose a dogmatic socialist interpretation, heavily influenced Bennewitz's work. His Shakespeare productions aimed at "visions of social harmony" that were – by Weimann's own admission – quite flawed and tended to minimalise "the tensions inscribed in Elizabethan cultural practises." Bennewitz's Shakespeare productions aligned with the official demand for humanism, realism and *Volkstümlichkeit* and dominated the discourse in the Shakespeare Society. As Weimann described:

Whatever innocence and/or complicity were involved in these productions (entangled no doubt with hope for a socialist conscience with 'a human face'), they could not be critically challenged as long as Shakespeare's reception in East Germany was dominated by modifications (along the lines of Kulturpolitik) of the classical-romantic paradigm.¹⁴²³

While Bennewitz interpreted the plays he staged in line with cultural policy and was very engaged in the socialist appropriation of cultural heritage, few of his productions were radical re-interpretations of the texts. One repeated criticism of Bennewitz's work in the GDR was that the ideological concepts behind his productions were often only very vaguely presented on stage. His attempt to highlight the contradictions of Faust's character and related them to Brecht's *Urfaust* adaptation were "hardly executed on stage and not very readable."¹⁴²⁴ For *Richard II.*, Bennewitz wanted to shift the focus

¹⁴²¹ Wekwerth, Manfred. Weimann, Robert. 1998. "Brecht and Beyond". Interview with Lawrence Guntner" In: *Redefining Shakespeare. Literary Theory and Theatre Practice in the German Democratic Republic*, edited by J. Lawrence Guntner and Andrew M. McLean. 226-240. Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, p.231

¹⁴²² Guntner, J. Lawrence. 1998. "Introduction: Shakespeare in East Germany: Between Appropriation and Deconstruction" In: *Redefining Shakespeare. Literary Theory and Theatre Practice in the German Democratic Republic*, edited by J. Lawrence Guntner and Andrew M. McLean. 29-60. Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, p.42

¹⁴²³ Weimann. 1998. p.129

¹⁴²⁴ Böhm. 2015. p.146

of the play from Richard's downfall to the changes in the balance of power.¹⁴²⁵ However, as Brigitte Oels noted, this dramaturgical concept clashed with the actual performance on stage:

Zwar wird dem Zuschauer diese Lektion sozialistischer Geschichtsinterpretation überzeugend vermittelt, aber der Versuch, der Handlung zugrunde liegende historische Zusammenhänge zum eigentlichen Gegenstand des Stückes zu machen, macht diese Inszenierung widersprüchlich. Bezeichnenderweise jedoch nur dem, der diese Regiekonzeption und erreichte Aussage miteinander vergleichen kann. Denn die Inszenierung selbst erzählt sich mühelos und ohne Brüche gegen aufgesetzte 'Aktualisierungen' durchsetzend, die Geschichte vom Untergang König Richards II.¹⁴²⁶

This analysis is not dissimilar to Ernst Schumacher's review of Bennewitz's Brecht productions that were shown in Berlin on the occasion of the 1968 Brecht Dialogue. He wished for *Galilei* to have "more sharply thought-out arrangements, but above all a more sharply pointed presentation."¹⁴²⁷ In the case of *Life of Edward the Second*, he criticised how the references to contemporary issues as envisioned by Bennewitz could only be identified with "a fair amount of imagination."¹⁴²⁸ Schumacher's criticism does not suggest that these two productions represented particular novelties in East German Brecht discourse. When Bennewitz directed the revival of *Galilei* at the Berliner Ensemble in 1971, he adhered extremely strictly to the model of the Brecht/Engel production, both in terms of the acting and the rhythm of the play.¹⁴²⁹

While a committed socialist, Bennewitz was, as journalist Christoph Funke attested, neither interested in party politics nor involved in subversive work.¹⁴³⁰ His domestic productions were deeply inspired by both his political convictions and the discourse around *Kulturelles Erbe* and *Volkstümlichkeit*. Even if they were therefore regarded as exemplary for the accepted interpretations of the classics, they were not very outstanding or innovative, with the bolder ideas and concepts often getting lost when realised on stage.

While Bennewitz's international Brecht productions of the 1970s marked a clear contrast to his work in the GDR, they were nevertheless motivated by the same

¹⁴²⁵ Oels. 1974. p.172

¹⁴²⁶ *ibid.*, p.172-173

¹⁴²⁷ Schuhmacher, Ernst. 1977. *Brecht-Kritiken*. Berlin: Henschelverlag, p.124

¹⁴²⁸ *ibid.*, p.126

¹⁴²⁹ *ibid.*, p.84

¹⁴³⁰ John, David Gethin. 2011. "Fritz Bennewitz's Islamic Chalk Circle in the Philippines" In: *Brecht in/and Asia. The Brecht Yearbook 36*, edited by Markus Wessendorf. 315-327. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, p. 316

concepts. Bennewitz himself left no doubt about the political considerations that informed his working methods. Of his *Chalk Circle* project, he declared:

Die Arbeit ist Teil und Fortsetzung einer internationalen Versuchsreihe zur Adaption und Integration des KREIDEKREISES von Brecht in fremde Nationalkulturen. Durch diese Versuchsreihe soll erprobt und erfahren werden, wie sich die dem Stück eigene soziale Absicht unter voneinander verschiedenen historischen, kulturellen, ethnischen und anderen Bedingungen künstlerisch und kulturpolitisch realisiert.¹⁴³¹

His concern with the adaptability of the *Chalk Circle* and the importance of its appropriation in service of a national culture is significant. It reveals how much his approach to his international productions was informed by the East German theatrical discourse he was deeply familiar with. Shakespeare, as a foreign author, had been a strong influence on the emergence of national culture in Germany. Just as his work was appropriated to serve the development of a socialist society in the GDR as part of the *Kulturelles Erbe*, Brecht was to have a similar influence on national culture in Asia:

[Die Arbeit] soll und kann in den jeweiligen Ländern eigene dramatische Literatur anregen, tradiertes Theater zeitgenössischer Thematik relevant machen und Ausbildungsprogramme methodisch befördern.¹⁴³²

This approach was often compatible with the intentions of his international partners, who – in the wake of decolonisation – were themselves trying to rediscover or develop ‘national’ forms of theatrical expression. PETA especially had been founded to promote a Philippine theatre that would aid the development of Philippine society.

With the exception of his repeated visits to the NSD in New Delhi, Bennewitz worked mainly with theatre troupes of different popular theatre traditions. This allowed him to reflect on the East German and specifically Brechtian concept of *Volkstümlichkeit*. While plebian characters and the influence of popular theatre were an important part of the East German discourse, Germany did not have a living tradition of popular theatre. Brecht’s *Volkstümlichkeit* was therefore not a continuation of existing traditions. Instead, as Bennewitz described, he based “his way of thinking on a thoroughly grounded relationship to the people in the present and the past, and this universally and not limited to Europe. Thoroughly grounded here means: grounded in reasons, from the ground up, at the root.”¹⁴³³

¹⁴³¹ BArch DR1/10653a. 1977/12/10. *Bericht über Aufenthalt in der Republik der Philippinen*.

¹⁴³² *ibid.*

¹⁴³³ Bennewitz: letter 10.11.1973. cited from: Esleben. 2016. p.45

The existence of a vast number of living popular theatre traditions in India allowed Bennewitz to engage with the concept of *Volkstümlichkeit* in a way that had been impossible in Germany. The “sense of association with both the cause and the culture of the people” fit well with what Bennewitz attempted to achieve with his intercultural adaptations of Brecht. He considered the focus on popular theatre necessary to counteract what he observed as the commercialisation and the depoliticisation of popular theatre and the alienation of literary theatre from popular theatre, which also corresponded to the alienation of intellectuals from the masses.¹⁴³⁴ He was very concerned with achieving the greatest possible authenticity in his work,¹⁴³⁵ and therefore considered the kind of co-production he had with Mehta to be crucial.¹⁴³⁶ In the same vein, he believed it vitally important to connect his work to a cultural organisation able to reach the masses through theatre.¹⁴³⁷

Since Bennewitz intended his Brecht productions to contribute to cultural and societal change in the respective countries, he considered it vital that the applicability of the plays’ themes and plot were understood by the audiences. The poverty and social inequality he witnessed during his first visits to India had a significant impact on Bennewitz. They confirmed to him the importance of Brecht’s critique of capitalism, that was more applicable in the Global South than in the socialist system of the GDR. In his report on *The Threepenny Opera* in 1970, he wrote that the play was “frighteningly relevant despite its limited practicable philosophy.” This topicality was stressed by an added prologue written by the students themselves.¹⁴³⁸ Apart from that, the actual play was still staged in a conventional European style:

Neither the setting of the play, the Victorian neighborhood of Soho in London, nor the names of the characters were Indianized. Furthermore, the costumes remained loyal to the original production as male characters wore black tuxedos, bow ties, and hats, and women wore skirts or half-pants along with beach hats.¹⁴³⁹

¹⁴³⁴ BArch DR107/4. *Bericht Arbeitsaufenthalt in Indien im Rahmen des Kulturarbeitsplans Indien-DDR, 4.10.-4.12.1973*, p.4

¹⁴³⁵ Bennewitz. 1980. p.1

¹⁴³⁶ BArch DR107/4. *Bericht Arbeitsaufenthalt in Indien im Rahmen des Kulturarbeitsplans Indien-DDR, 4.10.-4.12.1973*, p.4

¹⁴³⁷ *ibid.*, p.4

¹⁴³⁸ BArch DR1/8853. *Arbeitsbericht über Aufenthalt in New Dehli, 18.2. bis 19.4.1970*. p.4

¹⁴³⁹ Prateek. 2016. “East Meets East: Recycling Brecht in India” In: *Recycling Brecht*, edited by Tom Kuhn and David Barnett. 137-151. Rochester, New York; Woodbridge, Suffolk: Camden House, p.142-3

Esleben noted that even the only West German critic of the production called it “thoroughly bourgeois theatre for the Indian bourgeoisie.”¹⁴⁴⁰ Bennewitz himself later remarked that although the production “succeeded in raising curiosity about Brecht,” it “did not make a lasting impact on the young Indian national theatre movement, because the production had been created from our European traditions and acting conventions.”¹⁴⁴¹

For the *Chalk Circle* production and with the aid of a more artful, deliberate translation, Mehta and Bennewitz went further and transported the play into an Indian setting: The names and social standing of the characters, the costumes and music were all Indianised.

Because of his focus on popular theatre, Bennewitz’s productions abroad were almost exclusively performed in the different local languages. Since Bennewitz himself only spoke English, this presented a challenge. However, he found that this also had positive effects:

Begreifliche Sprachschwierigkeiten – ich hatte die deutsche Version im Kopf, brauchte die englische Übersetzung im Augenblick parat und mußte im selben Augenblick fähig sein zu entdecken, an welcher Stelle des Textes die Schauspieler in Hindi agierten – waren verhältnismäßig rasch zu überwinden. Es lag im Gegenteil ein bemerkenswerter Vorzug in dieser Schwierigkeit, da ich bei sehr mangelhafter Kenntnis der Sprache gezwungen war, den gestischen Ausdruck viel intensiver zu fordern und zu kontrollieren, als es bei Produktionen in der eigenen Sprache leider zu geschehen pflegt.¹⁴⁴²

Due to these difficulties with communication, Bennewitz concentrated on developing the Brechtian *gestus* in particular detail. For the *Threepenny Opera* of 1970, Bennewitz already attached great importance to very precise gestures in order to portray the characters in a way that was also understandable to an Indian audience.¹⁴⁴³ In subsequent productions, Bennewitz and his co-directors also made use of various forms of popular theatre. In the case of the *Chalk Circle* production, Mehta and Bennewitz chose to focus on Tamasha, one of the most popular and widespread forms in Maharashtra.¹⁴⁴⁴

Bennewitz realised, however, that not all elements of the text were easily comprehensible to an Indian audience. Characters and scenes that relied on the

¹⁴⁴⁰ Esleben. 2016. p.30

¹⁴⁴¹ Bennewitz. 1982. Letter to Ingeborg Pietzsch, cited from Esleben. 2016. p.32

¹⁴⁴² BArch DR1/8853. *Arbeitsbericht über Aufenthalt in New Dehli, 18.2. bis 19.4.1970.* p.3

¹⁴⁴³ Prateek. 2016. p.137-151

¹⁴⁴⁴ Bennewitz, Fritz: Letter 10.11.1973. cited from: Esleben. 2016. p.46

audience's knowledge of European history and cultural memory were especially hard to convey. For example, Bennewitz found "in Maharashtra's history, at least in the popular consciousness, nothing like the carpet weavers' uprising which is so important for understanding the play."¹⁴⁴⁵ He faced similar difficulties with the figure of the bandit Irakli, whom he found "not comprehensible at all" in the Indian context.¹⁴⁴⁶ In Germany, people were familiar with "comparable good robbers who give to the poor what they take from the rich" like Robin Hood or Schiller's Karl Moor from *The Robbers*, and Brecht had been able to presume this topos to be known to his audience. According to Bennewitz, this was not possible in Mumbai: "There are similar stories here, but those who took from the rich with weapons and violence have disappeared from public consciousness due to the Gandhian theory of non-violence [...]."¹⁴⁴⁷ Accordingly, the co-directors tried to find a solution to preserve the central messages of the play but avoid the character Irakli.¹⁴⁴⁸

The extent to which this adaptation differed from the Brechtian original can also be clearly seen in the East German reception of the guest performance of *Ajab Nyaya Vartulscha* at the Berliner Festtage. Ernst Schumacher's gives a detailed description:

Wenn die Huldigung an den Gott mit Elefantenkopf Ganesh, dem Patron glücklicher Unternehmungen, in der Form einer Hymne und eines Tanzes beendet ist, werden wir Zeuge, wie sich arme und reiche Bauern eines indischen Dorfes wegen eines Dammbaues, der zum Schutz gegen Hochwasser wie Dürre nötig ist, in die Haare geraten, weil die Reichen den Grund und Boden nicht hergeben wollen. Einer der Großbauern gibt vor, ‚vom Gott besessen‘ zu sein, und offenbar, es solle in einem Spiel dargestellt werden, wem was gehören solle. Daraus leitet sich dann das Spiel vom Kreidekreis ab. Bei dieser Darstellung zeichnet sich das Spiel der Repräsentanten der Macht, der feudalen Fürsten, Gouverneure, Beamten, durch ein hochstilisiertes, formalisiertes Verhalten aus, bei dem besonders auch die für uns nur bedingt verständliche Gestensprache verwendet wird. Die Repräsentanten des Volkes dagegen bedienen sich eines freien, ungebundenen Ausdrucks im Sprachlichen wie im Gestischen. Auf den Höhepunkten der Auseinandersetzung kommt es zu fast naturalistisch anmutenden Formen des Ausdrucks, denen dann wieder fast balletthafte, durchkomponierte Bewegungen (etwa beim Verfolgen der Grusche durch die Panzerreiter) gegenüberstehen, die durch den Gesang und den Rhythmus der Schlag- und Saiteninstrumente bestimmt sind und von der Urform des indischen Theaters, dem Tanztheater, profitieren.¹⁴⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴⁵ BArch DR107/4. *Bericht Arbeitsaufenthalt in Indien im Rahmen des Kulturarbeitsplans Indien-DDR, 4.10.-4.12.1973*, p.2

¹⁴⁴⁶ Bennewitz. Letter. cited from Esleben. 2016. p.48

¹⁴⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p.48

¹⁴⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.50

¹⁴⁴⁹ Schumacher. 1977. p.141-142

On the basis of his experiences in Mumbai, Bennewitz approached the *Chalk Circle* production he staged in Manila with the Kalinangan ensemble in a similar fashion. Originally, Bennewitz had planned to set the play in the mountainous regions of Northern Luzon. This decision had been inspired by Lutgardo Labad's contribution during the ITI seminar in 1976. Due to current political events, especially the ongoing conflict with Muslim separatists in the southern Philippines, however, Bennewitz and PETA changed their minds. In order to demonstrate "that the region was part of the nation, the Muslim culture an integral part of Philippine national culture", they decided to adapt the play "into the history and pre-colonial cultural traditions of the Muslim regions". The prologue, originally set in the Soviet Union, was transferred to the slums of Manila. According to Bennewitz, this brought "urban proletariat and rural poverty into relation with each other and with the basic social theme of the play, and gave it a national dimension by telling the 'story from ancient times' during the feudal history of the Sulu archipelago shortly after the arrival of the Spaniards."¹⁴⁵⁰

The style of this production was quite unlike the usual treatment of Brecht in the GDR. While Brecht's ideas were taken and adapted by dramatists and theatre artists in various ways, performances of his own plays hardly strayed from the established models both in regards to text and performance style. Under Helene Weigel, the BE had dedicated itself to the purist style of Brecht productions for which it had become famous. As the repository of Brechtian expertise, the BE was considered an important asset, and both the cultural politicians and Brecht's heirs were wary of experiments that could endanger this status. While many East German theatre practitioners criticised the BE's artistic stagnation, change was therefore very difficult. When Ruth Berghaus became the BE's new artistic director in the 1970s and tried to free the company of its status as a Brecht Museum, she was met with scepticism and ultimately replaced with the more agreeable Manfred Wekwerth. Brecht's heirs used their ownership of copy and performance rights to control the ways in which Brecht's plays could be performed. Barbara Brecht-Schall, who was responsible for the German-language rights, was especially strict and frequently refused even requests by Western directors with leftist credentials such as Peter Stein or Claus Peymann.¹⁴⁵¹ A BE production of *The*

¹⁴⁵⁰ BArch DR1/10653a. 1977/12/10. *Bericht über Aufenthalt in der Republik der Philippinen.*

¹⁴⁵¹ Kruger, Loren. 2004. *Post-Imperial Brecht. Politics, Performance, East and South.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 202

Threepenny Opera directed by Dario Fo in 1981, for example, was terminated after only a few rehearsals when he was fired on Brecht-Schall's instructions.¹⁴⁵²

Bennewitz's own productions in the GDR had closely adhered to the Brechtian models, and had not been considered especially experimental or ground-breaking. In contrast, his international productions were undoubtedly more than simple translations of Brecht's *Chalk Circle*. Rather, they were highly localised adaptations, directed not at the largest possible audience but rather at a very specific one. This begs the question why this style of production so unlike the Brechtian orthodoxy prescribed in East Germany and previously used as a successful cultural export was still met with approval by the MfK.

Familiarising through translation was a common issue regarding Brecht's texts in foreign languages.¹⁴⁵³ This was not a new phenomenon for Bennewitz, who as a German Shakespeare director was quite familiar with the practice of underlining one's own interpretation of plays through translation.¹⁴⁵⁴ In case of the *Chalk Circle* adaptations, this was a deliberate procedure. By cultural transfer of the play's settings, the *Chalk Circle* adaptations aimed to create familiarity and comprehensibility. In that, they differed strongly from Brecht's original text, which used distancing and historicization as a narrative technique. Brecht had deliberately set the action of the *Chalk Circle* in the Caucasus, a region unfamiliar to his original German audience. By looking at one social system from the perspective of another, Brecht wanted to provide deeper insights into the current systems, but also to shed light on the rules that were currently taken for granted.¹⁴⁵⁵

In Bennewitz's opinion, this kind of distancing was not possible for his Indian adaptations because he found any historicizing perspective on theatre lacking in the Indian audience. They were, according to him, "an audience not yet used to think historically understands events on stage either as legends, which lies in the distant past

¹⁴⁵² Urs, Jenny. 1992. "Brecht, ein auslaufendes Modell" In: *Der Spiegel* 1992(10)

¹⁴⁵³ Morley, Michael. 1997. "Negotiating Meanings: Thoughts on Brecht and Translation" In: *A Bertolt Brecht Reference Companion*, edited by Siegfried Mews. 321-338. London: Greenwood Press, p.323

¹⁴⁵⁴ Brown, John Russell. 1993. "Foreign Shakespeare and English-speaking audiences" In: *Foreign Shakespeare*, edited by Dennis Kennedy. 21-35. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, p.26

¹⁴⁵⁵ Brecht, Bertolt. 1967. *Gesammelte Werke in 20 Bänden*, edited by Werner Hecht. Vol. 16. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, p.653

or is not history at all, or as immediately related to the present.”¹⁴⁵⁶ According to Bennewitz, “the thinking patterns of the average Indian [were] predominantly static and not dynamic, not dialectical, and historical thinking [was] hardly developed at all.”¹⁴⁵⁷

This disregard of Brecht’s method was not necessarily un-Brechtian. Brecht used tools like *Verfremdung* in service of a desired effect, to “demonstrate and provoke an awareness of the individual’s place in a concrete social narrative.”¹⁴⁵⁸ Since he deemed the Brechtian methods ineffective for achieving Brecht’s intentions, Bennewitz prioritised the latter. This was a conscious decision and not an accidental development during rehearsals. In his opinion, Brecht’s cause could only reach the audience through “adaptation, integration and assimilation”:¹⁴⁵⁹ “Wir mussten aber auch begreifen: Der durch *Verfremdung* bewirkten Verwunderungen, daß das, was ist, nicht bleiben muß, wie es ist, muß die Einladung zur Identifikation vorausgehen.”¹⁴⁶⁰

While Brecht’s methods were thus side-lined, the focus was on highlighting the political message implicit in his plays through localisation instead. References to current political situations were often very apparent, such as the setting of the prologue in the slums of Manila for the Philippine version. For the *Threepenny Opera*, the students had written a prologue that explained the social relevance of the play.¹⁴⁶¹ For the *Chalk Circle* in 1973, they highlighted the themes via the traditions of Marathi popular theatre which allowed for free improvisation and for the actors to simply explain the meaning of certain scenes when necessary.¹⁴⁶²

In the review of *Ajab Nyaya Vartulscha* for *Theater der Zeit*, Joachim Fiebach agreed with Bennewitz’s general approach:

Ich halte das für einen überzeugenden Adaptionsansatz, ganz im Sinne Brechts, seiner Auffassung vom Primat der Funktion, also der Wirksamkeit von Kunst für die Behandlung von Kunst selbst. Dieser Funktionalität unterliegen natürlich auch seine Stücke. Sie müssen prinzipiell für Bearbeitungen, das heißt

¹⁴⁵⁶ Bennewitz. Letter. cited from: Esleben. 2016, p.49

¹⁴⁵⁷ BArch DR107/4. *Bericht Arbeitsaufenthalt in Indien im Rahmen des Kulturarbeitsplans Indien-DDR, 4.10.-4.12.1973*, p.2

¹⁴⁵⁸ Brooker, Peter. 2006. “Key words in Brecht’s theory and practice of theatre” In: *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*, edited by Peter Thompson and Glendyr Sacks. 209-224. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.210

¹⁴⁵⁹ BArch DR107/4. *Bericht Arbeitsaufenthalt in Indien im Rahmen des Kulturarbeitsplans Indien-DDR, 4.10.-4.12.1973*, p.4

¹⁴⁶⁰ Bennewitz. 1980. p.1

¹⁴⁶¹ BArch DR1/8853. *Arbeitsbericht über meinen Aufenthalt in New Dehli, 18.2. bis 19.4.1970*. p.4

¹⁴⁶² BArch DR107/4. *Bericht Arbeitsaufenthalt in Indien im Rahmen des Kulturarbeitsplans Indien-DDR, 4.10.-4.12.1973*, p.2

Veränderungen offen sein, um in bestimmten historischen Umständen ihre gesellschaftliche Rolle - künstlerischer Beitrag zur Verbesserung des menschlichen Zusammenlebens - erfüllen zu können. [...] Das so bearbeitete Vorspiel macht also generell aufmerksam: Hier wird deine Sache verhandelt. Komplizierte Assoziationen und Umsetzungen von europäischen Erfahrungen und beobachteter Geschichte auf indische Verhältnisse und Geschichte werden so umgangen.¹⁴⁶³

Fiebach therefore considered Bennewitz's approach to be an "example or model for Brecht reception in most developing countries." With the strong prioritisation of political objective even over artistic method, it was not surprising that East German cultural politicians and diplomats were also convinced by his conception of intercultural theatre.

His domestic productions were deeply inspired by both his political convictions and the discourse around *Kulturelles Erbe* and *Volkstümlichkeit*. To what extent these actually shaped the productions, however, is unclear not just because of Bennewitz's tendency in his East German stagings to only vaguely realise his conception on stage. The extent to which Bennewitz's ideas actually impacted the crucial production of *Ajab Nyaya Vartulscha* can also not be determined with absolute certainty. While he initially referred to Mehta as his assistant, but then mostly described the two of them as equal collaborators,¹⁴⁶⁴ there is also an account that attributes a much more passive role to Bennewitz, mainly because of the language difficulties.¹⁴⁶⁵

In addition, Bennewitz was not the first to attempt such a cultural adaptation of Brecht. Mehta herself had already undertaken a Marathi adaptation of *The Good Person of Szechuan* in 1972, a year earlier. The cultural transfer of European plays in general and Brecht plays in particular was also a larger trend among theatre artists of the Global South.¹⁴⁶⁶ In his review of *Ajab Nyaya Vartulscha*, Fiebach also noted that the production was an implementation of "considerations that have been posed for some

¹⁴⁶³ Fiebach, Joachim. 1974. "Kaukasische Kreidekreis, Der" nach B. Brecht an der Theatergruppe Bombay" In: *Theater der Zeit* 1974(12), 14-15, p.14

¹⁴⁶⁴ Esleben, Joerg. 2011. "From Didactic to Dialectic Intercultural Theater: Fritz Bennewitz and the 1973 Production of the Caucasian Chalk Circle in Mumbai" In: *Brecht in/and Asia. The Brecht Yearbook 36*, edited by Markus Wessendorf. 303-312. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, p.304-5

¹⁴⁶⁵ *ibid.*, endnote 11, p.310-311

¹⁴⁶⁶ This trend of cultural appropriation of Brecht by theatre artists of the Global South is addressed in a large number of academic publications. A few examples include: Pianca, Marina. 1997. "Brecht in Latin America: Theater Bearing Witness" In: *A Bertolt Brecht Reference Companion*, edited by Siegfried Mews. 356-378. London: Greenwood Press; Allana. 2018. p.121-135; Dalmia, Vasudha. 2006. *Poetics, Plays, and Performances. The Politics of Modern Indian Theatre*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

time by consciously anti-imperialist theatre-makers in those [developing] countries” and even mentioned Awni Karoumi’s Bagdad production of *Mr Puntila and his Man Matti* in the same year as an example of a similar attempt.¹⁴⁶⁷

Michael Bodden described the connection between Brecht’s work and contemporary Asian theatre as one of “cross-cultural appropriation”, that is “a creative, dynamic process of reinterpreting and retooling certain of Brecht’s ideas or techniques rather than a stiff imitation.”¹⁴⁶⁸ The effacing of Brechtian *Verfremdung* in favour of immediate relevance was a common feature of this trend.¹⁴⁶⁹ While Brecht was often found useful “in articulating a critique of existing power structures on behalf of the disenfranchised and marginalized”, Bodden also stressed that this was “never undertaken from the same ideological position as that occupied by Brecht during his life.”¹⁴⁷⁰ As examples of this trend, he cited several PETA/Bennewitz co-productions, without emphasising Bennewitz’s influence or distinguishing them from other productions because of his involvement. In Bodden’s depiction, Bennewitz therefore seems more like a teacher of Brechtian theories who introduced the PETA theatre people to vocabulary such as ‘scenic gestus’, but whose socialist agenda did not noticeably inform the already socially critical Brecht productions.¹⁴⁷¹

Situating Bennewitz within this trend does not diminish the evident success of his approach, but maybe provides an explanation. Bennewitz was recruited as a theatre expert by the East German ITI centre and the MfK to carry out the GDR’s foreign cultural policy towards the Global South. Through his guest productions, he was to represent GDR culture and Eastern Bloc socialism, get theatre artists to sympathise with these positions and to influence the development of their national culture in this way. His writings show that Bennewitz generally did agree with this prescribed role and viewed his international work in that context. The fact that he nevertheless did not dominate his co-productions with theatre artists from the Global South likely benefitted his success. In addition to Brechtian expertise, he provided his partners with an

¹⁴⁶⁷ Fiebach. 1974. p.14

¹⁴⁶⁸ Bodden, Michael. “Brecht in Asia: New Agendas, National Traditions, and Critical Consciousness.” In: *A Bertolt Brecht Reference Companion*, edited by Siegfried Mews. 379-398. London: Greenwood Press, p.380

¹⁴⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p.383

¹⁴⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p.380

¹⁴⁷¹ *ibid.*, p.386

approach that allowed itself to be used by theatre artists from the Global South for their own purposes that could either be aligned or unrelated to the GDR's political agenda.

5. A Common Method? - Other East German Theatre Experts in the Global South

Even if he was by far the most prolific, Bennewitz was not the only East German theatre artists who was sent abroad to work on guest productions in the Global South and thereby came into contact with the ITI centre of the GDR. In 1984, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of its ITI membership, the East German centre prepared an issue of *Theatre in the GDR* on the international East German activities in the framework of the ITI.¹⁴⁷² The GDR ITI centred this issue on two kinds of theatrical exports: participation in the Theatre of Nations festival and guest productions by East German theatre directors abroad. To that end, the centre collected reports from various East German theatre artists about their international activities.

The majority of these sendings of GDR theatre experts were to the Global South.¹⁴⁷³ Fritz Bennewitz's report on his "productions in India, the Philippines and elsewhere" is the first and longest among them. Apart from him, there are eight other accounts of East German guest productions in the Global South: Hanns Anselm Perten's *Debiera Haber Obispas* at the Teatro Fabregas in Mexico City in 1963, Hannes Fischer's *Puntilla* in Chile in 1970, the Brecht productions of Fischer, Ulf Keyn, and Claus Hammel in Cuba in the 1970s, Heinz-Uwe Haus's Brecht productions in Cyprus and Greece from 1975 to 1983, Alexander Stillmark's *Chalk Circle* in Vietnam in 1982, Hammel's productions of *Humboldt und Bolivar oder Der Neue Continent* in Cuba and Mexico 1983, and two accounts of children's theatre productions in Egypt in 1972 and in Ethiopia, Iraq and Sri Lanka in 1978.

There is no indication that the ITI centre of the GDR had any part in most of these engagements. In Bennewitz's case it is easy to understand how the contacts of the East German ITI centre had led to the possibility of many of his trips in the first place. There is nothing comparable to this, no travel requests, reports or detailed correspondence between the ITI centre and national centres or other institutions abroad

¹⁴⁷² The typewritten drafts in German and the translations into English, French and Russian can be found in: BArch DR107/108.

¹⁴⁷³ The exceptions are Joachim Tenschert's work in Australia and Wolfgang Pintzka's guest productions in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Iceland.

for any other director. Their inclusion in the ITI brochure is therefore slightly misleading. The only exception to that is Heinz-Uwe Haus, who, apart from Bennewitz, had the closest link to the ITI centre.

Haus staged four plays in Cyprus at the National Theatre between 1975 and 1980, including Brecht's *Mother Courage* and *The Good Person of Szechwan*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. He first came to Cyprus in 1975 to direct Brecht at the Theatricos Organismos Kiprou (THOK), the National Theatre in Nicosia. At the time, Cyprus did not have an ITI centre nor had the GDR ITI established any contact with Cypriot theatre artists. The trip came about through the cultural agreement between the GDR and Cyprus. The THOK had only recently been established, was just in its fourth season and looking for foreign support to expand its repertoire. Up until then, it had only performed classical and modern Greek works and contemporary Western plays. Brecht was the first 'socialist' author in its repertoire and Haus the first foreign guest director.¹⁴⁷⁴

Haus's first staging in Cyprus was *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, and he returned several times in the following years. In his Brecht productions in Cyprus, Haus tried to "tell the fables in such a way that they can basically be adapted against the background of the national situation and tradition."¹⁴⁷⁵ In *Theater der Zeit*, Haus explained the basis of his approach:

Meine These war, daß sich das Stück unter allen Umständen, nicht aber die Verhältnisse, für die es geschrieben war, inszenieren läßt, also die lebendige Dialektik zwischen der Aufführung und den Zuschauern der eigentliche Kern der Brechtschen Methode ist.¹⁴⁷⁶

He considered it therefore important to differentiate between stylistic elements and Brecht's general dialectical approach, with the latter playing the obviously more important part:

Brechts Ziel ist es bekanntlich, Gedanken und Gefühle zu verwenden und zu erzeugen, die zur Kreativität und Veränderung beitragen. Die Spielweise hat dem Zuschauer nicht nur ein Erlebnis zu verschaffen, sondern, wie Brecht es einmal radikal im Bekenntnis zu Piscators politischem Theater formulierte, 'einen praktischen Entschluß abzuringen, in das Leben tätig einzugreifen'. Ihm ist dazu jedes theatralische Mittel der Vergangenheit und Gegenwart recht. Der Formenreichtum und die Theatralik seines Theaters aber ist nur

¹⁴⁷⁴ Haus, Heinz-Uwe. 1976. "Der zypriotische Kreidekreis. Notat nach der Inszenierung" In: *Brecht Jahrbuch 1976*, edited by John Fuegi, Reinhold Grimm, and Jost Hermand. 162-165. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, p.163

¹⁴⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p.164-5

¹⁴⁷⁶ Haus, Heinz-Uwe. 1976. "Nachbetrachtung: 'Kreidekreis' in Nikosia" In: *Theater der Zeit* 1976(8). 12-14, p.12

selbstverständliche Voraussetzung zum eigentlichen Zweck: die Verhältnisse zwischen den Menschen dazuzustellen.¹⁴⁷⁷

During rehearsals, Haus used the model productions of the BE, not as a model to copy, but “to examine essential decisions in the production of the legendary Berlin performance for their causes.”¹⁴⁷⁸ Haus stressed that Brecht’s plays and his own stagings of them had to be analysed as products of specific historical circumstances and could not be universally applied to other countries.¹⁴⁷⁹ A looser approach to Brecht was therefore necessary.¹⁴⁸⁰

In his attempt to adapt the plays to new circumstances, several of Haus’s choices mirror Bennewitz’s approach. His Cypriot partners had initially planned to perform the *Caucasian Chalk Circle* without the prelude set in the Soviet Union, as it was felt to be “foreign and superfluous”. Haus convinced them to keep the prelude, but made changes to convey its current political significance to Cypriot audiences. He drew on recent events in Cyprus, where large sections of the population had been displaced following the Turkish invasion and occupation of 1974. Instead of being set in the Soviet Union, the prelude was set in a supposedly near future after the end of the Turkish occupation. In it, different groups of Cypriot refugees returned to the north of the country and began a dispute over the use of the land. In this way, the audience was to be shown a socialist alternative to their current living conditions.¹⁴⁸¹ Wladimiros Kavkaridis, the actor who played Azdak in this 1976 production called the play “extraordinarily topical and close to reality for our country”. In the role of Azdak, he felt like he “demanded justice for [his] tormented people.”¹⁴⁸² *Mother Courage* was similarly “naturalised” by turning the title character’s covered wagon into a blue-painted, two-wheeled farmer’s cart, common in the middle lowlands of Cyprus. The characters were also “entirely in the habitus of everyday experience.”¹⁴⁸³ Haus staged *The Good Person of Szechwan* with almost no changes to the text. What was changed, however, was the music by Paul Dessau, because it could not develop the intended effect without European listening

¹⁴⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p.12

¹⁴⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p.12

¹⁴⁷⁹ Hecht. 1986. p.54

¹⁴⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.58

¹⁴⁸¹ Haus. 1967. “Der zypriotische Kreidekreis“, p.44

¹⁴⁸² Kavkaridis, Wladimiros. 1976. “‘Der kaukasische Kreidekreis‘ könnte für uns auch ‚Der zypriotische Kreidekreis‘ heißen oder sein.“ In: *Theater der Zeit* 1976(8), p.14

¹⁴⁸³ Haus, Heinz-Uwe. 1979. ”Erfahrungen mit Brecht in Zypern“ In: *Notate* 1979(2). Berlin. Brecht-Zentrum, p.3

habits. Dessau's operetta parody was replaced by a parody of commercialised folklore and, according to Haus, achieved a comparable effect.¹⁴⁸⁴

In his various accounts of his directing in Cyprus, Haus also emphasised his "rigorous" use of typical Brechtian tools of *Verfremdung* like visible lighting fixtures, scene titles or half-height curtains.¹⁴⁸⁵ For example, images of the Turkish occupation of Northern Cyprus in 1974 were projected to accompany the songs in *Courage*, which Haus described as a "shocking element of local experience".¹⁴⁸⁶ In the *Chalk Circle*, a scripture banner provided information about Brecht's course of the fable to give the audience additional food for thought.¹⁴⁸⁷ In *Szechwan*, the actors wore masks that corresponded to their characters social standing: The masks worn by lower-class characters were comparatively crude and dehumanised.¹⁴⁸⁸

With his experience abroad, Haus also became involved in the work of the ITI centre. Even if the initiative for his guest productions in Cyprus had not come from the East German ITI, it soon gave him, like Bennewitz, a status as an expert on theatre work in the Third World. Accordingly, he too became a regular participant and contributor to events organised by the East German ITI centre on this topic. At the Brecht Dialogue in 1978, for example, he chaired the discussion on the problems of Brecht reception in Africa, Asia and Latin America,¹⁴⁸⁹ and at the Brecht Days in 1980 he shared the chairmanship of the discussion on "Theatre Work after Brecht" with Bennewitz.¹⁴⁹⁰ The Cypriot centre of ITI was established in 1978, and quickly became an active participant in ITI issues regarding the 'Third World'. In 1980 the centre held a CTWT conference on Third World theatre. Because of his many years of activity in Cyprus, Haus also established contacts with the Cypriot ITI centre and was appointed as an honorary member.

¹⁴⁸⁴ Hahn, Karl-Claus. 1981. "Vorgänge unterm Mikroskop. ‚notate‘-Gespräch zur zypriotischen Erstaufführung des ‚Guten Menschen von Sezuan‘ mit Regisseur Heinz-Uwe Haus." In: *Notate* 1981(1). Berlin. Brecht-Zentrum, p.3

¹⁴⁸⁵ Hecht. 1986. p.52

¹⁴⁸⁶ Haus. 1979, p.3

¹⁴⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p.165

¹⁴⁸⁸ John, Hans-Rainer. 1980. "Gut zu sein, wer wär's nicht gern/Heinz-Uwe Haus inszenierte Brechts ‚Sezuan‘ in Nicosia" In: *Theater der Zeit* 1980(3), 46-47, p.47

¹⁴⁸⁹ Hahn, Karl-Claus. 1979. *Brecht 78. Kunst und Politik. Dokumentation*. Berlin: Henschelverlag, p.39-50

¹⁴⁹⁰ Paffrath, Elifius. 1980. *Brecht 80. Brecht in Afrika, Asien und Lateinamerika. Dokumentation*. Berlin: Henschelverlag, p.301

The success of his productions in Cyprus enabled Haus to make further contacts and he was invited to lead further productions and lectures. His THOK productions were also staged as Cypriot guest performances in Athens and were shown on television, which led to invitations to Greece. In 1980, Haus was also invited to the USA for three months to stage *The Chalk Circle* at the Annenberg Centre of the Performing Arts at the University of Philadelphia. He then went on a tour to various universities, where he gave lectures on the methodology of theatre direction.¹⁴⁹¹

As with Bennewitz, these further engagements by Haus were not based on the initiative of the MfK, but on his own contacts. Whether he was able to take these opportunities was nevertheless dependent on their perceived usefulness in terms of cultural policy. This is clearly shown in a note about a conversation that Helmuth Tautz, Head of the International Relations Department, had with Haus in May 1979: In autumn 1978 Haus had been invited by Jim Christy, the director of the theatre at Villanova University. The MfK and the GDR embassy in the USA agreed that Haus was to decline this offer. They considered it necessary to concentrate their cultural relations with the USA on a few focal points, “larger and more influential” educational institutions, in particular those with German chairs. A “deployment” of Haus in the USA was not to be left to US initiative, but to be prepared by the GDR long-term. Despite instructions from the MfK, Haus was initially hesitant to cancel the invitation. Several letters were therefore sent between the two ITI centres and embassies of the GDR and USA to plan the visit. Tautz finally called Haus in for a meeting, in which he reiterated the MfK’s position and urged Haus to cancel the invitation citing other engagements.¹⁴⁹² At the same time, however, the MfK also planned to prepare a “conception of domestic and foreign commitments for the coming years” with Haus. Haus was in favour of this and agreed to submit his ideas to the ministry so that they could be discussed.¹⁴⁹³ Again, international engagements were only possible through cooperation with the cultural officials.

¹⁴⁹¹ BArch DR107/54. Haus, Hans-Uwe. 1980/12/15. *Bericht über die Dienstreise zur Durchführung der Inszenierung Der Kaukasische Kreisekreis von Brecht in Philadelphia und regiemethodischen Lehrveranstaltungen in verschiedenen Universitäten und Forschungseinrichtungen der USA vom 25.8.80 bis 28.11.80.*

¹⁴⁹² BArch DR107/54. 1979/05/14. Note on a conversation with Heinz-Uwe Haus on 1979/05/09, p.1

¹⁴⁹³ *ibid.*, p.2

Some of the other East German theatre directors named in the 1984 *Theatre in the GDR* issue, whose deployments were not related to the ITI at all, still became involved with the East German centre in some capacity. These were Alexander Stillmark and, of course, Ulf Keyn. In contrast to Bennewitz or Haus, they were sent as theatre experts to socialist countries in the Global South: Stillmark went to Vietnam in 1982, Keyn spent a large part of the 1970s in Cuba as an artist, lecturer and advisor. The GDR was not reliant on an NGO to facilitate these cultural exchanges, but could use the MfK's official state relations to other socialist countries. None of these directors became as involved in the ITI centre as Bennewitz in their role as experts for Third World theatre. Unlike him, they weren't 'homegrown' ITI personalities. Their contacts had not been built through the ITI network, but through the MfK's other channels. While their experiences did not translate into the broader sphere of the ITI world organisation as with Bennewitz, it did eventually bring them into contact with the ITI centre. Stillmark participated in the 1982 seminar organised by the GDR ITI for theatre artists of the Global South. Keyn would eventually become the ITI centre's last director in 1988.

The brief accounts in *Theatre in the GDR* show some striking basic similarities between the work of these directors in the Global South. Stillmark, for example, adapted *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* into traditional Vietnamese Chèo in cooperation with Vietnamese theatre director Vinh Mao. This approach was obviously reminiscent of Bennewitz's Marathi adaptation of the *Chalk Circle* with Vijaya Mehta. The East German theatre experts for the Global South shared, apart from the unsurprising focus on Brecht, a preference for cross-cultural cooperation with local theatre artists and a focus on cultural adaptation of the text to specific historical and social circumstances with an undogmatic approach in regards to methods and artistic questions:

Auffällig ist, daß von den Regisseuren nicht ein Theatermodell in seinen ästhetischen und methodischen Parametern propagiert oder gar zur Nachahmung angeboten wird, sondern wie intensiv die Suche nach adaptiven Verfahren, nach "Anverwandlung" an die verschiedenen Bedingungen in anderen Ländern betrieben wird.

This engagement with the history, culture and life practices of the partner countries was, according to the issue of *Theatre in the GDR*, a form of "practical internationalism".¹⁴⁹⁴

¹⁴⁹⁴ BArch DR107/108. Draft: *Das Theater in der DDR. Wirkung und Zusammenarbeit. 25 Jahre internationale Tätigkeit im Rahmen des ITI.*

There were certainly some differences in execution between these theatre directors. Haus, for example, placed a much stronger emphasis on using the tools of *Verfremdung* than Bennewitz. Nonetheless, there was a common strategy shared by many of the East German theatre directors who were sent to the Global South on cultural policy missions.

6 The ‘Development’ of Theatre within the Structure of the ITI

In the mid-1960s, in the wake of decolonisation, UNESCO had entered a new phase characterised by the developing countries trying to reshape the idea of development away from the paradigm of modernisation prominent in the 1950s.¹⁴⁹⁵ During the same time, ITI also began to turn more and more towards the Third World and a truly global exchange of theatre arts and practice. To give theatre artists from the Global South an opportunity to communicate with each other, the Committee of Third World Theatre was founded the idea of theatre as development aid thus enshrined in the organisation. After having examined the GDR ITI’s bilateral efforts focussed primarily on few experts that merely used the network of the ITI world organisation but otherwise remained outside of it, I will focus on these organisational structures of the ITI and examine how they significantly shaped the ITI’s efforts to support Third World theatre. The structure of the permanent committees were to various influences, which included the East German theatre experts who followed the developments within the ITI closely and tried to spin them in their favour.

6.1 Development Theory and the Third World

ITI’s efforts towards the theatre of the Global South have been shaped by the larger trends and ideas of development theory that were dominant in the UN and UNESCO throughout the decades, but have since fallen out of favour, as have the now highly-contested terms like ‘development’ and the ‘Third World’.

The core belief of developmentalism, the ideology of development, was that through development and industrialisation newly independent states could achieve the same economic prosperity and national autonomy following the model of Global North countries. It was closely linked to modernization theory, which presumed that modernization and the resulting economic wealth would as a matter of course also generally foster liberal democracy, civil and human rights.¹⁴⁹⁶ Though rooted in ideas of modernity dating back to the 19th century, developmentalism gained major traction in the postwar period, boosted by the fact that it aligned with US foreign interests in the Cold War through promoting capitalism in newly decolonised countries. Works like Seymour M. Lipset’s essay *Some social requisites of democracy: economic*

¹⁴⁹⁵ Pavone. 2008. p.106

¹⁴⁹⁶ Lipset, Seymour M. 1959. “Some social requisites of democracy: economic development and political legitimacy” In: *American Political Science Review* 53(1), 69–105.

development and political legitimacy (1959) or the *The Stages of Economic Growth: A non-communist manifesto* (1960) by Walt Rostow shaped not only US foreign policy. As organisations established in that era, the UN and UNESCO were steeped with these ideas of development and modernisation.¹⁴⁹⁷

The most optimistic period of developmentalist thought lasted from the postwar years until the end of the 1960s. The UN declared the 1960s the first Decade of Development and formulated a list of aspirational development goals that were meant to lift the “developing countries” to the same economic level as industrialised nations mostly through the funding of big industrialisation projects.¹⁴⁹⁸ At the end of first Decade of Development, the conditions in the Global South had not improved but, in some regards, even worsened. While the UN continued with setting new goals for the following Decades of Development, the golden era of developmentalism had ended. The ideas that had fuelled the previous development efforts were widely criticised for their ineffectual and too generalised approach. Modernisation theory did not account for different circumstances in different countries and on different continents. It disregarded how culture and particular worldviews that legitimized prevailing institutions and distributions of political power would influence the development of a state and society.¹⁴⁹⁹

Dependency theory was developed as a critique and alternative to the generalised ideas of developmentalism and modernization of the prior decades. It reframed the economic relationship between the poor countries of the “periphery” and the wealthy countries of the “core” as exploitative. This dependency was identified as the reason for the periphery’s inability to develop autonomously. While rooted in Marxist ideas, dependency theory rejected Marxist internationalism and called for the autonomous development without Global North interference. The ideas of dependency theory were also popular with liberal reformists in the West seeking for alternative models to explain and prevent the failures of development policies of the previous decades.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Smith, Tony. 1985. “Requiem or New Agenda for Third World Studies?” In: *World Politics*. 37(4). 532-561, p.533-544

¹⁴⁹⁸ The UN provides an official documentation including the most relevant documents, events, and resolutions here: <https://research.un.org/en/docs/dev/1960-1970>.

¹⁴⁹⁹ Acemoglu, Daron. Robinson, James. 2022. "Non-Modernization: Power–Culture Trajectories and the Dynamics of Political Institutions" In: *Annual Review of Political Science*, 25(1): 323–339.

Marxism-Leninism served as the theoretical basis and binding reference point for the Eastern Bloc's foreign policy. From the GDR perspective, there was no North-South conflict that divided the world into the rich developed North and the poor developing South. Instead, the colonial and neo-colonial exploitation of the capitalist countries was responsible for the underdevelopment of the Global South.¹⁵⁰⁰ Western development programs were thus regarded as the continuation of colonialism by different means.¹⁵⁰¹ While relations with capitalist countries were officially guided by the basic principle of "peaceful coexistence", their relation to the Global South was informed by the principles of "proletarian internationalism" and "anti-imperialist solidarity". In the framework of Marxist-Leninist theory, the alliance between the socialist countries and the decolonising world against capitalist imperialism was historically determined. Socialist foreign policy was framed as representative of a new type of international cooperation free of oppression and fundamentally unlike the exploitative economic relationships of the capitalist West.¹⁵⁰² The GDR itself thus did not use the term 'development aid' when referring to its support of developing countries.

This state ideology that was committed to radical changes of the international system provided the socialist countries an advantage that helped towards a balance where they struggled behind on e.g. economic matters.¹⁵⁰³ While dependency theorist and Eastern Bloc scholars and policy makers identified the same historical roots of the economic situation of the decolonising countries, they proposed radically different solutions. While the proponents of dependency theory argued leaned towards economic autarky, the socialist countries believed creating the preconditions for establishing a socialist system following the model of the Soviet Union was the only way out of underdevelopment and poverty.¹⁵⁰⁴ Analysis of the socialist countries' policies and the experiences of their development aid workers have shown that this rhetoric of

¹⁵⁰⁰ Post. Sandvoss. 1982. p.14

¹⁵⁰¹ Schulz. 1995. p.1

¹⁵⁰² For examples of the GDR position, see: Doernberg, Stefan. 1982. *Außenpolitik der DDR. Sozialistische deutsche Friedenspolitik*. Berlin: Staatsverlag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, p.191; Faulwetter, Helmut. 1989. "The Socialist Countries' Conception of the New International Economic Order" In: Schulz, Brigitte H., Hansen, William W. (ed.) *The Soviet Bloc and the Third World. The Political Economy of East-South Relations* . 77-89. Boulder, San Francisco, London: Westview Press.

¹⁵⁰³ Schulz. 1995. p.10

¹⁵⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p.25

solidarity, sometimes romanticised as one of the main positive legacies of the Eastern Bloc, was often exaggerated.¹⁵⁰⁵ While the socialist countries often supported the Global South in resolutions that called for a change of the economic order, they often failed to implement any substantial and binding acts of solidarity.¹⁵⁰⁶ Despite differences in details, East-South economic relations were often as guided by self-interest as those of the West.¹⁵⁰⁷

Despite their opposition to Western theories of development and their initial mistrust of international organizations like the UN and UNESCO as instruments of Western policy, the socialist countries did share many of the developmentalist ideas of the capitalist world. Modernist, technocratic rhetoric had been very successful during the process of industrialisation and economic development that the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe had undergone after 1918.¹⁵⁰⁸ Paradoxically, while establishing a distinct and competing system, they had thus implicitly accepted the foundational ideas of economic modernism.

The efforts of the UN, UNESCO and other international organisations concerned with development adjusted their approach in opposition to previous top-down approaches. This included a new focus on the fulfilment of ‘basic needs’ and the new principle of ‘capacity building’. Kacou, Ika and Munro observe that concepts of development thinking involving in a dialectic fashion, emerging to address the previous failings and blind spots.¹⁵⁰⁹ Postdevelopment theory emerged in the 1990s and has since provided fundamental criticism of developmentalism. In *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power* German sociologist and environmental scholar Wolfgang Sachs traced the idea of ‘underdevelopment’ back to the inaugural speech of

¹⁵⁰⁵ Hong, Young-Sun. 2015. *Cold War Germany, the Third World, and the Global Humanitarian Regime*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Raffer, Kunibert. A Critique of the Socialist Countries' Theory and Practice of the New International Economic Order. In: *The Soviet Bloc and the Third World. The Political Economy of East-South Relations*, edited by Brigitte H. Schulz, William W. Hansen., Boulder, San Francisco, London, Westview Press, 91-109, p.92

¹⁵⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p.106

¹⁵⁰⁸ Fava, Valentina. 2010. “People’s Cars and People’s Technologies. Skoda and Fiat Experts Face the American Challenge (1918-48)” In: *Expert Cultures in Central Eastern Europe. The Internationalization of Knowledge and the Transformation of Nation State since World War I*, edited by Martin Kohlrausch, Katrin Steffen and Stefan Wiederkehr. Osnabrück: fibre, 105-126.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Kacou, Kablan. Ika, Lavagnon. Munro, Lauchlan. 2022. “Fifty years of capacity building: Taking stock and moving research forward” In: *Public Administration and Development*, 42(3). p.12

Harry S. Truman and exposed it as a construction that served to uphold the hegemony of the Global North.¹⁵¹⁰ In his 1995 book, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* Colombian-American anthropologist Arturo Escobar likewise rejected the idea of ‘development’ as a concept rooted in colonial narratives.¹⁵¹¹

The idea of the ‘Third World’ is to Escobar inextricably tied to the ideology of development. He thus advocates for moving “beyond the paradigm of modernity and, hence, beyond the Third World” and finding alternatives to think “about the ‘problem-space’ defined by imperial globality and global coloniality”¹⁵¹² The term ‘Third World’ has always suffered from having no clear, agreed-upon definition. Although widely used, it was “a convenient and rather vague label for an imprecise collection of states in the second half of the twentieth century and some of the common problems that they faced”.¹⁵¹³ It was originally a demarcation based on political or geographical and not economic considerations. It was originally meant to define non-aligned countries, with the ‘First World’ referring to the NATO-aligned West and the ‘Second World’ to the socialist countries of the Warsaw Pact. Therefore, it would have included non-aligned but developed European countries such as Austria, Sweden or Switzerland, while excluding socialist countries in the Global South with strong Eastern Bloc ties like Cuba or Vietnam.

The term was also associated temporarily with the ideology of Third Worldism that emerged in the 1950s and 60s in connected to various projects of national liberation and forms of regionalisms (such as Pan-Africanism) in the new or older nation-states of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle-East. Third Worldism can be separated in the first generation of the Bandung Era and a second generation that split into a more radical and explicitly socialist movement and a moderate form that played an influential role at the UN in the 1970s.¹⁵¹⁴ In that context, the idea of the ‘Third World’ was meant

¹⁵¹⁰ Sachs, Wolfgang (ed.). 1992. *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. London: Zed Books.

¹⁵¹¹ Escobar, Arturo. 1995. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

¹⁵¹² Escobar, Arturo. 2004. “Beyond the Third World: imperial globality, global coloniality and anti-globalisation social movements” In: *Third World Quarterly*, 25(1), 207-230, p.225

¹⁵¹³ Tomlinson, B.R. (2003). “What was the Third World” In: *Journal of Contemporary History*. 38(2), 307–321, p.307

¹⁵¹⁴ For an overview and analysis of the history of Third Worldism and the Non-Alignment Movement, see: Berger, Mark T. 2004. “After the Third World? History, destiny and the fate of Third Worldism” In: *Third World Quarterly*. 25(1), 9-39.

to highlight the North-South conflict vis-a-vis the East-West conflict of the Cold War. It was likewise used in dependency theory to describe the division between the periphery and the core.

The various economic, territorial, and political distinctions of the ‘Third World’ have since become dubious and anachronistic, especially with the collapse of the ‘Second World’. In actual usage the term ‘Third World’ became conflated with ‘developing countries’. Terms like ‘underdeveloped’, ‘less-developed’ or ‘developing’ country were used synonymously to describe poor and and simply swapped out to avoid the derogatory implications that became associated with them. Vicky Randall argues that the actual term used – Third World, developing countries, Global South – is largely irrelevant, since its actual purpose was to denote the continuing economic and political inequality.¹⁵¹⁵ As such, they all shared and were criticised for the same generalisation: They were used to subsume very different cultural traditions, different pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial histories and can thus be attributed to the same developmentalist framework.¹⁵¹⁶

6.2 The Structural Framework of ITI’s Permanent Committees

Apart from a few major projects such as the Theatre of Nations Festival or the World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre, most of the ITI activities were undertaken in collaboration between the national centres and the ITI’s permanent committees. Manfred Linke of the West German ITI described their relationship as follows:

Bilden die Zentren gleichsam die horizontale (geographische) Ebene der Organisation, so kann man die Komitees als ihre vertikale (fachspezifische) betrachten diese ist ohne jene nicht arbeitsfähig.¹⁵¹⁷

A permanent committee had to be based on a common interest among ITI theatre experts coming from different countries to discuss problems and experiences in a specific field of theatre. To form a committee, these experts had to define their own terms of reference and draft their own guidelines for their work. The permanent committees were then established by decision of the General Assembly at World Congresses. Here the permanent committees submitted a report about their work in the

¹⁵¹⁵ Randall, Vicky. 2004. “Using and abusing the concept of the Third World: geopolitics and the comparative political study of development and underdevelopment” In: *Third world quarterly*, 25 (1), 41-53, p.50

¹⁵¹⁶ *ibid.*, p.45

¹⁵¹⁷ Linke. 1994, p.30

last two years and a plan for the next two years, both texts were then validated by the ExCom and the General Assembly.

Apart from this, the committees worked independently from the ITI world organisation. It was the national centres that defined the work of the permanent committees, as they appointed the experts who would participate in the work of each committee from the ranks of their members. The centres were also responsible for facilitating the participation of their own specialists in the events of the permanent committees. If one of their members was part of the committee board, the centre was obliged to provide the financial support that guaranteed their presence at committee meetings.¹⁵¹⁸ Each committee had its own president, board and secretariat. The secretary and the secretariat of the committee were particularly important. The secretariat was hosted by the national centre to which the secretary belonged,¹⁵¹⁹ which allowed the respective centre to influence the committee in major ways.

Apart from the financial subsidies provided by the centres for maintenance of the secretariat or travel expenses of the board members, the permanent committees had no financial resources of their own and were not supported by ITI membership fees. This meant that the committees were dependent on the support of the national centres to hold any meetings. These could only take place if a centre agreed to host and finance a seminar, colloquium, workshop etc. of the committee in its own country. This was often only possible if there was either a strong interest on the part of the sponsors of the respective centre in holding the event, or if the committee meeting was linked to another event like a festival.¹⁵²⁰

The permanent committees emerged in the latter half of the 1960s and the early 1970s. During this time the ITI became increasingly affected by financial difficulties, which were partially caused by the unfavourable exchange rates that resulted from the conversion of membership fees paid in dollars. The ITI journal *World Theatre* had to be discontinued due to insufficient funds.¹⁵²¹ The largest project associated with the ITI to that point, the Theatre of Nations festival, also began to struggle financially in the late 1960s.¹⁵²² The French Ministry of Culture, which had previously subsidised the

¹⁵¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.31

¹⁵¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.32-33

¹⁵²⁰ *ibid.*, p.33

¹⁵²¹ Linke. 1994, p.21

¹⁵²² Iacob, Viviana. 2018. p.201,

festival, stopped its funding in 1972.¹⁵²³ This meant that the Theatre of Nations had to be suspended for several years until it could continue in a new and revised form. Again, the member centres of the ITI now took over, with the festival being held in and funded by different countries from 1975 onwards.¹⁵²⁴ The permanent committees, although not intended as such, were one of the reasons why the ITI was able to remain active despite financial difficulties. However, this was only possible because the ITI headquarters largely relinquished control of these events and left them up to the willingness of the member centres and their financial supporters.

The German Democratic Republic (GDR) ITI's promotion of Walter Felsensteins *Musiktheater* through the international colloquium on contemporary opera interpretation in Leipzig in 1965, resulted in Felsenstein and Stephen Arlen being commissioned by the ExCom to establish the Music Theatre Committee. Felsenstein became the Co-President and Ebermann the Secretary of the MTC, and Felsenstein's approach to 'music theatre' was enshrined in the committee's name and basic principles. This positive experience with the MTC had taught the members of the East German Centre that they could exert significant influence on the direction of a permanent committee and the discussions that took place within it, provided they were already involved early enough to help shape the committee and contribute to its guidelines and definitions.

There were also counter-examples, as not all committees were as easy to influence. For instance, the New Theatre Committee proved a much harder challenge. It was founded in 1971 to address new trends and new forms outside of established theatre that had emerged because of the student movement and social changes in the West. Since this had primarily been a Western development, the NTC was strongly linked to the interests of young Western theatre artists wanting to explore theatre outside of established traditions. This was a development regarded with some suspicion in the GDR, where 'beat music' was believed to be a tool of Western imperialist influence and the student protests were regarded with ambivalence. To counteract these trends in the NTC, the GDR centre organised its own NTC seminar in 1974 and tried to quickly establish its own perspective in the new committee. It was explicitly designed

¹⁵²³ Jacob. 2020. and Peslin-Ursu. 2009.

¹⁵²⁴ Linke. 1994, p.19-20

as a “counter-event” to prove “that only the socialist social order is able to provide young theatre people with a real alternative to the existing bourgeois theatre”.¹⁵²⁵

The Committee for Third World Theatre (CTWT) was another one of these permanent committees. It became central to the ITI’s activities regarding theatre in the Global South, since all activities of theatrical ‘development aid’ in ITI were either channelled through it or at least had to work with or around these new structures. The CTWT was officially founded at the World Congress in Moscow in 1973. This was the result of years of efforts to integrate Third World theatre into ITI’s structures.

6.3 The Emergence of Regional Initiatives for Theatrical Exchange

Of the twelve national ITI centres which already existed in 1948 and were listed in the report of the first Congress, only three were not located in either Europe or North America: Brazil, Chile and China.¹⁵²⁶ In the following years, mostly Western and Eastern European centres joined the ITI. Throughout the 1950s, the ITI was therefore predominantly European, and this balance began to shift only slowly. When it came to the accession of national centres from the Global South, distinct phases can be identified in relation to the individual regions. Several ITI centres from mainly South and Central America were admitted to the ITI in its first decade: the two founding members Brazil and Chile were soon joined by Mexico in 1948, Cuba in 1949, Argentina and Columbia in 1957 and Venezuela in 1959, as well as the associate centres in Ecuador 1948 and Peru 1961. A large number of centres from the Arab World joined in the 1960s: First Egypt in 1962, Morocco in 1967, then Lebanon and Syria in 1968, Iraq in 1969 and Jordan in 1970. After the Chinese centre withdrew from the ITI,¹⁵²⁷ the only South and East Asian centres in the ITI were India (1950), Japan (1951) and South Korea (1956), until the Philippines joined as an associate centre in 1967. The process of establishing ITI centres in Africa in the wake of decolonization was particularly slow. Nigeria became the first associate centre in 1967 and a regular ITI centre in 1977. Senegal

¹⁵²⁵ BArch DR107/80. 1973/12/20. 2. *Entwurf. Konzeption für das internationale Colloquium ‚Theateraktivitäten junger Leute‘ vom 20.-23.juni 1974 in Leipzig*, p.1

¹⁵²⁶ UNESCO Digital Archive. Report on the First Congress of the International Theatre Institute. p.29-31

¹⁵²⁷ There was a second, short-lived Chinese ITI centre in Taiwan, that was admitted into ITI in 1959 and excluded in 1963. The People’s Republic of China finally joined in 1980.

likewise joined in 1977, while associate centres were established in Zaire in 1977 and in Zambia in 1978.¹⁵²⁸

The ITI held its first events focusing on non-European theatre in the 1950s, such as a conference on popular Asian theatre in Mumbai in 1956 or a colloquium on the establishment of theatre faculties in Asia, which took place during the 7th ITI World Congress in Athens.¹⁵²⁹ In the early years of the organisation, the ITI nevertheless had a clear focus on European, Western theatre and all World Congresses were initially held in Europe. The first Congress not held in Europe was the 11th Congress in Tel Aviv in 1965. Until 1990 only 4 of the 20 total meeting places were outside Europe (New York 1967, Montreal 1985, Havana 1987). The situation was similar with seminars and other events of the individual committees.

One of the biggest obstacles to the ITI in countries of the Global South was money. Membership in the ITI required the payment of membership fees. Although these were adjusted to the wealth of the respective country corresponding with the practices in UNESCO, they were nevertheless often too high for developing countries, especially if the necessary government support was not provided. This often made it difficult for theatre artists from developing countries to set up their own centre and join the ITI. Establishing associated centres was meant to overcome this problem. Associate centres did not pay membership fees and therefore did not have the right to vote at the World Congresses, but could still contribute to the ITI. However, theatre artists from non-European countries were not able to attend ITI events because of high travel costs. Long-distance flights were often too expensive, especially for members from emerging countries, making it difficult to attend ITI events in Europe without additional financial support.

The ITI was aware of these obstacles early on, but it was difficult to find an adequate solution. At the 1961 World Congress in Vienna, Darcante informed the General Assembly that theatre artists from various African countries were interested to join the ITI, but were prevented from doing so by financial reasons.¹⁵³⁰ Since it was difficult for many countries to establish their own centres, the ITI sought to initially recruit and retain only correspondents instead. At the World Congress in Tel Aviv in

¹⁵²⁸ Kollektiv des Zentrums DDR des ITI. 1984. *25 Jahre Mitgliedschaft des Zentrums DDR des Internationalen Theaterinstituts*.

¹⁵²⁹ Linke. 1994, p.55

¹⁵³⁰ BArch DR1/20438. German Translation: *9. Kongress des ITI. Bericht des Generalkomitees*.

1965, Darcante reported that the ITI now had well-established contacts in some countries such as Ghana, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Uganda, Zambia and Senegal, as well as in Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Syria.¹⁵³¹ This expansion of the ITI network was reflected, among other things, in the fact that from the mid-1960s onwards, there was an increasing number of articles on the theatre of the Global South published in *World Theatre*.¹⁵³² ITI projects that were intended to rectify this situation and support the development of non-European theatre were also difficult to implement at the time because of the lack of funding. In some cases, the funds were provided by UNESCO but also national culture organisations or state authorities, while the ITI acted merely as a patron. Where such support was not obtained, these projects could not be implemented.

To avoid these problems and especially the high travel costs, early attempts to organise theatre artists from the Global South within the ITI were mainly aimed at establishing regional structures. The idea was pioneered in Latin America, which can be attributed to the fact that a substantial number of Latin American countries were already represented in the ITI much earlier in comparison to other regions of the Global South. The Institute of Latin American Theatre (ILAT) was founded by theatre artists from South and Central America on the occasion of a conference on Latin American theatre in Chile in 1959.¹⁵³³ Similar to the national centres, ILAT was to represent the countries of Latin America in the ITI. It also took the work that the ITI was doing internationally to a more regional level, by facilitating contacts between Latin American artists, promoting new plays, and holding separate events to coordinate an exchange of knowledge in South and Central America.¹⁵³⁴ The ILAT organised four conferences on Latin-American theatre throughout the 1960s: in July 1960 in Montevideo, in April

¹⁵³¹ BArch DR1/13619. *Report. XI. Weltkongreß des ITI in Tel Aviv, 20.-27.6.1965.* p.4-5

Some of these correspondents were listed in an overview in: *World Theatre*. 1968, volume XVII, 1-2: Major Trends 1948-1968, p.118

¹⁵³² See, for example: Morisseau, Leroy F. 1965. "The Ghanaian theatre movement" In: *World Theatre* (Vol. XIV-1: Realism). 75-77; 1965 "The beginning of a new beginning for Zambia" In: *World Theatre* (Vol. XVI/3. Theatre in Israel). 285-289. and the volume dedicated to non-European puppet theatre: *World Theatre*. 1965, Vol. XIV-5. "Puppets outside Europe".

¹⁵³³ Kollektiv des Zentrums DDR des ITI. 1984. *25 Jahre Mitgliedschaft des Zentrums DDR des Internationalen Theaterinstituts*, p.49

¹⁵³⁴ Linke, p.56

1963 in Lima, in September/October 1965 in Caracas and in March 1969 in Mexico City.¹⁵³⁵

Because the ILAT worked separately from the ITI and because of the geographical distance, the ITI centre in the GDR had little insight into the work of the ILAT. This quote from the International Relations Department of the MfK illustrates their attitude at the time:

Unsere Einstellung zur Existenz dieses regionalen Zentrums und der Zweckmässigkeit seines Weiterbestehens muss mit den sozialistischen Ländern sowie mit Kuba abgestimmt werden. Im Augenblick ist es uns nicht möglich, den Charakter dieses Zentrums und die damit in Zusammenhang stehenden politischen Probleme einzuschätzen. Auf der letzten Regionalkonferenz erhielten die kubanischen Vertreter keine Einreise nach Peru.¹⁵³⁶

The first thing the MfK noticed was that the Cuban delegates had not been allowed to enter Peru for the second ILAT conference in Lima. They also noted that Humberto Orsini, President of the Venezuelan Centre and Vice-President of ILAT, had been arrested in his home country shortly before the World Congress, which was interpreted as a sign “that many progressive forces [were] active in this centre.”¹⁵³⁷ In late 1963, Agustin Siré, Chilean theatre director and current secretary general of the ILAT approached a Cuban theatre artist currently working at the Berliner Ensemble to express his interest in visiting the GDR. When the MfK learned about Siré’s intention and his credentials, the MfK officials decided to invite him and concluded that the ITI centre of the GDR should extend the invitation.¹⁵³⁸ Siré accepted the invitation and, after his stay in France and the FRG, spent a week and a half in the GDR in December 1963.¹⁵³⁹

The ILAT also inspired other similar attempts to build more regional structures for theatrical exchange. In 1966, the Indian centre of the ITI organised an international event called the East-West Theatre Seminar in New Delhi. The seminar dealt with the differences between Western theatre and traditional Asian theatre forms. In the invitation, Som Benegal from the Indian ITI centre presented the central concept of “total theatre”, a term that could be understood both in a contemporary Western context but also as “total spectacle” in a traditional Eastern context and therefore manifested

¹⁵³⁵ Kollektiv des Zentrums DDR des ITI. 1984. *25 Jahre Mitgliedschaft des Zentrums DDR des Internationalen Theaterinstituts*, p.50-51

¹⁵³⁶ BArch DR1/19834. 1963/06/06. *Teilnahme am ITI-Kongress in Warschau*, p.2

¹⁵³⁷ *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁵³⁸ BArch DR1/107/48. 1963/10/30. Letter to Link.

¹⁵³⁹ BArch DR107/48. 1963/11/18. Letter from Siré.

itself in various ways. At the seminar, the participants were to discuss the relations between various Asian theatre traditions and also the influences of Western and Eastern theatre on each other. Wolf Ebermann and Käthe Rüllicke-Weiler attended the seminar as GDR representatives. They were sceptical about the idea behind the seminar. The definition of “total theatre” but also the suggested traditional Asian counter-concept of “total spectacle” seemed contradictory to them.¹⁵⁴⁰ At the seminar, they identified two opposing aesthetic tendencies among the participants, that at least partially matched their political allegiances:

Auffällig war, daß mythisierende, vom Realitätsbezug wegführende Konzeptionen vor allem von indischen Sprechern und von Delegierten aus Israel, Philippinen, Singapur etc. vertreten wurden. Dagegen wurde das ‚politische Theater‘ aller Spielrichtungen von Joan Littlewood und Claude Planson, von den Delegierten der arabischen Staaten sowie vieler asiatischer Nationen – und natürlich von den sozialistischen Staaten! – erfolgreich behauptet. Die Rolle Brechts und der von ihm entwickelten Theatermethoden, die nicht allein die Interpretation, sondern die Veränderung der Wirklichkeit zum Ziel haben, rückte dabei mehr und mehr – und das nicht nur dank der von uns selbst gegebenen Beiträge – in den Mittelpunkt der Debatte.¹⁵⁴¹

During the seminar, the Indian hosts declared that they intended to found an Asian Theatre Office. The impetus was that the Indian centre and government were convinced that the ITI was not spending enough money on projects related to Asian theatre. The fact that India was not benefiting from the activities of the ITI, had therefore led the Indian Centre to withhold its membership fee. To compensate for the ITI’s negligence, the money that would otherwise have gone to the ITI’s headquarters in Paris was to be used by the Indian centre to fund the Asian Theatre Office. Accordingly, the Asian Theatre Office was to function quite independently from the ITI. While its structures were similar to those of the ILAT, it differed in that membership of the Asian Theatre Office would not require ITI membership, which was to be pursued as a long-term goal instead. Since the Asian Theatre Office was never mentioned again in the archival materials or the publications of the ITI, it can be assumed that these plans never came to fruition. Nevertheless, they should be understood as an expression of a trend and a conflict within the ITI. While the organisation was interested in supporting the development of theatre in the Global South, its structures did at that time not provide an adequate basis.

¹⁵⁴⁰ BArch DR1/22790. *Bericht vom Aufenthalt einer Delegation des ITI-Zentrums DDR in Indien (23.10.-12.11.1966)*, p.1

¹⁵⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.1-2

The GDR delegates were sceptical of the Asian Theatre Office, mainly because of its independence from the ITI and tendencies incompatible with the GDR's political interest. As Kohls explained in his report: „Hier liegt natürlich latent die Gefahr eines späteren allzu großen Eigenlebens dieser Organisation und gewisser ‚pan-asiatischer‘ Züge.“¹⁵⁴² Thus unconvinced by the objectives of the seminar, the members of the GDR ITI used the visit to establish contacts with the Indian theatre professionals and other participants of the seminar. They drew up several lists of suitable guests for the already planned Brecht Dialogue 1968 or the Berlin Festival and suitable candidates for scholarships.¹⁵⁴³

A similar trend was also emerging in the Arab world. In the second half of the 1960s, several meetings of Arab theatre artists took place to discuss the shared problems of Arab theatres and build a regional network of support. These meetings were not official ITI events, but indirectly connected and inspired by recent developments within the ITI. French Syrian author, playwright and theatre director Chérif Khaznadar emerged as one of the central figures of this endeavour. He had been associated with the activities of the ITI through the University of the Theatre of Nations.¹⁵⁴⁴ From 1965 to 1966 he led the Centre for Advanced Theatre Studies at the International Cultural Centre of Hammamet directed by Claude Planson.¹⁵⁴⁵ In 1965, Arab theatre experts met in Hammamet to discuss the problems of theatre in the Arab world. They resolved to collaborate on the development of Arab theatre:

There is an admirable Arab culture, an Arab world, and Arab language (the ambiguity of the dialects has been studied). On the basis of our own riches, we must now build an Arab Theatre that will express the thought, the life and the hopes of our peoples.¹⁵⁴⁶

At the Hammamet seminar, Darcante was enthusiastic about this meeting of young representatives of Arab Theatre, proclaiming that there was “a brilliant future lying in wait for this Theatre for the hundred million Arabs.”¹⁵⁴⁷

¹⁵⁴² *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁵⁴³ BArch DR1/22790. Mögliche Teilnehmer am Internationalen Brecht-Colloquium 1968 p.16-18

¹⁵⁴⁴ Peslin-Ursu. 2009. p.104

¹⁵⁴⁵ Khaznadar writes about the theatre courses in Hammamet in: Khaznadar, Chérif. Littlewood, René Allio. 1965. “Jan Kott at Hammamet” In: *World Theatre* (Vol. XVI -4: Theatre in East Germany), p.411-413

¹⁵⁴⁶ Darcante, Jean. 1965. “Colloquium on the Modern Arab Theatre”. In: *World Theatre*. (Vol. XIV-1: Realism). 89-90, p.90

¹⁵⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p.89

In 1966, the Arab Theatre experts met again in Casablanca to establish an Arab Theatre Committee. Apart from Darcante, Som Benegal of the Indian centre was also in attendance. He had hosted the East-West-seminar only months prior, in which several of the Arab theatre experts had also participated. The delegates at the Casablanca seminar reviewed and approved the resolutions of the New Delhi seminar, and referred to them in their own resolutions.¹⁵⁴⁸ They wanted to expand the reach of their new committee to other Arab countries as soon as possible. The aims of the committee were to hold a periodic festival and an annual playwrights' competition, to create a documentation of past and modern forms of Arab theatre and to publish both a bulletin and a dictionary of theatre terms in Arabic. All this should be done to create solidarity among theatre practitioners from Arab countries. Although the main goal of this Arab theatre committee was the establishment of regional structures in support of the development of Arab theatre, the participants were also looking to connect to the ITI network. The resolutions of the Casablanca seminar therefore also stated:

Les participants estiment que, de même que les gouvernements sont membres de l'U.N.E.S.C.O., il est du plus haut qui en est en fait la « Branche Théâtrale », en conséquence, ils souhaitent la création de Centres de l'Institut International du Théâtre dans leurs pays respectifs et demandent pour ce faire l'appui de leurs gouvernements.¹⁵⁴⁹

In the following years as a direct result of this effort, many national centres were established in the Arab world and joined the ITI in the late 1960s.

While no East German theatre artists had attended the Casablanca event, Khaznadar, the Administrative General-Secretary of the Arab Theatre Committee, informed Rüllicke-Weiler, whom he knew from the East-West seminar in New Delhi, about the founding of the committee and sent the resolutions that had been passed. In his letter to Rüllicke-Weiler he expressed the hope that the committee would “help in facilitating contacts and exchanges with other theatre movements.”¹⁵⁵⁰ Although the ITI centre of the GDR did not participate due to the regional character of these meetings, this shows that the East German ITI was already seen as a potential exchange partner.

In 1967 and 1969, the Arab theatre experts joined the UNESCO round-table conference in Beirut that dealt with problems in Arab cinema, radio and television. The 1967 conference on Arab Theatre and Cinema was sponsored by UNESCO and the

¹⁵⁴⁸ BArch DR107/47. *Arab Theatre Seminar Casablanca. 17 to 20 November 1966. Resolutions*, p.6

¹⁵⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.6

¹⁵⁵⁰ BArch DR107/47. 1966/11/25. Letter from Khaznadar.

Lebanese centre of ITI. There were delegates from ten Arab countries, while Darcante attended as an observer.¹⁵⁵¹ The 1969 meeting was also attended by theatre artists from other regions of the Global South, notably a delegation from the Philippine Educational Theatre Association (PETA).

PETA was founded in 1967 by the Filipino theatre artist Cecile Guidote-Alvarez. Guidote had studied in the United States on a Rockefeller scholarship, first in New York and then at the Drama School in Dallas. On her return to the Philippines, she founded PETA and became its first executive director. PETA was envisioned as an organisation that would help develop a Philippine theatre, with a strong focus on performing plays in the various languages spoken in the Philippines. PETA was not initiated by the ITI. But since support for the development of Philippine theatre was also to be achieved through international cooperation, Guidote and PETA soon moved into ITI's orbit. Guidote had attended the 1967 World Congress in New York, where she was already trying to gain international support for the Philippine theatre. On this occasion, she had approached the East German delegation as well.

To promote PETA's work internationally and to stimulate artistic exchange to support it, PETA planned to organise an international theatre festival. 1971 marked the 400th anniversary of the founding of the city of Manila and provided a suitable occasion for such an event. The foundation for the festival was laid at UNESCO. During the UNESCO sponsored round-table talks about Arab theatre in Beirut in 1969, Alejandro Roces, author, playwright and chairman of PETA, proposed the idea of a festival of 'Third World' theatre in November 1971. This festival was supposed to be linked to an international conference about "The development of theatre in developing countries". The aim of the project was to focus both on indigenous theatre but also contemporary theatre in developing countries.¹⁵⁵² The proposal was accepted by the UNESCO and therefore granted UNESCO funding.

The ILAT, the Arab Theatre Committee, and even the failed Asian Theatre Office demonstrated a larger trend among theatre artists of the Global South in the 1960s to establish cooperation among each other and support the development of theatre in their respective region. The structures they established were limited to specific

¹⁵⁵¹ One brief account of the 1967 round-table conference can be found in "Arab theatre in Beirut". In: *World Theatre* (Vol. XVI/4: The Swedish Scene, Pirandello in the World). 377-378.

¹⁵⁵² BArch DR107/51. *Report of the Third World Committee*, p.2

regions due to practical constraints. However, there was already interest in sharing ideas beyond these geographical boundaries. This is evidenced both by the Arab theatre experts and the Indian ITI centre observing each other's activities and resolutions, and by the ITI's involvement in supporting these various efforts to exchange across these geographical boundaries. The example of PETA shows that while this trend was not just a development specific to the ITI, even independent, parallel efforts sought out the ITI network. While the ITI was eager to support these projects, it did not and could not do so financially. Instead, the ITI provided them with international contacts and a platform.

The GDR Centre of the ITI had shown consistent interest in these various projects. As they had little opportunity to participate in them due to their regional character, the delegates from the GDR mainly limited themselves to establishing contacts with the theatre artists involved in these endeavours.

6.4 The Working Committee for Third World Theatre (1971-1973)

The projects of the 1960s had not resulted in the economic development that international organisations had hoped for. In the *UNESCO Courier*, Malcolm S. Adiseshiah, Deputy Director-General of UNESCO, gave a critical report about the failures and successes of the previous decade. While the facts of the 1960s were harsh, the coming decade would be a second chance to tackle the problem of underdevelopment: "The work of development has begun: it will not be finished in a day or a year. This is work for this century and beyond."¹⁵⁵³

Accordingly, UNESCO-affiliated organisations such as the ITI were encouraged to focus their efforts more strongly on the support of the cultural development of the Third World. The ITI wanted to build on the already established relationships with theatre artists in the Global South and on the support of regional coordination such as the ILAT and the Arab Theatre Committee in the 1960s. At the World Congress in London in 1971, these past efforts were to be integrated into the ITI's structure. A permanent committee was to be created that would dedicate itself to the issues of 'Third World' theatre. There were, however, many questions about the scope, tasks and definitions of the topic that first needed discussing. Therefore, the

¹⁵⁵³ Adiseshiah, Malcolm S. 1970. "The Crisis in Development" In: *The UNESCO Courier*, XXIII(10). 4-14, p.7

working committee on Third World theatre met for the first time in London to discuss possible approaches. This meeting was open to delegates from all member centres of the ITI, not just representatives from 'Third World' countries. The delegates that participated reflected the current composition of national centres from the Global South. With delegates from Argentina, Colombia, Uruguay and Venezuela, the Latin American countries were the most strongly represented. There were participants from Egypt, Lebanon, Nigeria, India and the Philippines, as well as observers from Costa Rica and Ethiopia.

There were fundamental questions that needed to be discussed. 'Third World theatre' was a much more difficult subject matter to define than those of the other permanent committees. In addition, it was then necessary to work out what defined the category of 'Third World theatre', what common material or artistic problems and considerations existed and how the ITI could show its support. According to Rolf Rohmer's report on the working committee, there was no definition of these terms shared by all delegates. The search for common ground was made more difficult by the fact that delegates from all ITI centres could participate in the meeting and express their own ideas about the definition and problems of Third World theatre. There was one approach in line with the paradigm of modernisation to understand the issues of Third World theatre solely as a problem of development.

Es bestand hier die Tendenz, die dritte Welt dadurch zu definieren, daß es in ihr traditionell und bisher noch kein Berufstheater gibt. Die Funktion des Internationalen Theaterinstituts im Hinblick auf die dritte Welt wurde so verstanden, daß den Ländern der dritten Welt Hilfe gegeben werden soll für die Errichtung von Berufstheatern. Diese Hilfe war finanziell gemeint; sie soll auch in der Entsendung von Regisseuren oder Theaterleitern bestehen, die helfen, Berufstheater zu verwirklichen.¹⁵⁵⁴

Rohmer attributed this approach to the delegates from West Germany and Israel, two of the GDR's greatest enemies regarding foreign politics towards the Global South. Their line of thinking described by Rohmer followed the developmentalist model of the post-war decades.

In opposition to this viewpoint, other participants considered the problems of the Third World in terms of political and social causes. Colombian theatre director, actor and playwright Enrique Buenaventura defined the meaning of the Third World as overcoming colonialism, acquiring economic independence and eliminating colonial

¹⁵⁵⁴ ITI. ITI Weltkongresse. *Bericht über die Mitarbeit auf dem 14. Kongreß des Internationalen Theaterinstituts*. p.

deformation. Despite these shared basic problems, he also emphasised the substantial differences that existed between countries of the Third World.¹⁵⁵⁵ The rejection of economic dependency situates Buenaventura's definition in the field of 1970s dependency theory, which, despite its primary intellectual debt to Marxism,¹⁵⁵⁶ was also characterised by a renunciation of socialist internationalism. Lebanese theatre director and playwright Jalal Khoury provided a definition of the Third World that was particularly agreeable to the GDR perspective. Khoury subsumed all political and social issues of the Third World as part of the process of "liberation from imperialism and colonialism."¹⁵⁵⁷ and highlighted the concept of social class.¹⁵⁵⁸

There were other participants in the discussion who completely opposed the concept of the Third World. To the East Germans' regret, this included the Polish representative, who, with regard to cultural issues, rejected the separation according to these political and economic boundaries and therefore described the term Third World as "inexpedient" and "useless". As a counter-model, he defined "a universal culture of a general humanistic character, in which all countries would have equal rights and opportunities to develop their own culture." The GDR centre dismissed this attitude as "a new kind of cosmopolitanism"¹⁵⁵⁹ which in their political framework was generally understood as a bourgeois-imperialist attempt to undermine the sovereignty of independent nations and national culture.

Despite this disagreement on the definition of the term Third World, the participants of the working committee meeting discussed different proposals for how the ITI could support the theatre in the developing world. Suggestions included the promotion of local drama and playwrights by translation, publishing and circulation of new plays through ITI channels,¹⁵⁶⁰ the support of theatre education and training through the sending of "experts to work closely with theatre people in a given country", and the establishment of a permanent theatre workshop in an Asian country "for East-West information and comparison [to] be readily and significantly implemented".¹⁵⁶¹

¹⁵⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p.1-2

¹⁵⁵⁶ Smith, Tony. 1985. "Requiem or New Agenda for Third World Studies?" In: *World Politics*. 37(4). 532-561, p.547

¹⁵⁵⁷ ITI. ITI Weltkongresse. *Bericht über die Mitarbeit auf dem 14. Kongreß des Internationalen Theaterinstituts*. p.2

¹⁵⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.3

¹⁵⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p.3

¹⁵⁶⁰ BArch DR107/51. *Report of the Third World Committee*, p.3

¹⁵⁶¹ *ibid.*, p.4

The majority of these ideas mirrored previous proposals and shared their fundamental problem, namely they were dependent on non-existent financial support. The delegates from the Nordic countries also proposed various ITI events on the theme of Third World theatre, such as an international seminar and a discussion on the topic as the main subject of the next World Congress.¹⁵⁶²

The most tangible of these proposals was the 1st Festival of Third World Theatre in Manila. It had been suggested and approved by UNESCO at the round-table talks in Beirut. While PETA itself was not yet affiliated with the ITI, it had sent a delegation to London in addition to the official Philippine delegation to present this project to the ITI general assembly. In contrast to all other suggestions, the festival was already fully funded. At the time of the World Congress, the festival was to take place in six months and was already well into the planning phase. Thus, the ITI did not have to provide financial or administrative support to PETA's efforts, but simply offered access to its international platform and network. The ITI took note of the announcement of the PETA festival and declared it the first official event of the new working committee:

That the Third World Committee endorses the PETA-Unesco Philippines Proposal for an Afro-Asian Festival – to be known in the future as the Third World Festival – and an International Conference on “Developing Theatre in Developing Countries”, to be held in Manila for its Fourth Centennial Celebration in the last week of November 1971.¹⁵⁶³

While this endorsement allowed PETA to reach a broader international audience, the ITI had not played a notable role in the planning and realisation of the festival. Instead, Guidote relied on her own personal contacts that she had gained during her stay in the United States and thereby also introduced new theatre artists to the ITI. Most notable among them was Ellen Stewart, founder of La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club in New York. Ellen Stewart's off-Broadway theatre in New York was best known for its commitment to performing the plays of new playwrights. The La MaMa Theatre company went on many mostly European tours and also established quite a number of La MaMa satellite theatres around the world, mostly but not solely in Western countries. Ellen Stewart was therefore already a well-connected and successful theatre manager, who was also supported by the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations in several of her projects. Presumably because of this and pre-existing connections with Guidote, Ellen Stewart was “designated as a UNESCO Expert to assist in the organization,

¹⁵⁶² *ibid.*, p.1

¹⁵⁶³ *ibid.*, p.1-2

implementation and coordination of the project with the PETA Secretariat in Manila.”¹⁵⁶⁴ Another example was the Korean theatre director Yoo Duk Hyung, with whom Guidote had studied in Dallas. Funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, he travelled to Manila to stage a Tagalog version of his Korean radio play *Dhyana* with PETA's Kalinangan Ensemble for the Third World Festival.¹⁵⁶⁵

With the promotion of Filipino theatre being one of PETA's main goals, the festival featured other Tagalog productions of *Cyrano* and Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano*. Other performances included Verdi's *Aida* in a Philippine production, traditional Khmer dance drama, Indonesian Wayang Kulit shadow-puppet play and an excerpt from the Malaysian play *Hang Jebat*.¹⁵⁶⁶

The accompanying conference was much smaller than originally planned. Invitations had been sent to all centres of the ITI and also to 'Third World' theatre artists not represented in the ITI. A hundred delegates had been expected, but partly due to postal strikes in the Philippines, the number of participants was much lower. In the end, the conference was attended by 37 delegates from 16 countries.¹⁵⁶⁷ Due to the location, most participants came from Southeast and East Asia (Indonesia, Khmer Republic, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines), some from Sub Saharan Africa (Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Sudan) and one delegate from Egypt. In addition, there were observers from six European countries (the CSSR, France, the FRG, the GDR, Poland, and Sweden) and from Australia, Israel and Japan, which were not geographically but politically part of the 'West'.¹⁵⁶⁸

The press coverage in Manila was celebratory. The festival and conference were presented as a contribution to a united community of theatre professionals that could also transcend political boundaries. The evidence presented was that the Khmer Republic had sent a 30-man theatre troupe despite the ongoing war in their country, that

¹⁵⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.3

¹⁵⁶⁵ Carunungan. 1971/11/30. „Alamang. Dream come true” In: *The Manila Times*.

¹⁵⁶⁶ Goqingco, Leonor Orosa. 1971/11/28. “Babel Overcome. One World Through Theater” In: *Manila Bulletin*.

¹⁵⁶⁷ Partido, Corazon R. 1971/11/24. “Without much ceremony. Third World Theater participants convene” In: *The Manila Times*.

¹⁵⁶⁸ Goqingco, Leonor Orosa. 1971/11/28. “Babel Overcome. One World Through Theater” In: *Manila Bulletin*.

The participation of Ladislav Smocek from the CSSR is not mentioned in this list, but subject of another article („L. Smocek to attend theater meet.” In: *Manila Bulletin*. p.3 & cont. p.8) and mentioned in „German Theater Personalities To Attend Manila Conference”. In: *The Philippines Herald*.

the East and West German delegates embraced at the inaugural reception, and that the delegates from Egypt and Israel, Ahmed Zaki and Jesaja Weinberg, worked together “hand in hand” during the conference.¹⁵⁶⁹

Many of the participants were similarly optimistic about the theatrical accomplishments. Darcante was quoted declaring the successful realisation of the festival and conference an already significant step for the development of theatre in the Third World:

For the theatre of the Third-World they represent an exalting possibility of knowledge and progress. This will be more important and better than any other festival throughout the world. It will be an act of faith of the theatre people of Africa, Asia und Latin America whose presence is absolutely necessary for the world, as much for the future of our theatre as for indispensable peace.¹⁵⁷⁰

During the conference great emphasis was placed on celebrating indigenous theatre and affirming the theatre artists of the Global South in their independence from European theatre. At the centre of this was Ellen Stewart, who admonished the delegates “to have faith in their own theatrical systems”¹⁵⁷¹:

Why do you accept these self-impositions of Western standards? You are the ones who created theater in the world! There is need of a revamping of attitudes: search for and establish your own individual identities; give of yourselves! It does not matter whether theatre consists of sound and image more than dialogue, or of dance and song more than acting. Perhaps it is more important to MAKE theatre than to WRITE theatre. Believe in yourselves and in your heritage, in what you have; do not pay lip-service to the Western world!¹⁵⁷²

Her supportive sentiment was echoed by Polish actor, theatre director and ITI delegate Janusz Warmański. He was “likewise to cheer on delegates of countries where subsidies to art and artists were meagre or non-existent: ‘Do not be discouraged: in some countries where there are subsidies, it is the talent that is wanting; this is a greater lack.’”¹⁵⁷³

Several challenges of theatre in Third World countries were discussed: finding a broader audience, the lack of funding, the dependence on European theatre tradition.¹⁵⁷⁴ In line with PETA’s aims, the resolutions adopted stressed the importance of bringing “performances to popular audiences in both urban and rural

¹⁵⁶⁹ Goqingco, 1971.

¹⁵⁷⁰ „Third-world festival. Renaissance Theater director lauds Philippine initiative” In: *The Manila Times*.

¹⁵⁷¹ Sanchez, Ephraim. 1971/11/28. “A Critical Resume: Third-World Theatre Conference: Questions and Issues Raised” In: *The Manila Chronicle*.

¹⁵⁷² Goqingco. 1971.

¹⁵⁷³ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁷⁴ Sanchez. 1971.

communities”¹⁵⁷⁵ in support of community development and emphasised the significance “of local playwrights who [would] reflect in their creations the problems and endeavours of their respective communities and countries.”¹⁵⁷⁶ The conference also resolved to form a permanent working committee that would collaborate with the ITI and “maintain communication with the different countries concerned” to organise a second international conference.¹⁵⁷⁷

The GDR delegates had some reservations concerning the developments during the festival and conference in Manila. The MfK had considered the conference and the development of ‘Third World’ theatre important in terms of the GDR’s foreign cultural policy and had therefore been “very interested in sending a delegation to this festival.”¹⁵⁷⁸ The GDR centre of the ITI had informed the other socialist centres about their participation before the conference in Manila and asked “whether and to what extent” the other centres would participate.¹⁵⁷⁹

Fritz Bennewitz and Walter Kohls attended the festival and conference as representatives of the GDR centre. From Kohls’ report it is obvious that the GDR delegates, while they already did have friendly connections to Guidote and PETA, were sceptical about the direction of Third World theatre in the ITI, and about the Western influences they picked up on. This concern was primarily directed at Ellen Stewart, who they suspected to be an agent of US interests in the Global South:

Es ist ohnehin – was für uns keine Neuigkeiten war- festzustellen, daß die Truppen des La-Mama-Theaters, die in einer großen Anzahl westlicher Länder bestehen, offensichtlich die Aufgabe haben, bestimmte nationale Bestrebungen unter ihre Fittiche zu bekommen. So erklärte Ellen Stewart freimütig, daß sie bereit und in der Lage sei, in jedes beliebige Land der Welt Mitarbeiter kostenlos zu entsenden, um La-Mama-Truppen aufzubauen. Wenn man weiß, daß dieses Unternehmen zu wesentlichen Teilen seine Finanzierung durch die Ford- bzw. Rockefeller-Stiftung erhält, dann sind die Hintermänner dieser „großmütigen“ Finanzierungspolitik unschwer zu erkennen.¹⁵⁸⁰

Kohls also noticed this Western or more explicitly US-American influence among the participants of the conference from ‘Third World’ countries. His following remark

¹⁵⁷⁵ ITI. DW. *First Third World Theatre Conference, November 23-30, 1971[sic], Manila, Philippines. Summary of Adopted Resolutions*, p.1

¹⁵⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁵⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁵⁷⁸ BArch DR107/51. 1970/12/09. Letter from Greiser to Kohls.

¹⁵⁷⁹ BArch DR107/51. Letter to Eastern Bloc ITI centres.

¹⁵⁸⁰ BArch DR107/51. *Bericht über die Teilnahme an der 1. Theaterkonferenz und einem Theaterfestival der „Dritten Welt“ vom 18.11.-2.12.1971 in Manila sowie über Aufenthalt in Tokio vom 3.-5.12.1971*, p.9

presumably referred to theatre artists such as Cecile Guidote or Yoo Duk Hyung, who studied in the USA on Rockefeller scholarships and whose work continued to be supported by the Rockefeller Foundation:

Es war interessant, in Manila zu beobachten, wie eine Reihe von Vertretern aus diesen Ländern auftraten und wo man nach ihrem Diskussionsbeitrag ohne allzu große Mühe feststellen konnte, wo sie ihre Ausbildung genossen hatten und dies nicht nur auf Grund ihrer Sprachkenntnisse, sondern vor allem, was den Inhalt ihrer Ausführungen angeht.¹⁵⁸¹

But while the GDR delegates were alarmed by this Western influence on the CTWT, the members of the other socialist ITI centres did apparently not share their concerns. Kohls noted that “despite [his] request” Eastern Bloc support for the conference and presence at the conference were severely lacking. Apart from the GDR, Poland and the CSSR were the only socialist countries that had sent delegates to Manila. Kohls was under the impression that the other centres of the socialist countries had not yet fully grasped the importance of the new ITI committee and would thus grant the opposing side a head start in this new field of the Cultural Cold War. Thus, he called on the allied socialist centres for stronger participation:

Es ist offensichtlich und nicht nur erst durch die Konferenz in Manila, daß die westlichen Länder, allen voran die USA und die BRD, alle Anstrengungen unternehmen, um ihren Einfluß in den Entwicklungsländern auch auf unserem Sektor zu stärken. Bei der nächsten Zusammenkunft der sozialistischen Länder müßte meiner Ansicht nach prinzipiell über die Bedeutung dieser Arbeit mit und in diesen Ländern gesprochen werden. Dort wo wir nicht aktiv werden, ist mit Sicherheit der Gegner am Wirken.¹⁵⁸²

The delegates of the GDR ITI had feared that the actual constitution of the Third World theatre committee as an official permanent committee of the ITI would already take place in Manila. They assumed that, in this case, due to the perceived strong Western influence on the festival and the conference, the defined scope and rules of the committee would also reflect a Western perspective. But since Ellen Stewart was unavailable for a few days, this did not come to pass. Instead, the conference merely decided on minor issues. The delegates determined that the committee should only include representatives from ‘Third World’ countries and that representatives from other countries, including Ellen Stewart, should act as advisers. Final deliberations, however, would not take place until the next World Congress 1973 in Moscow. The

¹⁵⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.10-11

¹⁵⁸² *ibid.*, p.10

members of the GDR ITI considered this a lucky turn, since it would give them and their socialist allies a reprieve and a potential home advantage.¹⁵⁸³

Behind the scenes, there were disagreements between Darcante and Stewart about the composition of the Working Committee. This conflict stemmed from the fact that there was not yet an agreed upon definition on what countries constituted the Third World. Stewart had, “of her own authority”, given representatives of economically developed countries that geographically belonged to the Global South the right to vote in the committee. Darcante disagreed and proclaimed that he would refuse “countries such as Israel, or Japan, or the USSR, or any others with geographical excuses” to participate in the decision of the committee:

This is a point which, as an executive in the service of the ITI, I will not concede. After twenty years of wisdom, the ITI cannot, at the instigation of several private interests, take on the appearance of a neo-colonialist political organisation.”¹⁵⁸⁴

After the Manila conference, the conflict festered. Stewart contacted members of the Working Committee with suggestions for the next meetings that had been offered by the respective ITI centres, in Mumbai in 1972 and in Shiraz in 1973. She considered them suitable since both countries were “rich in theatre traditions and theatre problems” and also “in a position to welcome all countries who might wish to participate.”¹⁵⁸⁵ Darcante who preferred Hammamet as the next meeting place,¹⁵⁸⁶ took issue with the way in which Stewart had, in his opinion, simply “announced” the next locations. Martha Coigney of the US centre tried to intervene on Stewart’s behalf and provide evidence against Darcante’s accusations in a confidential letter to the ExCom.¹⁵⁸⁷ Because of the Tunisian refusal to grant a visa to the Israeli delegate, the ExCom chose Mumbai as the next meeting place.¹⁵⁸⁸ It was clear that Darcante was dissatisfied with Stewart’s prominent position on the Working Committee.

Kohl’s efforts to curb Western influence on the committee were also primarily directed against the dominant role that Stewart played in it. After Stewart had spoken to Kohls about the Working Committee during a trip to Europe in the first half of 1972,

¹⁵⁸³ *ibid.*, p.9

¹⁵⁸⁴ Darcante recounted these proceedings in: ITI. DW. 1973/10/02. Letter from Darcante to attendees of the Shiraz conference, p.2

¹⁵⁸⁵ ITI. DW. 1972/03/24. Letter from Ellen Stewart to members of the working committee of the Third-World Conference.

¹⁵⁸⁶ “ITI. DW. 1973/10/02. Letter from Darcante to attendees of the Shiraz conference, p.2

¹⁵⁸⁷ BArch DR107/54. 1972/04/14. Confidential letter from Coigney to EXCOM.

¹⁵⁸⁸ ITI. DW. 1973/10/02. Letter from Darcante to attendees of the Shiraz conference, p.2

she felt that Kohls disagreed with the committee's development, disapproved of her involvement and wanted to replace her as a consultant because she was an American.

Coigney intervened again and contacted Kohls to smooth things over:

I think what we have to remember is that she was not chosen as an American... she was chosen as a theatre person, by the Third World Committee at the Congress in London. Whatever her role in the work of the Committee is in the future, I really don't think it should be based on whether or not she is American, but rather on what special help she can give from her theatre experience.¹⁵⁸⁹

Kohls assured her that he was appreciative of Stewart's efforts, but also felt that the committee should be made up exclusively of representatives from the Third World. Instead of Stewart as the sole consultant, he proposed a group of "advisors coming from the other countries." He affirmed that Stewart would evidently be "in this circle, one of the most important persons."¹⁵⁹⁰

Kohls was also keen to delay important decisions until the World Congress in Moscow. He therefore suggested that the new committee should for the time being focus on regional meetings "rather than trying to lump all countries together every time."¹⁵⁹¹ He emphasised that he considered "the Committee created in Manila a preliminary one" because of the absence of Latin American delegates, and stressed that he did not "see any possibility to assemble once more the representatives from the countries of all continents" before the Moscow Congress.¹⁵⁹² While Coigney conceded that regional meetings would be a "practical" arrangement, she was concerned that this would also mean the loss of "the spirit that seems to have been born at Manila."¹⁵⁹³

Although not intended as such, the meeting in Mumbai in November 1972 was indeed a regional one. Even though Ellen Stewart had considered the location "geographically reasonable", the old problem of lacking funds for long-distance flights that had already prevented participation in the 1960s became evident there again. Delegates from nine Asian countries participated, among them the representatives from all five Asian countries that had participated in the Manila conference, as well as observers from France, the GDR, the USA and the USSR. There were, however, no

¹⁵⁸⁹ BArch DR107/54. 1972/06/21. Letter from Coigney.

¹⁵⁹⁰ BArch DR107/54. 1972/08/01. Letter to Coigney.

¹⁵⁹¹ BArch DR107/54. 1972/06/21. Letter from Coigney.

¹⁵⁹² BArch DR107/54. 1972/08/01. Letter to Coigney.

¹⁵⁹³ BArch DR107/54. 1972/06/21. Letter from Coigney.

delegates from the other regions of the Global South.¹⁵⁹⁴ Israeli delegate Weinberg was unable to participate since he was not granted a visa.¹⁵⁹⁵

Two important decisions concerning the committee itself were made at the Mumbai meeting: Firstly, as a result of a renewed discussion on the term Third World, the name of the committee was changed to Afro Asian Latino Theatre Committee:

The consensus was arrived after deliberations in view of the numerous controversies and arguments as well as objections from several countries regarding the use of the term Third World which is felt to be strongly economic and political in nature. Several delegates expressed strongly the need to change the nomenclature.¹⁵⁹⁶

According to the report of the GDR centre, Ellen Stewart had submitted the motion. It was adopted by chairman A.R. Krishna as a resolution “without a vote” but with “the consent of all representatives from Third World countries.” Behind Stewart’s motion Bennewitz suspected “isolationist and separatist tendencies to the point of possible separation from the iTi”, noting that Stewart attacked Darcante’s conception for the committee especially.¹⁵⁹⁷ Bennewitz therefore asked the participants for assurance that they did not intend “a loosening of ties with the iTi”. According to him, this was accepted by everyone present except Stewart, who countered with the statement that “the Afro-Asia-Latino Association will exist even without the blessings of the iTi”.¹⁵⁹⁸ There was also another attempt to set up a separate institution for Asian theatre, this time called the Asian Council for Theatre Arts. This organisation was not to be just another ITI institution, but also linked to other UNESCO projects. Each country was therefore to be represented by two delegates, one from UNESCO, but only in an advisory capacity. Even though Bennewitz participated as an advisor, he does not mention the meeting in his own report. It is likely that this meeting exacerbated his concerns regarding the attempted separation from the ITI.¹⁵⁹⁹

Secondly, the working committee appointed two other consultants from non-Third World countries in addition to Ellen Stewart. This was done after Ellen Stewart declared in a statement on the first day of the conference that “concerns have been

¹⁵⁹⁴ ITI. DW. *Teilnehmerliste “Second Afro-Asian Conference”*.

¹⁵⁹⁵ ITI. DW. *List of delegates and observers*.

¹⁵⁹⁶ ITI. DW. *Adopted Resolutions, Third World Working Committee, November 23-24, 1972 Bombay*.

¹⁵⁹⁷ BArch DR107/4. *Bericht über Tagung des 3rd World Working Committee in Bombay, 23.-25.11.1972*, p.1

¹⁵⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁵⁹⁹ ITI. DW. *Minutes of the Meeting of the Working Group, Organizational Set Up for Asian Council for Theater Arts*.

raised by some ITI centres about her being a Project Consultant, fears that she would use the role to expand the La Mama theatre movement and that in her person as a citizen of the USA, she would anchor the influence of the United States too exclusively in the Committee".¹⁶⁰⁰ The appointment of three consultants instead of just one was intended to prevent this potential one-sided appropriation of the Committee. Their independence from cultural politics and Cold War interests was clearly emphasised in the resolution:

The members of the council of consultants are experts selected not on the basis of nationality but for their concern, deep interest and willingness to lend assistance in the implementation of the programs of the committee. They particularly serve as a close link to the other Theatre regions of ITI to further strengthen fruitful collaboration and mutual exchange.¹⁶⁰¹

The new consultants were Chérif Khaznadar and Fritz Bennewitz, with the latter being chosen for his work at the National School of Drama in New Delhi in 1970. His appointment as a consultant was a great success for the GDR centre's endeavours to exert influence on the direction of the ITI's Third World efforts. It allowed Bennewitz to participate in the work of the Committee and gave the GDR much more access.

6.5 The Committee for Third World Theatre

With these promising preconditions, the GDR centre prepared for the World Congress in Moscow, where the CTWT would finally be admitted as a permanent committee of the ITI. For the GDR ITI, the Moscow venue presented a special opportunity for the Eastern Bloc to steer the CTWT in a favourable direction. To achieve this, it also motivated the other socialist ITI centres, especially the Soviet ITI, to give greater importance to the committee. Kohls suggested to his Soviet colleagues that instead of paying for the accommodation of a delegate from each ITI centre as usual, the Soviet centre should use these funds to invite more theatre artists from various Third World countries instead who would otherwise not be able to attend the Congress.¹⁶⁰² The Soviet ITI followed his advice, resulting in representatives from 21 Third World countries attending the Congress in Moscow. Since the usual obstacles of travel costs were removed, the breakdown of participants from the individual regions was

¹⁶⁰⁰ BArch DR107/4. *Bericht über Tagung des 3rd World Working Committee in Bombay, 23.-25.11.1972.*

¹⁶⁰¹ ITI. DW. *Adopted Resolutions, Third World Working Committee, November 23-24, 1972 Bombay.*

¹⁶⁰² ITI. ITI-Weltkongresse. 1973/07/31. *Bericht über den XV. Weltkongreß des Internationalen Theaterinstituts in Moskau vom 27.Mai bis 1.Juni 1973, p.12*

comparatively balanced this time, with five Latin American, five African, four Asian and seven Arab and Middle Eastern countries. Again at the suggestion of the GDR centre, the Soviet centre provided for Spanish translation for the CTWT meeting in addition to the usual English and French.¹⁶⁰³

At the meeting, the name change was revoked and *Committee for Third World Theatre* was adopted as the official name of the committee. The definition of the term Third World now adopted addressed the concerns expressed in Mumbai about the derogatory nature of the term:

[T]he term THIRD WORLD does not have to be circumscribed only by the habitual meaning relegated to it by the politicians and statisticians but that as artists we can liberate the fears of its seemingly demeaning implications through awareness and appreciation of the existence in the regions of the oldest civilizations, richest traditions and high achievements in culture constituting the pride of all humanity.¹⁶⁰⁴

Several unifying aspects of the Third World were identified, among them „certain social, material conditions of life (want, deprivation, exploitation, colonialism)“, which resulted in “sensitivity in human experience”, “self-determination and promotion of national identities”, and “artistic efforts for development and a deep quest for change.” It was also stressed that “the efforts of theater people of the THIRD WORLD societies” could be “more meaningful” through international collaboration. This included both “linking their efforts with other peoples of the world with similar economic problems, social needs and humanc[sic] condition and aspirations”, but also “the auxiliary participation of all those who sincerely feel and share with it because the THIRD WORLD is not an isolated self-contained world.” A purely geographical definition was thus rejected and the historical, political and economic aspects, which were also emphasised by the GDR, explicitly mentioned as common features of the Third World. Voting rights were granted to national centres from „a developing economy“ and „a dynamic movement to assert the broadening of human rights, freedom, and peace.”¹⁶⁰⁵ Admitted as associate members without voting rights were “those representatives of theater groups or associations who belong by geography and wish to relate to the cultural roots of the regions constituting the THIRD WORLD” and “ethnic or indigenous tribes or minority groups within the economically developed and

¹⁶⁰³ ITI. ITI-Weltkongresse. 1973/07/31. *Bericht über den XV. Weltkongreß des Internationalen Theaterinstituts in Moskau vom 27.Mai bis 1.Juni 1973*, p.12

¹⁶⁰⁴ ITI. DW. *Third World Committee Meeting XV.Congress, Moscow, March 28-30, 1973*, p.1

¹⁶⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p.2

industrialized societies suffering the same human conditions of the THIRD WORLD and are involved with the process of overcoming their manifold problems”¹⁶⁰⁶.

Countries that could have claimed to belong to the Third World geographically, but did not belong to it politically and economically were excluded from the work of the committee in this process. This applied to Japan and Israel on the one hand, and the Soviet Union on the other.¹⁶⁰⁷ Four subcommittees corresponding to the four regions of the Global South were created to continue the regional exchange that had already been started by the ILAT or Arab Theatre Committee. The various positions of the CTWT were carefully chosen to equally represent the four regions: A.R. Krishna from India was appointed honorary president of the CTWT, Jalal Khoury from Lebanon its president, with Joel Adedeji from Nigeria and A. Osvaldo from Venezuela as vice presidents. Guidote was appointed secretary, with Farrokh Gaffary from Iran and Alonso Alegria from Peru as deputy secretaries.¹⁶⁰⁸ Bennewitz, Stewart and Khaznadar were confirmed as consultants, and in addition Dinora Baikaterjova was designated as a fourth, Soviet consultant.

The GDR ITI declared the official founding of the CTWT the result of its successful strategy. One of the reasons for that was the explicit mention of political and economic aspects as common aspects of the Third World in the official definition. In the East German ITI’s report on the Congress, it is described as “remarkable progress” that “the geographical definition of the term was only recognised for the organisation of sub-committees and the holding of regional conferences”. It also seemed significant to the GDR delegates that the committee recognized “that the Arab world (although geographically belonging partly to Africa, partly to Asia) is a separate historical-political region.”¹⁶⁰⁹ In addition, the GDR delegates were also satisfied with who was elected to the positions in the CTWT. Khoury’s appointment in particular met with the approval of the East German centre. According to the report, he had “the advantage of having a very good understanding of our worldview.”¹⁶¹⁰

As Stewart had suggested, the 2nd Festival and Conference of Third World Theatre took place in Shiraz as part of the 7th Festival of Arts, which was held in Shiraz

¹⁶⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p.3

¹⁶⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p.1

¹⁶⁰⁸ ITI. ITI-Weltkongresse. 1973/07/31. *Bericht über den XV. Weltkongreß des Internationalen Theaterinstituts in Moskau vom 27.Mai bis 1.Juni 1973*, p.13

¹⁶⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p.13-14

¹⁶¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.13

and Persepolis in August and September 1973. Like in Manila, the ITI name was attached to an already existing, planned and funded project. At this second conference of the CTWT, however, the opposition against Stewart became much more pronounced. As with the previous events of the CTWT, the geographical and political balance of the committee was re-shifted again. Given the meeting place, there were participants from eight Arab World and Middle Eastern countries, as well as five Asian countries, two African countries and no Latin American country. Neither one of the vice presidents Osvaldo and Adedeji attended.¹⁶¹¹

Joachim Werner Preuss, the secretary of the West German ITI centre, attended the Shiraz meeting as an observer, since the FRG centre would be hosting the next World Congress. He explained the tensions that emerged during the conference by the fact that “a comparatively strong Arab ‘front’ dominated with its own ideas about organisation and activity.” According to Preuss, they felt “that they had to fend off an allegedly existing US-American and European-Western sphere of influence in favour of a future emphasis on cultural independence.”¹⁶¹²

This led to further changes in the composition and scope of the CTWT. Guidote and Stewart raised the question of ethnic and other minorities in developed countries who, according to the Moscow decisions, were allowed to participate in the committee as associate members. This was especially relevant to Guidote herself, as she had fled the Philippines during martial law in 1972. During her political exile in New York, she founded PETAL, an exile offshoot of PETA. Together with Stewart, Guidote also organised the Third World Institute of Theatre Arts Studies (TWITAS), which was meant to facilitate cross-cultural exchange between artists from the Global South and minority artists from the United States. To this end, Guidote and Stewart presented a draft of a workshop to be held with Third World theatre artists or theatre artists of ethnic minority by La MaMa in New York. This proposal was discussed and rejected. The reasoning was, according to Bennewitz, that “on the one hand, the culture of ethnically and racially oppressed minorities is not directly a problem of the Third World, but primarily a problem of capitalist social order [...], and on the other hand, workshop models for the Third World can in principle not be designed outside the Third World and in any case not in the USA (without wanting to cast doubt on the anti-American

¹⁶¹¹ ITI. DW. Progress Report: *Third World Committee History*.

¹⁶¹² ITI. DW. *Kurzbericht des BRD ITI über die Shiraz Konferenz*.

attitude of the initiators of the programme).” In addition, since Guidote was no longer operating in the Philippines but in a non-Third World country, it was decided to transfer the CTWT secretariat from the Philippines to Iran.¹⁶¹³

Even though Guidote had been stripped of her official position on the committee, she did not stop organising affairs on behalf of the CTWT. For example, the FRG ITI had already agreed to publish a documentary on Third World theatre movements, activities and problems in preparation for the 1975 Congress in West Berlin. As the new CTWT secretary, Gaffary approved of this proposition and offered full support and collaboration.¹⁶¹⁴ After Guidote informed him that she had already been working on the collection of material since the Congress in Moscow,¹⁶¹⁵ however, Gaffary left the coordination of the project to her.¹⁶¹⁶

The push to eliminate Western influence from the CTWT continued at the next meeting in Beirut in March 1974. Several theatre experts who up to that point had been involved in the CTWT were unable to attend, because the meeting was announced at short notice and they were not informed on time or at all. A letter from Guidote to Khoury revealed that she and Stewart had only heard about the meeting second-hand from Khaznadar and that some participants, such as the Korean representative Yoo, had not received an invitation.¹⁶¹⁷ Preuss had also only received an invitation to the meeting at such short notice,¹⁶¹⁸ that he could not attend.¹⁶¹⁹ CTWT vice president Adedeji, who had also been unable to participate due to lack of funds, remarked in June 1974 that he had still not “been informed of what happened in Beyrouth.”¹⁶²⁰ Unlike the Western observers, Bennowitz did attend the CTWT meeting in Beirut.¹⁶²¹ During the meeting, the delegates decided that the four consultants needed to resign.¹⁶²² In addition, the

¹⁶¹³ BArch DR107/4. *Bericht: 2. Festival/Konferenz des Theaters der Dritten Welt in Shiraz (Iran) 1973*, p.4

¹⁶¹⁴ ITI. DW. 1973/12/23. Letter from Gaffary to Preuss.

¹⁶¹⁵ ITI. DW. Copy of telegramm from Guidote to Gaffary.

¹⁶¹⁶ ITI. DW. 1974/01/30. Letter from Farrokh Gaffary to Preuss.

¹⁶¹⁷ ITI. DW. 1974/02/24. Copy of letter Brief from Guidote to Khoury.

¹⁶¹⁸ ITI. DW. 1974/03/06. Telegramm from Khoury to Preuss.

¹⁶¹⁹ ITI. DW. 1974/03/07. Letter from Dietrich to Bammer.

¹⁶²⁰ ITI. DW. 1974/06/04. Letter from Adedji to Preuss.

¹⁶²¹ During the same time, from March 7th to 25th 1974, there was an exhibition of the works of East German stage sculptor Eddy Fischer. The exhibition was linked to a week-long seminar by Fischer to introduce theatre technicians from Lebanon to the art of laminating. (ITI. Dir. 1974/02/05. *Protokoll der Direktoriumssitzung vom 2.2.1974*, p.4)

¹⁶²² There is no detailed MfK report or any other documentation on the Beirut meeting in the files I have examined. It is therefore only possible to infer what happened there from mentions

publication offered by the FRG ITI was rejected.¹⁶²³ Overall, the GDR ITI still regarded the developments in the CTWT positively, even if the “lack of unity of the Arab centres” was perceived as a problem. From the GDR perspective, Khoury’s position as president of the committee had been consolidated and the GDR considered its own position in the CTWT to be “still favourable”.¹⁶²⁴

The meetings in Shiraz and Beirut had made the political division of the CTWT obvious. While Darcante, Khoury and the other Arab theatre experts, and the members of the East German ITI centre had different goals, at the time their positions aligned in rejecting Stewart’s influence on the committee. The majority of participants from Arab states at both meetings led to a clear rejection of Western influences, which were seen as represented above all by Stewart. This manifested itself, among other things, in the rejection of La MaMa projects and other endeavours by Western centres such as the FRG ITI. In these changes, the GDR saw its perspective on the relationship of the Third World to the Cold War parties confirmed: The influence of capitalist countries was rejected, their own support accepted.

However, this political assertion in the CTWT had little actual effect on the work of the ITI - the exchange of knowledge and theatre practice. At the World Congress in West Berlin in 1975, Darcante was already forced to critically reflect on the success of the ITI in relation to the CTWT and the theatre of the Global South in general. Apart from the two meetings in Shiraz and Beirut, the committee had “no practical existence” in the period between the Congresses of 1973 and 1975. Events that had been planned in Moscow, such as a conference on African theatre, had not taken place.¹⁶²⁵ When Darcante took the initiative and proposed a work plan for the committee, he received only four responses “from the Argentine, Cuban and Venezuelan centre and the other from the... French centre!”¹⁶²⁶ CTWT secretary Gaffary had assured Darcante that he had never managed to contact CTWT president Khoury.¹⁶²⁷ In his General Secretary’s Report at the West Berlin Congress, Darcante therefore complained at length about the

elsewhere. This decision was referenced in: BArch DR1/22797. 1975/06/07. *Bericht über den XVI. Weltkongreß des Internationalen Theaterinstituts in Berlin (West) vom 1.-6.6 1975*, p.11

¹⁶²³ ITI. DW. 1974/07/26. Letter from Preuss to Jalal Khoury.

¹⁶²⁴ ITI. Dir. 1974/02/05. *Protokoll der Direktoriumssitzung vom 2.2.1974*, p.2

¹⁶²⁵ BArch DR1/22797. 1975/06/07. *Bericht über den XVI. Weltkongreß des Internationalen Theaterinstituts in Berlin (West) vom 1.-6.6 1975*, p.11

¹⁶²⁶ ITI. Weltkongresse. *Secretary General’s Report, XVIth Congress*, p.4

¹⁶²⁷ *ibid.*, p.4-5

inactivity of the CTWT, which he called “a delicate, perhaps even explosive subject.”¹⁶²⁸

Darcante took the opportunity to provide further examples of failed attempts by the ITI to encourage the participation of other countries of the Global South in the ITI. „[I]n the hope of creating a favorable climate” Morocco had been elected to the ExCom of the ITI in 1973, but in the following two year-period the ITI had “not received one single word, not one single letter, not one single gesture from the Moroccans” and the Moroccan delegate had never taken part in any of the ExCom meetings. In Tunisia, Darcante had contacted “three Ministers of Culture successively concerning the creation of a Tunisian ITI centre” and had been repeatedly promised that the project would be started soon with ultimately no results.¹⁶²⁹ Having never heard from the Senegalese ITI centre since its creation, UNESCO’s Director-General Mahtar M’bow had personally written to the Senegalese Minister of Culture at Darcante’s request and never received a reply.¹⁶³⁰ Darcante was notably frustrated with the fruitlessness of his efforts:

Having untiringly and often at a personal level badgered our Third World friends, and particularly those of Africa and Asia; having pointed out that, at the start, all that needed to be done was work involving information, requiring no financial means, just a small amount of dedication, I have no explanation to offer you today.

On the basis of these unsuccessful examples, Darcante and the ExCom were uncertain „that [their] approach [was] the most suitable or that [their] working methods [were] the best for Africa and Asia.” Darcante emphasised that the ITI “morally” did not have the right “to cease our efforts, to become discouraged too soon, or to condemn anyone.” Rather, the ITI should try “to understand the bases of these situations in order to resolve the problems and to move forward, in order not to find ourselves confronted with an empty page, once again, in two years.”¹⁶³¹

Accordingly, the CTWT again discussed how to actually better promote theatre initiatives in developing countries. First, the four consultants were re-established. It was also decided to divide the work into four subcommittees for the regions of Asia, Africa,

¹⁶²⁸ *ibid.*, p.4

¹⁶²⁹ *ibid.*, p.6.

¹⁶³⁰ *ibid.*, p.7

¹⁶³¹ *ibid.*, p.6

the Arab World and Latin America.¹⁶³² A work plan was created based on proposals for CTWT events made by the member centres: This included the 3rd Third World Theatre Festival with associated seminar hosted by the Venezuelan ITI centre, six different proposals by PETA/TWITAS, as well as an African conference “corollary to the Black and African Arts Festival”¹⁶³³ and a writers’ conference „with themes related to National Liberation” in Lebanon. Several centres of the Global North also proposed their own initiatives. They were listed as “Cultural Exchange and Cooperative Programs”, and included the GDR seminar 1976, the Helsinki Festival 1977, and the Grenoble Festival of the French ITI, all of which had a focus on and invited participants from the Third World.¹⁶³⁴ This programme showed how little effect the attempted political takeover of the CTWT had on its actual work. As with all permanent committees, the CTWT was entirely dependent on the initiatives of those involved. The CTWT’s resolutions of Shiraz and Beirut, which had served the purpose of curbing Stewart’s influence, had no effect on the projects that could actually be realised within the CTWT.

In the period after the World Congress, there was a brief resurgence of activity within the CTWT. In 1976, there were three CTWT events, two of them festivals: The 3rd Festival of Third World Theatre and accompanying colloquium were held this time not in a country of the Global South but at the 3rd Festival des Arts Traditionnels organised by Khaznadar at the Maison de la Culture in Rennes in March 1976. The 4th Festival of Third World Theatre was hosted by the Venezuelan centre in Caracas in April. In June, the GDR centre held its first seminar for Third World theatre artists. In 1977, Khaznadar and the French centre organised another colloquium on Third World theatre in Rennes. In terms of actual activity, the CTWT began to stagnate again soon afterwards. The lack of central organisation by the secretariat and president remained a major problem of the CTWT, which is why this work often fell to the consultants. Because of the ongoing civil war, Khoury had temporarily left Lebanon, the consultants were unsure of his whereabouts, and had no means of contacting him. Because of this,

¹⁶³² BArch DR1/22797. 1975/06/07. *Bericht über den XVI. Weltkongreß des Internationalen Theaterinstituts in Berlin (West) vom 1.-6.6 1975*, p.11

¹⁶³³ This referred to Festac 77 (Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture) in Lagos, which at the time was still planned for 1975, shortly after being postponed to 1977.

¹⁶³⁴ ITI. DW. Excerpt from *Proposed Projects and Program of Activities noted and approved 1975-1977*.

there were no actual CTWT meetings between 1975 and 1977. At the World Congress in 1977, the secretary of the CTWT was transferred to Venezuela.¹⁶³⁵

The question of the usefulness of the CTWT came up repeatedly. At the Festival des Arts Traditionnels in 1976, Bennewitz, Khaznadar, Stewart, and Hüdepohl of the West German Goethe Institute met to discuss this issue. Bennewitz, Hüdepohl and Khaznadar agreed that the CTWT should best be dissolved and reintegrated into the ITI, so that the ITI members of the Global South would simply participate in the meetings of the other permanent committees again. Stewart advocated for the retention of the CTWT. She argued that the CTWT had successfully drawn attention to the theatre of the Third World in the first place, and that the contacts made within the CTWT had resulted in a number of important events. In the end, the consultants agreed that the CTWT should not be resolved, but needed to work more efficiently. Hüdepohl, who as an outsider was new to the struggles of the CTWT, judged the whole project quite harshly: „Meine persönliche Meinung: das Komitee ist fast wertlos, aber man wird seine Mitglieder kaum dazu bringen, sich selbst aufzulösen.“¹⁶³⁶

Darcante was likewise unimpressed by the CTWT. At the 4th Third World Festival in Caracas in 1976, the discussions at the accompanying conference mainly revolved around political issues. According to Ebermann, the Venezuelans represented all “shades of the left”, while Adedeji tried “to calm the political tides not unskilfully.” He was supported by Darcante “who, of course, did not like ‘the whole direction’ and was anxious to keep up the appearance of an ‘apolitical’ organisation in the resolutions”.¹⁶³⁷ At the meeting of theatre NGOs in Schildow in March 1978, Darcante addressed the shortcomings of the CTWT again. He criticised the ineffectiveness of the CTWT and felt that political rather than theatrical problems were still at the forefront of the committee's meetings. He therefore proposed that the CTWT be reintegrated into the work of the other committees and that it only be an organising committee for cultural activities within the Third World. Darcante's opinion of the CTWT was reinforced by the CTWT meeting during the Theatre of Nations in Caracas in 1978.

¹⁶³⁵ BArch DR1/13619. 1977/06/24. *Bericht über den 17. Weltkongress des Internationalen Theaterinstituts in Stockholm (Schweden) vom 31.5.-5.6.1977*, p.12

¹⁶³⁶ ITI. DW. 1976/03/16. *Bericht über zeitweilige Teilnahme am (10.-14.3.76) am 3e Festival des Arts Traditionnels (5.-19.3.) und am Festival-Colloque du Tiers Monde (13.-19.3.) in Rennes*, p.1

¹⁶³⁷ BArch DR1/10653a. *Bericht über die Teilnahme an der 4. Dritte-Welt-Konferenz des ITI in Caracas und dem Festival der Dritten Welt 20.-29.4.1976*, p.1

Bennewitz called the meeting “a deplorable failure.” There were almost no participants from Africa, Asia or the Arab centres, and the too-short session became the scene of inner-Venezuelan quarrels.¹⁶³⁸ Bennewitz reported that Darcante used the public podium in Caracas several times to attack the CTWT. He complained about the lack of communication between the CTWT and the General Secretariat, which had not improved despite his efforts. Darcante was therefore determined to dissolve the CTWT at the next Congress in Sofia. However, he found no support for his proposal after Joel Adedeji protested against the dissolution of the CTWT at the ExCom meeting in October 1978.¹⁶³⁹

In general, Bennewitz agreed with Darcante’s assessment. He considered the lacking communication “regrettable and hardly excusable”. He was in favour of the “re-integration” of the CTWT into the ITI. In Bennewitz’s opinion and in his experience at the East German centre, both bilateral agreements within the ITI and cultural state relations had achieved more substantial results than the CTWT.¹⁶⁴⁰ Despite this admission of the CTWT’s failures, the East German ITI opposed Darcante’s attempts to dissolve the committee.

Bennewitz explained his reasoning by referring to Darcante’s support of the Theatre of Sources project by Jerzy Grotowski.¹⁶⁴¹ Grotowski’s approach was to Bennewitz antithetical to his own engagement with indigenous theatre traditions and incompatible with the socialist worldview:

Die Nicht-Anerkennung von historisch-politischen Gemeinsamkeiten der jungen Nationalstaaten Asiens/Afrikas/Laitenamerikas[sic] und die erneute Reduktion auf die begrenzten Gemeinsamkeiten von Kulturkreisen zielt ebenso auf Enthistorisierung und Entpolitisierung wie sie in der Begründung zum Grotowski-Projekt zu lesen sind.¹⁶⁴²

Darcante’s attempt to dissolve the CTWT was therefore interpreted by the GDR centre as an attempt to “isolate, divide and push back the influence” of ‘Third World’ countries

¹⁶³⁸ BArch DR1/13017. 1978/08/14. *Bericht: Delegations- und Arbeitsaufenthalt Prof. Fritz Bennewitz in Caracas, Venezuela, vom 4. Bis 30. Juli 1978.*

¹⁶³⁹ BArch DR1/17543. 1978/10/16. *Bericht über Teilnahme an der Exekutiv-Komitee-Beratung des ITI vom 2.-4. Oktober 1978 in Paris.*

¹⁶⁴⁰ BArch DR1/13017. *Bennewitz, Fritz. Zusatzbericht zum Reisebericht Theater der Nationen. Gedanken zum Komitee Dritte Welt im iTi, p.1*

¹⁶⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.1-2

¹⁶⁴² *ibid.*, p.2

through “depoliticization”.¹⁶⁴³ For that reason, and despite his knowledge of the inefficacy of the CTWT, Bennewitz rejected Darcante’s proposal:

Leider ist eben die Repräsentation der Theaterbewegungen in den Ländern der sog. DRITTEN WELT in iTi höchst angreifbar. Wenn mit dem Angriff auf das Komitee DRITTE WELT nicht so offensichtlich die gerechtfertigte und notwendige Politisierung der Arbeit des iTi durch die Vertreter der jungen Nationalstaaten getroffen werden sollte, müßte der Auflösung des Komitees zugestimmt werden.¹⁶⁴⁴

Still, Bennewitz felt it was necessary to consider alternatives “as to how the theatre movements in the young nation states, with their cultural-political weight and artistic face, could become effective in the federation of the world organisation, not just tolerated”. In his opinion, it would be beneficial to also establish bilateral relations between socialist centres and theatre people from developing countries. Additionally, he suggested introducing more socialist countries of the Global South, such as Vietnam, Ethiopia or Mozambique, into the ITI world organisation with the help of state cultural relations. At the meeting of the ITI centres from socialist countries, the representatives discussed how they could fend off attacks by Darcante and some of the ExCom members against the CTWT to prevent its total dissolution.¹⁶⁴⁵ The Cuban ITI members agreed to contact socialist-leaning African countries to negotiate their membership in the ITI, while the Soviet delegates pledged to support Mongolia, Mozambique, Laos, Vietnam and Angola.¹⁶⁴⁶

At the World Congress in 1979, there was no major restructuring of the CTWT.¹⁶⁴⁷ After no projects for two years, the Cypriot centre organised an international conference of Third World theatre in 1980. The 5th Festival of Third World Theatre in Seoul was boycotted by the countries of the Eastern Bloc. In 1982, the GDR centre organised another Brecht seminar for theatre artists from the Global South.¹⁶⁴⁸ However, as Bennewitz feared, the CTWT had lost its role as a channel of all ITI related activity concerning the Third World. Important events and discussions that the ITI began to organise in support of the Global South in the late 1970s were not affiliated

¹⁶⁴³ BArch DR1/17543. *Bericht über Beratung des Liaison-Komitees der internationalen nichtstaatliche Organisationen auf dem Gebiet des Theaters, 21.-23.3.1978.*

¹⁶⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁶⁴⁵ BArch DR1/17543. 1978/09/25. *Bericht von Irene Gysi über die Beratung der ITI-Zentren sozialistischer Länder in Prag vom 18.-21. Sept. 1978*, p.6

¹⁶⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.7

¹⁶⁴⁷ ITI. *Weltkongress Sofia. Report of the 18th Congress Sofia. 11th-17th June 1979*, p.42-44

¹⁶⁴⁸ Kollektiv des Zentrums DDR des ITI. 1984. *25 Jahre Mitgliedschaft des Zentrums DDR des Internationalen Theaterinstituts*, p.53-59

with the CTWT, since they were financed by UNESCO and merely endorsed by the ITI world organisation. The 1978 workshop on Theatre in Africa was organised by the Nigerian centre on behalf of UNESCO, Eugenio Barba's workshop on three Latin American cultures in Peru 1978 was likewise supported by UNESCO. The workshop on Theatre for Development in Zambia in 1979 was also not a CTWT event.¹⁶⁴⁹ Unable to finance any projects itself, the ITI's function shifted to a font of international authority. It lent its name and thereby its legitimacy to projects devised outside its own forums.

The discussion about the CTWT was picked up again at the World Congress in East Berlin. The delegates from the Global South in particular criticised the structure and procedures of the CTWT, and thereby addressed issues that had already been controversial since its inception.¹⁶⁵⁰ For example, there was renewed discussion about the definition of the Third World, which was still perceived by many of the delegates as vague, misleading or discriminatory.¹⁶⁵¹ The delegates also criticised the prominent role of the consultants:

Mr. Orsini proposed that the idea of permanent consultants be dissolved from the organizational structure of the Committee. He said that he did not have anything personal against the consultants but why should they remain permanent.

Mr. Sharma (India): What is a consultant? How many are needed? Who elects them? I propose a standing panel of consultants, not a group of permanent consultants."

Mr. Gupta (India): The word 'consultants' bothers me. Of course, I do not underestimate the value of the consultants in past programs, but the word reinforces colonial ties between the Third World and past colonizing nations. They should rather be regarded as partners.¹⁶⁵²

Guidote, Khaznadar and Stewart explained the history of the consultants and their permanent status, and the CTWT once again voted for their retention.¹⁶⁵³ Nevertheless, it became evident that there were clear doubts about the structures of the CTWT, which still existed after more than ten years.

The World Congress in Toronto and Montreal in 1985 finally saw the beginning of a restructuring of the CTWT. First, General Secretary Perinetti had put forward a

¹⁶⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.53-59

¹⁶⁵⁰ BArch DR1/26185. 1983/06/01. XX. *Kongress des Internationalen Theaterinstituts. Berlin. Hauptstadt der DDR. 9-12.6.1983*, p.33

¹⁶⁵¹ BArch DR107/84. *Report of the Third World Theatre Committee, World Congress 1983*, p.5

¹⁶⁵² *ibid.*, p7

¹⁶⁵³ *ibid.*, p.7A

motion from the ExCom to change the name of the CTWT.¹⁶⁵⁴ The proposed title was “Theatre and Development”. With this change the ExCom wanted to take into account the „cultural dimension of Development“ and broaden “the scope of the committee beyond geographical or economic borders[sic].” After this proposed name change initially met with opposition from various centres, the decision was left to the committee itself. Based on Nelly Garcon’s suggestion,¹⁶⁵⁵ the committee agreed on the alternative name “Permanent Committee of Theatre for Cultural Identity and Development”, which was adopted by the General Assembly.¹⁶⁵⁶ The structures of the committee were retained until the World Congress in Havana 1987, where it was decided to redesign the Committee for Cultural Identity and Development from a permanent committee into a forum subdivided by regions but without fixed structures. After this approach failed and the new forum proved not functional, the permanent committee was revived.¹⁶⁵⁷

On the one hand, the CTWT was characterised by strong personnel continuities. A core group of dedicated theatre professionals from the Global South, like Guidote, Adedeji, Khoury, or Orsini, was committed to supporting the work of the committee. The same can be said about the consultants. On the other hand, the CTWT remained inefficient for a long time for various reasons. Fundamentally, the stipulations of a permanent ITI committee were not well suited to support the development of theatre in the Global South. Unlike the other permanent committees, the CTWT was not based on a concrete theatrical issue. Instead, it rested on an ambiguous and inherently political demarcation that needed constant re-examining. This resulted in debates that bogged down the actual exchange of theatre knowledge and practice and constantly strained ITI’s principled political neutrality. The financial model of the permanent ITI committees ultimately did not lend itself well to the support of Third World theatre. The CTWT’s ability to operate was fully dependent on the initiatives of its members centres, which often hugely overstretched their financial means. Only a few centres in Third World countries were able to financially support the work of the ITI. Some were unable to pay membership fees or remained largely inactive due to lack of budget. Consequently, the CTWT relied heavily on outside sources to maintain any regular

¹⁶⁵⁴ BArch DR107/75. *21st Congress. Theatre/ New World Visions. Toronto. 1-8 June*, p.48

¹⁶⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p.49

¹⁶⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.90

¹⁶⁵⁷ Linke. 1994, p.58

activity, which was most often provided by the consultants. Meanwhile, the CTWT also was a limitation to the most active ITI centres of the Global South that did not necessarily want to relegate their activity to the CTWT.¹⁶⁵⁸

The East German ITI centre promoted the CTWT throughout its existence. To begin, this was an expression of the general support for the Third World within the framework of international anti-imperialist solidarity, as advocated by the GDR and the Eastern Bloc in all international organisations. But above all, the GDR ITI had gained a secure position within the CTWT both through Bennewitz's role as a consultant and the good existing relations with many important CTWT actors such as Orsini, Guidote and Khoury.

This made participation in the CTWT an easy sell to East German cultural officials. The CTWT served as an example of how highly the GDR was regarded by Third World theatre-makers. The disruptive political debates were interpreted as a successful joint defence with the progressive representatives of the Global South against Western imperialist influence. Darcante's proposals to change the inefficient structures of the CTWT were described as desperate attempts by the other side to prevent the inevitable alliance of the Third World and the socialist states.

In actuality, members of the East German ITI centre were quite aware of the structural problems of the committee, and that the different perspectives represented in the CTWT did not always neatly fit into the Cold War framework of the GDR's Marxist-Leninist principles of foreign policy. The obviously polemical portrayal of alleged political opponents, especially Stewart, was often equally exaggerated and did not reflect actual interaction. This can be seen by the fact alone that Bennewitz was invited to the USA three times between 1977 and 1979 by Stewart and Guidote to work on La MaMa and TWITAS projects with actors from ethnic minorities.¹⁶⁵⁹

While, in general, the financial model of the permanent committees impeded the CTWT, it inadvertently gave greater importance to the consultants and the projects they proposed. The CTWT was therefore a useful platform for the ITI centre of the GDR to promote its own projects for theatre artists of the Third World.

¹⁶⁵⁸ The Venezuelan centre hosted the Theatre of Nations festival in 1978. Both the Cuban and Cypriot centres, for example, organised events of the New Theatre Committee in 1983. In: Kollektiv des Zentrums DDR des ITI. 1984. *25 Jahre Mitgliedschaft des Zentrums DDR des Internationalen Theaterinstituts*, p.53-59

¹⁶⁵⁹ David G. John goes so far as to call Bennewitz a "personal friend" of Stewart. John. 2012. p.185

7 East German ITI Events for Third World Theatre Artists

Colloquia, seminars or workshops had already been an important means within the International Theatre Institute (ITI) to explore shared aspects and problems of theatre. In the 1960s, there had been, for example, an itinerant series of symposia on acting training, which featured acting schools from both East and Western Europe to demonstrate their different methods.¹⁶⁶⁰ When the permanent committees emerged, they offered a new framework for such more specialised studies, provided that the committee members and their national centres had the necessary funds to organise such an event. As Chapter 6 has shown, this proved quite difficult in the case of the Committee for Third World Theatre (CTWT). The consultants supplemented the CTWT with their own events, like Ellen Stewart and her projects or Chérif Khaznadar at the Maison de la Culture in Rennes. The same was also true for Fritz Bennewitz, and through him, the ITI centre of the German Democratic Republic (GDR).

In their annual report in 1987, the East German ITI centre proudly declared: „Alle in der DDR stattfindenden Veranstaltungen des ITI konzentrieren sich in besonderer Weise auf die Unterstützung der Entwicklungsländer.“¹⁶⁶¹ The centre had organised two series of events that were either entirely or mostly aimed at theatre artists from developing countries; a series of seminars or colloquia from 1976 to 1983, and a series of workshops from 1985 to 1989. This chapter traces this development back to the Brecht Dialogue in 1968, the most well-known and momentous event of the East German ITI, which decisively shaped all its later endeavours.

7.1 The Brecht Dialogue (1968)

The 1968 Brecht Dialogue was one of the most significant events of the East German ITI centre. Manfred Linke mentioned it in his brief review of the activities of the GDR centre and pointed out that the success of the Brecht Dialogue also gave rise to the later “seminars and workshops for theatre people from the Third World.”¹⁶⁶² Other publications also note the participation of foreign theatre professionals in the event, which suggests that it played an influential role in the artistic development and

¹⁶⁶⁰ Jacob. 2020/11/13. “The University of the Theatre of Nations: Explorations into Cold War exchanges” (Paper presentation) *Cold War University – Humanities and Arts Education as a (Battle)field of Diplomatic Influence and Decolonial Practice*. International Online Workshop.

¹⁶⁶¹ BArch DR1/26185. 1987/12/18. *Jahresbericht 1987 über die Mitarbeit im ITI*, p.5

¹⁶⁶² Linke, Manfred. 1994. *Das Internationale Theaterinstitut. Das Zentrum Bundesrepublik des Internationalen Theaterinstituts*. Berlin: Papyrus Druck, p.112

international contacts of many theatre artists. For example, both Amal Allana and Vasudha Dalmia mention Ebrahim Alkazi's attendance as the Indian representative at the Brecht Dialogue when discussing Brecht and his impact on Indian theatre.¹⁶⁶³

7.1.1 Conflicting Ideas in the Planning Phase

The Brecht Dialogue was the second event organised by the ITI centre of the GDR. The first had been the colloquium on contemporary interpretation of opera, which had been largely centred on the work of Walter Felsenstein. It had achieved its goal of promoting Felsenstein and his 'socialist realist' method of directing opera and kickstarted the revival of the Music Theatre Committee within the ITI. To follow up on this success, the GDR ITI centre considered what other subjects could be promoted in a similar fashion. Brecht was an unsurprising choice. Since the Berliner Ensemble's (BE) performances at the Theater of Nations festival in Paris, Brecht had proven a useful tool to garner interest in East German theatre. In addition, the upcoming 70th Brecht anniversary provided a fitting opportunity to dedicate an event to him. The celebration of such anniversaries had become established early on in the GDR and served the purpose of staking the East German claim to the *Kulturelles Erbe*.¹⁶⁶⁴ While Brecht had still been a controversial figure in the GDR during the *Formalismusstreit* of the 1950s,¹⁶⁶⁵ he had since long been embraced by cultural policy. His influence on a new generation of artists had been acknowledged, and Brecht was also enjoying increasing popularity abroad. Solidifying Brecht as belonging exclusively to the East German theatrical heritage against Western claims had thus become a priority to the GDR's cultural policy makers. In Brecht's case, this was significantly easier compared to the works of Shakespeare or Weimar Classicism, since ties to the GDR were not just a matter of interpretation: Brecht's return from exile to East Berlin, where he had founded his own theatre company with his wife Helene Weigel, made it obvious that the artist himself had chosen East Germany over its Western rival. Both the BE and

¹⁶⁶³ Allana, Amal. 2018. "Released into the Future. (Re)Claiming Brecht in India" In: *Recycling Brecht*, edited by Tom Kuhn and David Barnett. 121-135. Rochester, New York; Woodbridge, Suffolk: Camden House, p.127 and Dalmia, Vasudha. 2006. *Poetics, Plays, and Performances. The Politics of Modern Indian Theatre*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.179

¹⁶⁶⁴ Bradley, Laura. 2011. "Remembering Brecht: Anniversaries at the Berliner Ensemble" In: *Brecht and the GDR. Politics, Culture, Posterity*, edited by Laura Bradley and Karen Leeder. 125-144. Rochester, New York; Woodbridge, Suffolk: Camden House, p.125

¹⁶⁶⁵ See: Mittenzwei, Werner. 1978. *Der Realismus-Streit um Brecht. Grundriß der Brecht-Rezeption in der DDR 1945-1975*. Berlin, Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag. and: Stuber. 1998.

many of his former students very directly carried on his legacy in the GDR after his death in 1956. Additionally, Brecht's openly communist convictions that had informed both his theories and plays, allowed the GDR to combine Brecht's work with the realities of GDR socialism and present them as inherently linked.

While Brecht's close alignment with GDR politics made him an effective figurehead for cultural politics, it also presented a constant risk to the artist's reputation. He became especially controversial in the FRG, where several boycotts of his plays were sparked by political events in the GDR. His apparent support of the SED as it was misrepresented by a partially published letter by Brecht to Walter Ulbricht about the popular uprising in 1953 had earned him heavy criticism in the Western world.¹⁶⁶⁶ After this and again after the building of the Berlin Wall several years after his death, many West German theatres temporarily stopped performing Brecht.¹⁶⁶⁷ Those in the Western world and elsewhere who did not subscribe to this harsh condemnation, continued to stage and study Brecht and develop their own interpretations of his work that often differed from the ideologically sanctioned versions in the GDR and the performance style pursued by the BE. Both of these reactions were a potential threat to the GDR's use of Brecht and the BE in foreign cultural politics. The positive image of Brecht and his company had to be upheld and the association of Brecht with exclusively East German theatre as well as the status of the East German artists and scholars as the indisputable experts on Brechtian theatre to be defended continuously. Since these developments had as of yet not been foreseeable on Brecht's 60th birthday in 1958, shortly after his death, 1968 marked the first occasion to organise anniversary celebrations in Brecht's memory, as it had been done for other influential German writers.

The first talks on this matter were held at the ITI centre with the officials of the Ministry of Culture (MfK) shortly after the conclusion of the opera colloquium.¹⁶⁶⁸ It soon became clear, that other GDR institutions entertained similar ideas. The minutes of the ITI directorate meeting in January 1966 mentioned that the MfK, the ITI centre

¹⁶⁶⁶ Harkin, Patrick. 2011. "Brecht and 17 June 1953. As Reassessment" In: *Brecht and the GDR: Politics, Culture, Posterity*, edited by Laura Bradley and Karen Leeder. 83-99. Rochester, NY: Camden House.

¹⁶⁶⁷ Rischbieter, Henning. 1999. *Durch den Eisernen Vorhang. Theater im geteilten Deutschland 1945 bis 1990*. Berlin: Propyläen-Verlag, p.50-1

¹⁶⁶⁸ BArch DR1/10653a. *Brecht-Dialog 1968. Ergänzende Bemerkungen des iTi-Sekretariats. Internes Arbeitsmaterial*, p.1

and the BE had independently considered convening an international Brecht colloquium in Berlin in 1968.¹⁶⁶⁹ Their intentions were quickly combined and plans set into motion. Joachim Tenschert, the BE's representative within the ITI directorate, confirmed the BE's willingness to cooperate. Kohls discussed the plans with Helene Weigel and agreed to inform Darcante during his next visit to Paris in April 1966 so that the event would be included in the official work programme of the ITI.¹⁶⁷⁰ At Helene Weigel's suggestion, the Academy of Arts (AdK) also became involved.¹⁶⁷¹

This cooperation of the ITI, the BE and the AdK – “three high-profile, in part very idiosyncratic” organisations¹⁶⁷² – was troubled by friction and was exacerbated by the fact that the MfK did not initially divide responsibilities or determine who would play the leading role organising the event.¹⁶⁷³ Thus, during the planning process, different phrasings were used and discarded to express the involvement of the different organisations, such as “In collaboration with...” or “Under the patronage of...”¹⁶⁷⁴ The fact that the ITI later wrote a 12-page ‘internal report’ for the MfK about the planning and realisation of the Brecht Dialogue reveals the extent of these difficulties.

The fact that the cultural organisations involved held incompatible ideas about the purpose of the event was a major source of contention. While they were all interested in commemorating Brecht, their reasons differed quite significantly. In her essay *Remembering Brecht* on the various Brecht Anniversaries at the BE, Laura Bradley analysed what image of Brecht Helen Weigel wanted to present: After Brecht's death, the BE had understood continuing Brecht's legacy by staging his previously unperformed plays and applying Brechtian methods to productions of works by other authors as its raison d'être. In the 1960s, after most of Brecht's plays had been performed and Brecht's theories and methods were widely discussed and applied outside the BE, the theatre company had to justify its existence and reassert its expertise in the Brechtian style.¹⁶⁷⁵ To that end, Weigel imagined a small scale and exclusive

¹⁶⁶⁹ BArch DR1/19834. *Ergebnisprotokoll der Direktoriumssitzung vom 30.1.1966*, p.4

¹⁶⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p.3

¹⁶⁷¹ BArch DR1/10653a. *Brecht-Dialog 1968. Ergänzende Bemerkungen des iTi-Sekretariats. Internes Arbeitsmaterial.*

¹⁶⁷² *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁶⁷³ BArch DR1/19834. *Ergebnisprotokoll der Direktoriumssitzung vom 23.5.1966*. p.3

¹⁶⁷⁴ BArch DR1/10653a. *Brecht-Dialog 1968. Ergänzende Bemerkungen des iTi-Sekretariats. Internes Arbeitsmaterial*, p.2

¹⁶⁷⁵ Bradley. 2011. p.126

colloquium, that was presented as a modest work meeting.¹⁶⁷⁶ The focus was to be on the BE, with only a few selected friends and international Brecht pioneers as guests.

This vision was fundamentally incompatible with the work that the ITI centre was committed to. Since the ITI was involved in the planning of the Brecht commemorations from the very beginning, it was clear that the event had to have a wider reach and serve the foreign representation of the GDR. Vis-à-vis the BE, the ITI centre in some ways therefore acted as an enforcer of GDR cultural policy. The East German ITI was primarily concerned with the role Brecht played in the GDR's foreign cultural representation. It therefore strongly insisted on the involvement of the MfK in the planning of the event. The MfK had supported the ITI centre substantially during the recent opera colloquium, but while the ITI expected a similar level of involvement for the Brecht commemorations, the MfK seemed to them comparatively reluctant to get involved. What the ITI centre expected from the MfK was not primarily support in administrative matters, but political supervision. Ebermann insisted that the Theatre Department should bear "full political co-responsibility" and "constantly let the organisers feel this." The MfK's restraint to fill that role added to the perceived chaos and friction during the planning phase:

In dieser Situation und angesichts des hohen politischen Risikos, daß wir alle gemeinsam mit diesem Colloquium eingingen, hätte uns der Staatsapparat in ganz anderer Weise mit ständigem Rat und sofortigen Entscheidungen zur Verfügung stehen müssen.¹⁶⁷⁷

In the end, the ITI centre won this initial struggle about the scope and purpose of the Brecht Dialogue. While Weigel had been determined to hold on to the BE's control over the commemorations,¹⁶⁷⁸ the ITI's vision matched the MfK's much more closely. At the directorate meeting in December 1966, which was described as "temperamental", Deputy Minister Bork proposed that the ITI centre be in charge of the overall project. Wolf Ebermann rejected this suggestion, since, in his opinion, the ITI was not suited to decide the artistic programme of the event. With this, he presented a notion of the East German ITI as a facilitator of theatrical exchange and an instrument of foreign cultural policy without itself contributing to this exchange artistically. Instead, Ebermann suggested the appointment of an academic secretary

¹⁶⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p.128

¹⁶⁷⁷ BArch DR1/10653a. *Brecht-Dialog 1968. Ergänzende Bemerkungen des iTi-Sekretariats. Internes Arbeitsmaterial*, p.2

¹⁶⁷⁸ Bradley. 2011. p.129

[*wissenschaftlicher Sekretär*], someone very familiar with Brecht's work and closely connected to the BE, who would coordinate the ideas of the three organisers.¹⁶⁷⁹ Following this proposal, the responsibilities for the preparation of the colloquium were split. Werner Hecht, dramaturge at the BE, was appointed academic secretary.¹⁶⁸⁰ Meanwhile, the ITI centre took over administrative duties and formed its own working group.

Instead of a modest work meeting, the Brecht Dialogue became a larger event with a stronger international focus and the aim to use Brecht not only to promote the BE, but the GDR's theatre, cultural politics and socialist system in general. The topic of the Brecht Dialogue was decided to be "Politics in the Theatre". On one hand, this topic provided an easy opportunity to convey the cultural politics of the GDR by linking Brecht's political convictions with the politics of the GDR. On the other hand, doing that also increased the risk for criticism of these politics. At an international event, the contributions of the foreign attendees could not always be anticipated and critical voices could not be completely avoided. To address this danger, it was decided not to hold an open debate among the participants, but to organise the Brecht Dialogue in panel discussions instead. This provided the hosts with the opportunity to select agreeable East German and foreign theatre experts as panellists who would likely not engage in political provocation towards the GDR. It was also a compromise between Weigel's vision and the cultural policy objectives: It still allowed for discussion in smaller groups of experts, albeit with a much larger audience. It did, however, also mean that many of the guests were only able to participate as spectators; the event had transformed, in Ebermann's words, "from a strict 'scholars' academy' into a meeting between 'scholars' and 'learners'".¹⁶⁸¹

While the East German ITI members had succeeded in giving the event a strongly representative character, they struggled to maintain the character of an ITI event vis-à-vis the interests of the BE and the AdK. To present the Brecht Dialogue as an ITI event and use the reach and respectability provided by the NGO, the colloquium had to be convincingly presented as such. For strategic reasons, the East German centre thus had to represent the interests and customs of the ITI in the domestic context. The

¹⁶⁷⁹ BArch DR1/10653a. *Brecht-Dialog 1968. Ergänzende Bemerkungen des iTi-Sekretariats. Internes Arbeitsmaterial*, p.1

¹⁶⁸⁰ BArch DR1/8852. *Stichpunkt-Protokoll der Direktoriumssitzung vom 12.2.1967*, p.2

¹⁶⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.5

centre's collaborators, however, were either ignorant of or not concerned with this issue. For example, the members of the directorate were reserved about Werner Hecht's suggestion to use the occasion of the Brecht Dialogue to form an "International Battle Front of Representatives of Realist Theatre", since they felt it would encroach on their own work. When Hecht brought up raising the number of participants to well over 200 to address the large East German interest in the event, the ITI again rejected this proposal, fearing the Brecht Dialogue would lose its international character.¹⁶⁸²

The ITI centre was well aware that the topic "Politics in the Theatre" could well be controversial within the non-governmental and non-political ITI. The Brecht Dialogue was, in their opinion, "the most political iTi event since this organisation was founded."¹⁶⁸³ When the East German representatives announced the Brecht Dialogue at the World Congress in New York in 1967 and presented a letter of invitation from Helen Weigel to the Congress,¹⁶⁸⁴ some delegates criticised the title of the colloquium and wanted it changed. According to their own report on the World Congress, the GDR delegation told those afraid of the subject to "stay away."¹⁶⁸⁵ Despite the objections, the colloquium was approved as an ITI event under this title. Since Darcante was also initially concerned about the title, the GDR centre considered his participation and involvement in the Brecht Dialogue especially important, because it would "legalise" its political character.¹⁶⁸⁶ When the two co-organisers proposed to cut Darcante's welcome address at the opening event, the ITI members vehemently disagreed. They pointed out that a welcome address by the ITI's secretary-general at international events was not only "unavoidable" but also "desirable".¹⁶⁸⁷

Da Darcante seine Zusage zur Teilnahme gegeben hat, könnte ein Nichtauftreten des Generalsekretärs nur in einem Sinne gedeutet werden, der unserer iTi-Arbeit direkt schadet: als Distanzierung Darcantes gegenüber dieser Veranstaltung oder als Distanzierung der Veranstalter gegenüber Darcante.¹⁶⁸⁸

One major issue that the ITI centre had to compromise on was the list of invited participants. Whereas the BE had to give up its vision of modesty, the ITI in turn –

¹⁶⁸² BArch DR1/8852. *Stichpunkt-Protokoll der Direktoriumssitzung vom 19.12.1967*, p.3

¹⁶⁸³ BArch DR1/8852. 1968/08/15. *Gedanken zur künftigen Arbeit unseres Zentrums im Internationalen Theaterinstitut*, p.2

¹⁶⁸⁴ BArch DR1/23732. *Letter to the ITI Congress in New York*.

¹⁶⁸⁵ BArch DR1/8852. *Bericht über die Teilnahme einer DDR-Delegation am XII. Weltkongreß des Internationalen Theaterinstituts in New York, 4.-11.6.1967*, p.10

¹⁶⁸⁶ BArch DR1/8852. 1968/08/15. *Gedanken zur künftigen Arbeit unseres Zentrums im Internationalen Theaterinstitut*, p.2

¹⁶⁸⁷ BArch DR1/8852. *Stichpunkt-Protokoll der Direktoriumssitzung vom 21.1.1968*, p.3

¹⁶⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p.3-4

compared to the music theatre colloquium in Leipzig – needed to refrain from inviting many ITI representatives. As usual, the East German ITI informed the other national centres of ITI about the event and asked for suggestions regarding the guests, but received only few responses, which it largely deemed to be of little use. Instead of pursuing ITI delegates, the East German ITI experts began to look for fitting candidates through their personal contacts with foreign theatre artists and organisations. Since they were already keen on establishing relations with theatre people in the Global South, many of them were from developing countries. This search for suitable guests was made easier by the early interest that the ITI centre had shown in the regional organisation of theatre artists from the Global South within or with the support of the ITI. The contacts they built were doubly beneficial for the ITI centre both for finding invitees to the Brecht Dialogue for strengthening their relations with theatre professionals in the Global South. One of the few ITI invitees was Humberto Orsini, with whom the GDR ITI had signed a friendship agreement the previous year. Other than that, the ITI centre mainly drew on contacts that Ebermann and Rüllicke-Weiler had made at the East-West Seminar in New Delhi in 1966. There they had carefully observed the artistic and political standpoints of the delegates from the various countries of the Global South. In their opinion, the theatre artists present from the Arab states, for example, had played “a rather positive role”. In contrast, they had noticed “cosmopolitan-reactionary lines of thought” among some Asian representatives.¹⁶⁸⁹ They had also talked to delegates who had either expressed a desire or seemed particularly suitable to visit the GDR.¹⁶⁹⁰ Based on these experiences, they compiled lists with recommendations, including a list of possible attendees for the Brecht colloquium in 1968. Ebrahim Alkazi was considered to be a “currently influential theatre man” in India who, as the director of the NSD, could “afford a relatively high degree of objectivity” in a comparatively “financially independent situation”. Chérif Khaznadar, who was already in regular contact with the BE because of his production of *The Exception and the Rule*, was of interest because of his position as secretary of the newly formed Arab Theatre Committee.¹⁶⁹¹ It is likely that through Khaznadar, further contacts were made with various theatre artists who were also part of the Arab Theatre Committee, like Youssef

¹⁶⁸⁹ BArch DR1/22790. *Bericht vom Aufenthalt einer Delegation des ITI-Zentrums DDR in Indien (23.10.-12.11.1966)*, p.4

¹⁶⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.8

¹⁶⁹¹ *ibid.*, p.16

El-Ani or Jalal Khoury, who would soon become presidents of the Iraqi and Lebanese ITI centres. On their return from India, Ebermann and Rüllicke-Weiler had a three-day stopover in Cairo and used this time to build more relationships. They attended an early rehearsal of a production of *The Good Person of Szechwan* directed by Saad Ardasch at the Hakim Theatre and noted that the production contained “topical political allusions to Arab and international problems.”¹⁶⁹² They also saw a rehearsal of *Agammemnon* and a performance of *Sheherazade* both directed by Karam Motaweh, who had been a former assistant to Giorgio Strehler and Orazio Costa, and, in Ebermann’s estimation, “was obviously gifted.” In the process, the delegation from the East German centre also made contact with the Egyptian ITI centre and discussed closer relations between the two centres with its secretary Leila Gaad.¹⁶⁹³ Subsequently, Ardasch, Motaweh and Gaad were the three Egyptian attendees to be invited to the Brecht Dialogue.

The ITI centre was, however, not solely responsible for the invitees. The various departments of the MfK responsible for relations with specific countries also suggested further participants. Other theatre artists were invited as long-time friends of the BE.¹⁶⁹⁴ The socialist countries sent their own selected representatives on the basis of bilateral cultural exchange agreements, some of whom were not known to the East German organisers before their arrival.¹⁶⁹⁵ In addition to the personal invitations, there was also a large number of additional applications. Those were first checked by the organisers before they were accepted, to “fend off” unwanted applicants.¹⁶⁹⁶ Ebermann expressed satisfaction that the organisers “were able to prevent [Martin] Esslin and other troublemakers from appearing”.¹⁶⁹⁷

The Brecht Dialogue was attended by participants from a total of 38 countries. The countries of the Global South made up the largest group, even if there were only few representatives per country. Theatre experts from the Global South from Argentina, Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Egypt, India, Iraq, the

¹⁶⁹² BArch DR1/10653a. 1967/04/10. *Aufenthalt der Indien-Delegation in Kairo (12.-15.11.1966)*, p.1

¹⁶⁹³ *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁶⁹⁴ BArch DR1/10653a. *Brecht-Dialog 1968. Ergänzende Bemerkungen des iTi-Sekretariats. Internes Arbeitsmaterial*, p.5

¹⁶⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p.6

¹⁶⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p.5

¹⁶⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p.6. Martin Esslin’s focus on the Theatre of the Absurd and his study *Brecht: A Choice of Evils* both had likely not endeared him to the East German cultural officials.

Philippines, Sri Lanka, Syria, Uruguay and Venezuela participated.¹⁶⁹⁸ Very few of them were members of national ITI centres, if such existed at all. There were more than 80 East German attendees that accounted for considerably more than a third of the approximately 220 participants.

7.1.2 'Politics in the Theatre'. The Programme of the Brecht Dialogue

The opening ceremony of the Brecht Dialogue took place on February 10th with speeches by Felsenstein, Darcante and Alexander Arbusch, the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers. While Felsenstein and Darcante opened the Congress and welcomed the guests in short speeches, Arbusch gave a long lecture.¹⁶⁹⁹ In it, Arbusch emphasised Brecht's political intentions and linked them inseparably to the emergence and development of the GDR:

Brecht kam zu uns, um mit uns die sozialistische Umwälzung vorzubereiten, wie sie die sozialökonomische geschichtliche Notwendigkeit unseres Jahrhunderts erfordert und wie sie von ihm selbst in genialen Dichtungen begründet wurde. Die Kontinuität und Konsequenz dieses politischen Weges entsprach der Kontinuität und Konsequenz im Werk und Leben von Bertolt Brecht.¹⁷⁰⁰

Brecht's ambivalent relationship to the SED was reduced, and instead framed as his complete alignment with the politics and development in the GDR.

This link between Brecht and the GDR made it necessary to reject mostly Western criticism of Brecht. Thus, Arbusch argued against perceived West German attempts to defuse the political message of Brecht's work and to deny what he called Brecht's "consistent life path". Arbusch explicitly addressed the statement of Swiss writer Max Frisch, who had imputed to Brecht "the resounding ineffectiveness of a classic." Arbusch rejected this notion and declared the official GDR position on this issue:

Unser Standpunkt ist, daß wir in der Bezeichnung eines sozialistischen Dichters als Klassiker keine Abwertung sehen, weil unser revolutionär-marxistischer Begriff des Klassischen nichts Abgeschlossenes, Denkmalhaftes bedeutet, sondern ein so hohes Maß an ideeller und künstlerischer Vollendung, daß ein Werk eine lebendige humane Wirkung auf die Mitwelt und auf künftige Generationen ausüben kann.¹⁷⁰¹

¹⁶⁹⁸ See the list of participants printed in: Hecht, Werner. 1969. *Brecht-Dialog 1968: Politik auf dem Theater*. München: Rogner & Bernhard, p.277-286

¹⁶⁹⁹ Hecht. 1969. p.16-25

¹⁷⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p.17

¹⁷⁰¹ *ibid.*, p.20

On February 11th, two keynotes were given by Brecht disciple Manfred Wekwerth and literature scholar Werner Mittenzwei, who worked as a lecturer in literary theory at the Institute for Social Sciences at the Central Committee of the SED. Mittenzwei identified several misinterpretations of Brecht, and directly addressed the criticism of Brecht by West German writer Martin Walser.¹⁷⁰² In a second part, Mittenzwei then discussed what the theatre of the GDR owed to Brecht and his method,¹⁷⁰³ how Brecht's work had changed society and how Brecht's dramatic technique was still applicable under the new social conditions in a socialist society.¹⁷⁰⁴ Manfred Wekwerth refuted the Max Frisch quote already mentioned by Arbusch and discussed common views of Brecht's impact and status in an attempt to rebut "platitudes". Contrary to earlier East German defences against these statements, Wekwerth now stated: „Brecht ist Klassiker.“¹⁷⁰⁵

The speeches of Arbusch, Mittenzwei and Wekwerth, despite their different structures and different perspectives from a politician, a scholar, and a theatre director respectively, featured some conspicuous commonalities. They make it obvious what perspective on Brecht the GDR wanted to propagate with the Brecht Dialogue. All three lectures addressed alternative Western views Brecht and his work and elaborated on the role Brecht played for GDR theatre, pointing out the benefits that could still be drawn from the political elements of Brecht's work in a state of established socialism. The Brecht Dialogue was quite clearly part of the GDR's ongoing fight with Western and especially West German artists and scholars over Brecht's legacy.¹⁷⁰⁶

The press reports on the Brecht Dialogue showed that observers from both East and West were aware of what purpose the Brecht Dialogue was supposed to serve, especially in regards to the BE's ongoing crisis.¹⁷⁰⁷ Some were also sceptical about the size of the event, which was seen as an indicator that this Brecht commemoration was an attempt to dominate the Brecht discourse.¹⁷⁰⁸ At the event itself, however, the

¹⁷⁰² *ibid.*, p.27

¹⁷⁰³ *ibid.*, p.31.

¹⁷⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p.34

¹⁷⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p.47

¹⁷⁰⁶ On the occasion of Brecht's birthday and immediately before the Brecht Dialogue in the GDR, a Brecht Week was held in the FRG in Frankfurt am Main. Kohls had considered it absolutely necessary to "send an expert to Frankfurt/Main." This person was to "reliably" inform the East German keynote speakers and moderators about the results of the West German event. (BArch DR1/8852. *Stichpunkt-Protokoll der Direktoriumssitzung vom 21.1.1968*, p.4)

¹⁷⁰⁷ Bradley. 2011. p.126

¹⁷⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p.129

framework that the GDR had provided went largely unchallenged and unmentioned.

Only playwright Peter Weiss commented on and criticised Brecht's exaltation:

Ich glaube, daß der "unfeierliche" Brecht sich während der letzten Tage ein paarmal im Grab herumgedreht hätte, denn wenn er noch nicht Klassiker ist, wird er jetzt zum "Klassiker" gemacht. Und das wollen wir doch nicht. - Die praktische Theaterarbeit ist doch das, was uns interessiert; ich als Stückeschreiber bin besonders daran interessiert. Obgleich hochinteressante theoretische Auslassungen vorhanden gewesen sind, die uns genauso viel angehen müssen, sollten wir uns doch mit den praktischen Problemen der Bühnenarbeit beschäftigen, sowohl mit Brecht als auch mit dem realistischen Zeittheater heute, das die Tradition von Brecht fortsetzt.¹⁷⁰⁹

Still, the keynote speeches did only partially serve their purpose. They were intended to provide central topics and arguments as the basis for the panel discussions, but were hardly addressed even by the East German moderators, most likely because they had not had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the very dense speeches, and were therefore unable to refer to them during the dialogues.¹⁷¹⁰

The Brecht Dialogue itself was divided into separate panel discussion by different groups of experts. These were: literary and theatre scholars, translators and publishers, stage designers, directors and actors, theatre scholars and critics, as well as philosophers, politicians, and natural scientists. The individual talks were each chaired by an East German moderator that guided the course of the conversation. Among the participants of the discussion, the GDR experts usually predominated, although the ratio varied: At the Dialogue of Publishers and Translators, for example, which dealt with the difficulties of translating Brecht texts into various foreign languages, the experts naturally came from all regions of the world.¹⁷¹¹ The Dialogue of Directors and Actors was the panel discussion that came closest to Weigel's original vision. It featured six experts from the GDR, most of them current or former members of the BE (Benno Besson, Peter Kupke, Ekkehard Schall, Hilmar Thate, Helene Weigel, Manfred Wekweth) and five experts from abroad (Chérif Khaznadar, Juri Ljubimov, Tamás Major, Koreya Senda, Giorgio Strehler).¹⁷¹² The Dialogue of Theatre People with Philosophers, Politicians and Natural Scientists featured only East Germans; members of the BE and representatives of a wide range of institutions in the GDR.¹⁷¹³

¹⁷⁰⁹ Hecht. 1969. p.90

¹⁷¹⁰ BArch DR1/23732. 1968/04/18. *Brecht-Dialog 1968. Bemerkungen zu Fragen der Organisation.*

¹⁷¹¹ Hecht. 1969. p.110

¹⁷¹² *ibid.*, p.147

¹⁷¹³ *ibid.*, p.207

The extent to which the topic of “Politics in the Theatre” was discussed in accordance with the GDR’s officially approved interpretations of Brecht varied greatly, as did the course of the individual conversations. The first panel discussion, the Dialogue of Literary and Theatre Scholars began with moderator Joachim Tenschert trying to follow the momentum of the lectures with his first questions to the participants. After some lengthy statements had been read, the conversation became a more dynamic discussion mainly centred around documentary theatre, a form that was both topical, political and inspired by Brecht’s methods. While Peter Weiss explained the principles of documentary theatre, Rainer Kerndl and several other East German participants were doubtful as to what extent this style was an appropriate use of Brecht’s methods.¹⁷¹⁴

Other panels like the Dialogue of Translators and Publishers, the situation of Brecht translation in various countries was presented and discussed, were very matter-of-fact.¹⁷¹⁵ During the Dialogue of Stage Designers, the participants noticed a general difference of opinion between the German and foreign stage designers regarding the use of Brecht’s modelbooks. The East (and one West German) stage designers were in favour of using the models, and saw them as useful tools to avoid diffusion of Brecht’s political message. In contrast, the attendees from Japan, Romania, UK and Sweden all stated that, while the models had been useful in their own productions, they did not consider it necessary to follow the models exactly to convey the intention of the text. It became clear that while the BE’s Brecht productions were admired worldwide, imitating them as faithfully as possible was not a priority for international theatre practitioners. Instead, they were more interested in finding new ways of staging the work.¹⁷¹⁶ The most explicitly political discussion was the Dialogue between Theatre People, Philosophers, Politicians and Natural scientists, that primarily dealt with Brecht’s social impact and political usefulness in the GDR. Since the conversation took place exclusively between representatives of various East German institutions, it was, however, not very accessible to the foreign audience.¹⁷¹⁷

The ITI centre confirmed that – despite the title “Politics in the Theatre” and the unequivocal speeches by Arbusch, Mittenzwei and Wekwerth – the GDR participants

¹⁷¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.77-119

¹⁷¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.110-30

¹⁷¹⁶ *ibid.*, p.131-46

¹⁷¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.207-37

had generally tried not to provoke opposition to these statements in the panel discussions:

Mit unserer Absicht, Provokationen aus dem Wege zu gehen, war leider auch der Verzicht auf leidenschaftliche Streitgespräche verbunden, obwohl doch gerade die Ausbildung einer profilierten „Einheitsfront des realistischen Welttheaters“ unser Ziel war. Aber eine deutliche Profilierung der Fronten ist eben nur im Kampf möglich, und wir taten wohl nicht gut daran, den alten Leninschen Hinweis, daß Vereinigung Auseinandersetzung zur Vorbedingung hat, zu vergessen.¹⁷¹⁸

Before the closing ceremony of the Brecht Dialogue ended with final words by Weigel and Darcante, Khaznadar read a statement about Brecht's significance in the current geopolitical situation:

Die Teilnehmer des Brecht-Dialogs 1968 über Politik auf dem Theater sind davon überzeugt, daß alle Theaterleute der Welt ihre Anstrengungen vereinigen müssen, um die imperialistische Aggression, wo immer sie auftreten mag, besonders aber heute in Vietnam, zu verurteilen. Wir müssen unser Publikum auffordern, dieser Aggression ein sofortiges Ende zu setzen und für den Frieden der Welt zu kämpfen. - Die Teilnehmer des Brecht-Dialogs stimmen mit Bertolt Brecht überein, ihr Theater nicht als Mittel der Mystifikation, des Individualismus und des Antihumanismus zu gebrauchen, sondern als Mittel der gegenseitigen Verständigung zwischen allen progressiven Menschen der Welt. Unser Theater sollte den Menschen Klarheit über ihre gesellschaftliche und politische Situation verschaffen - mit dem Ziel, die Welt zu ändern und zu verbessern.¹⁷¹⁹

Khaznadar's words fit well with the cultural policy tenets of the Brecht Dialogue. The ITI centre later expressed the regret that this moment had been insufficiently prepared. Thus this “well-intentioned and actually extremely necessary appeal by Khaznadar was simply drowned out during the closing ceremony.”¹⁷²⁰

The accompanying programme of the Brecht Dialogue was most extensive.¹⁷²¹ The theatre performances alone scheduled for the Brecht Dialogue were so numerous and, in some cases, took place in parallel, that the participants were unable to attend them all. The BE performed on each evening of the Dialogue, and the German State Opera staged Paul Dessau's opera adaptations of Brecht. In addition, there were guest performances from other non-Berlin GDR theatres: The Hans-Otto-Theater Potsdam performed *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* directed by Peter Kupke, the Nationaltheater Weimar showed *Life of Galilei* and *Life of Edward the Second of England*, Brecht's

¹⁷¹⁸ BArch DR1/10653a. *Brecht-Dialog 1968. Ergänzende Bemerkungen des iTi-Sekretariats. Internes Arbeitsmaterial*, p.7

¹⁷¹⁹ Hecht. 1969, p.263-4

¹⁷²⁰ BArch DR1/10653a. *Brecht-Dialog 1968. Ergänzende Bemerkungen des iTi-Sekretariats. Internes Arbeitsmaterial*, p.7

¹⁷²¹ Hecht. 1969, p.271-5

adaptation of the Marlowe play, both directed by Fritz Bennewitz. These performances were followed by discussions with the directors, actors and other participants. Apart from the evening performances of the East German theatres, there was also a mixed programme in the mornings.

The ITI centre and the BE had originally planned guest performances by the Piccolo Teatre in Milan and the Taganka Theatre in Moscow, but these could not take place, meaning foreign participation in the Brecht Dialogue's accompanying programme was comparatively sparse.¹⁷²² On February 15th, a performance of *The Exception and the Rule* by Arab students in Arabic, directed by Chérif Khaznadar, was staged at the Berliner Ensemble. On the same day, the Japanese actor Hedeo Kanze showed scenes from No plays.¹⁷²³ In addition, there was an exhibition on *Brecht auf den Bühnen der Welt*, in which foreign theatre people were given the opportunity to document Brecht's reception in their countries. According to Hecht, these photographs of productions demonstrated "that different solutions had been found under the different conditions of the countries" for the stage adaptation of Brecht's texts. From these pictures it could be discerned that the models of the Berliner Ensemble were "used as often as they were creatively modified".¹⁷²⁴

The scope of the Brecht Dialogue also included the publication of a dedicated congress newspaper, that informed the attendees of upcoming events and programme changes, printed excerpts of the keynote speeches and provided additional material on the various performances, screenings and exhibitions. The congress newspaper emphasised both the international and the political character of the Brecht Dialogue. Everyday, it listed the names and professions of foreign guests who had newly arrived on the previous day. The issue on February 11th featured *Griüße und Briefe zum Brecht-Dialog 1968*. It included letters to Helene Weigel by international theatre artists such as Peter Brook, Jean Vilar or Paolo Grassi, who had to cancel their participation in the event due to their own theatre rehearsals, premieres or travels. Mixed in were greetings from the Peace Council of the GDR, the VEB Chemical Factory Buna or the Karl Marx Expanded Secondary School.¹⁷²⁵ Additionally, the front pages of some issues also featured sections of "current news" from the GDR's state news service. These news

¹⁷²² Bradley. 2011. p.129

¹⁷²³ Hecht. 1969. p.274

¹⁷²⁴ *ibid.*, p.290

¹⁷²⁵ BArch DR1/8852. Brecht Dialog 1968. Congress newspaper. 11.2.1968.

either concerned the successes of East German socialist society, the oppressiveness of the West German state, or the anti-imperialist struggles of the Global South.

7.1.3 A Neglect of the Global South? Evaluation and Resolutions

With over 200 attendees and such an extensive supporting programme, the Brecht Dialogue was much larger than the usual ITI seminars and colloquia. It was the largest event the East German ITI centre would ever organise apart from the World Congress in 1983. This was possible because of the joint organisation together with the BE and the AdK, two much larger and, at least in the East German context, considerably more influential institutions. A much greater effort could be made and more organisations and individuals in the GDR could be enlisted to contribute. The BE's involvement also attracted the interest of theatre artists who were not usually part of the ITI sphere.

While there was no doubt that the Brecht Dialogue had been a successful opportunity for the ITI centre to promote Brecht in connection with GDR theatre and cultural politics on an unusually large scale, the ITI centre was critical of several aspects. The scale of the Brecht Dialogue and the widely divergent interests of the co-organisers had created a structure and programme that did not lend itself to the GDR ITI's intentions. The fact that the different parties had been responsible for the programme and inviting the guests led to some discrepancies. There were different groups of guests with different interests that had all not been accommodated equally. According to the internal report of the ITI centre, different criticism thus came from different groups:

- a) Teilnehmer aus der DDR waren enttäuscht, daß das durch die Referate vorgegebene Niveau nicht gehalten werden konnte,
- b) Teilnehmer aus den jungen Nationalstaaten waren enttäuscht, daß ihre so ganz anderen Probleme von Anfang an nicht den gebührenden Platz fanden,
- c) Teilnehmer aus kapitalistischen Ländern, vor allem solche, die der Arbeiterbewegung nahestehen, waren enttäuscht, daß das Motto „Politik auf dem Theater“ nicht in einer politisch schärferen, konkreteren Orientierung Ausdruck fand.¹⁷²⁶

The ITI centre persisted that the panel discussion had proven itself the “the only appropriate” form for an event of this size. Ebermann was convinced that, if all participants had been able to take part in the discussion, “guests from a number of countries would only have released the microphone after a detailed presentation of their

¹⁷²⁶ BArch DR1/10653a. *Brecht-Dialog 1968. Ergänzende Bemerkungen des iTi-Sekretariats. Internes Arbeitsmaterial*, p.7

Colombian, Ceylonese etc. directorial experiences” and would have left the moderators unable to preserve the character of a ‘dialogue’.¹⁷²⁷ He agreed that only through restricting the number of active participants was any real exchange of ideas possible. However, he also noted that this had left the guest with very limited opportunities to contribute. Of the invited attendees from no less than 16 countries of the Global South, only three had been able to participate in the actual panel discussions, two of them, the translators Carlos Rincón from Colombia and Asoke Sen from India in the Dialogue of Translators and Publishers.

The dialogues were often dominated by conversation between East German Brecht experts. In the Dialogue of Directors and Actors, the high number of BE members was particularly striking. Their discussion about the relationship between actors and directors had the character of a conversation between colleagues, with many interjections and joking asides.¹⁷²⁸ It was interrupted by Darcante, who from the audience pointed out that the BE-style collective was not necessarily “a cure” for other problems, which had not yet been mentioned in this conversation.¹⁷²⁹ Khaznadar, the only other participant from the Global South, spoke next, also making it plain that the discussion up to this point had been almost exclusively about conditions in the GDR and specifically at the BE, and did not necessarily match the experiences and struggles of international participants. Thus, he wanted to broaden the framework:¹⁷³⁰

Ich habe diese Diskussion mit sehr großem Interesse verfolgt. Ich kann Ihnen sagen, warum: Ich fühle mich nicht so sehr angesprochen. Sicher geht es hier um sehr wichtige Dinge für ein Theater, an dem es Regisseure und Schauspieler gibt. Aber das Problem ist, ich komme aus einem Land, in dem es keine Theaterhochschulen und keine Berufsschauspieler gibt, aber wo wir trotzdem Brecht spielen wollen. Aus diesem Grunde bin ich zu einer anderen Konzeption des Kollektivs von Regisseur und Schauspielern gekommen.¹⁷³¹

Khaznadar further illustrated his point by describing his experience with staging *The Exeception and the Rule* at the BE. After being told upon his arrival in East Berlin that he would not find any Arab actors there, he had picked a mixed group of 15 Arab students who had never been on stage before. Since he was used to working in conditions significantly different from those of professional East German theatre, this had not been an unusual approach to him. Helene Weigel welcomed Khaznadar’s

¹⁷²⁷ *ibid.*, p.6

¹⁷²⁸ This is particularly evident in: *ibid.*, p.160-62

¹⁷²⁹ *ibid.*, p.168

¹⁷³⁰ *ibid.*, p.170

¹⁷³¹ *ibid.*, p.169

contribution and referred to her own experiences during the time of her emigration, where she had also performed with amateurs, to show that she was no stranger to the issues addressed by Khaznadar. Despite her acknowledgement, no further exchange about these problems took place. Khaznadar's contribution was one of the few moments where the issues of theatre in the Global South were specifically addressed during the Dialogues.

Before the Brecht Dialogue, the hosts had asked some of their foreign guest to prepare reports on the state of Brecht reception in their respective countries. Of these numerous contributions, some were selected for the closing ceremony, where Tenschert asked these guests as representatives of their countries to talk about their experiences of staging Brecht or about their impressions of the Brecht Dialogue.¹⁷³² Some participants from the Global South had the chance to report on the theatre situation in their countries. These contributions were of very differing content: the Cuban dramaturge Nicolas Dorr Udaeta praised Brecht and his theatre, which he described as a “prelude and a pillar of a new stage in world history”.¹⁷³³ The actress Manel Jayasena described the development and difficulties of the still nascent Brecht reception in Sri Lanka.¹⁷³⁴ Ebrahim Alkazi spoke about Brecht and Gandhi, and how the theatre should make a small contribution to overcoming the “terrible misery” in India.¹⁷³⁵ Mercedes Rein, writer and translator from Uruguay, explained how the financial difficulties hindered theatres from staging Brecht plays and what audience could be attracted to them.¹⁷³⁶ Saad Ardash spoke of the efforts of Arab countries “to build a new, socialist society”, and the task of “developing an Arab theatre that plays as great a role in social life as Brecht’s theatre.” Ardash also shared his impressions on the Brecht Dialogue. In his opinion, it had helped him “to better interpret Brecht’s ideology” and had made him realise “that the differences between our traditional theatre and Brecht's epic theatre are not as great” as he had previously assumed.¹⁷³⁷ The purpose of these contributions to the closing ceremony was to showcase and celebrate Brecht’s international popularity,

¹⁷³² *ibid.*, p.239

¹⁷³³ *ibid.*, p.239-240

¹⁷³⁴ *ibid.*, p.240-242

¹⁷³⁵ *ibid.*, p.246-8

¹⁷³⁶ *ibid.*, p.256-7

¹⁷³⁷ *ibid.*, p.259-61

not to spark further discussion. The reports that were not used in the closing ceremony were instead printed in a special issue of *Theater der Zeit*.¹⁷³⁸

By attempting to present the most comprehensive and impressive look at Brecht reception and theatre in the GDR, the organisers had barely considered foreign contributions in general. The very dense programme had not left enough time for exchange among the attendees. This was particularly true for participants from the Global South. Since they had barely been given opportunity to do so during the panel discussions, the guests from the Global South wanted other opportunities to share their experiences that the hosts had not anticipated. The foyer talks that the ITI centre had insisted on could only partially serve that function. The guests from the Global South had therefore “forced” the hosts to provide additional space for them. These talks that were led by Käthe Rüllicke-Weiler and Giorgio Strehler are not documented in the Brecht Dialogue publication. According to the ITI, they were “not always controllable in their quality and at times left a rather chaotic impression.”¹⁷³⁹

Even as passive listeners, the colloquium had not been geared towards the attendees from the Global South. The organisers had attempted to address both East German and international theatre artists, discuss within a small circle of selected Brecht experts but also have a larger audience that did not share the same level of expertise or the same experiences within the East German theatre system. The theoretical level and state of Brecht discourse in the GDR was unfamiliar to many foreign visitors, in whose countries Brecht's theoretical texts were often not even available. Ebermann critically remarked on this:

Die scherzhaft wirkende Bemerkung, daß zum BRECHT-DIALOG eigentlich nur zugelassen sei, wer die mehrbändigen Brecht-Schriften zum Theater durchgelesen und auch verdaut habe, wäre bei einem nationalen Brecht-Kongreß durchaus ernstzunehmen. Bei einem internationalen ist sie reine Utopie.¹⁷⁴⁰

The keynote speeches, especially Wekwerth's, had been particularly problematic in that regard. They had very extensively argued against Western Brecht interpretations and were thus difficult to follow for those with no prior knowledge of or vested interest in

¹⁷³⁸ „Brecht auf den Bühnen der Welt. Materialien zum Brecht-Dialog 1968. Berichte aus anderen Ländern“ In: *Theater der Zeit*. Studien 1/1968.

¹⁷³⁹ BArch DR1/10653a. *Brecht-Dialog 1968. Ergänzende Bemerkungen des iTi-Sekretariats. Internes Arbeitsmaterial*, p.6

¹⁷⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.6-7

these disagreements. This was exacerbated by the fact that the speeches had only been submitted for translation a few days before the Brecht Dialogue.¹⁷⁴¹

Dieses Auseinanderklaffen von begeisterter Zustimmung und etwas ratlosem Unverständnis war höchst bedauerlich. Konzentriert philosophische Texte dieser Art gehen natürlich nicht nur über viele Köpfe hinweg, sondern sie übersteigen auch weit die derzeitigen Möglichkeiten der Simultanübersetzung.¹⁷⁴²

Ebermann concluded that this approach was not suited for an international colloquium, and needed to be reconsidered in the future:

„Wir müssen lernen, hier mit durchaus verschiedenen Niveaus zu arbeiten; das eigene bereits erreichte theoretische Niveau als nicht zu unterschreitende Bedingung für die Diskussion mit ausländischen Theaterleuten anzusehen, wäre ein wirklich schwerer Fehler.“¹⁷⁴³

The ITI centre of the GDR thus took several lessons away from the 1968 Brecht Dialogue. Firstly, that while the overtly political topic had felt like a risk at the time, there was a strong tolerance or even demand for this partisan framing. Secondly, that theatre artists from the Global South had a stronger interest in Brecht than anticipated. And thirdly, that the interests and struggles of theatre artists from the Global South had to be specifically considered and addressed.

While the Brecht Dialogue became one of the biggest and most important events in the history of the ITI Centre, it did not help overcome the difficulties the BE was facing at the time. Only a few months after the Brecht Dialogue, the crisis that had already been brewing escalated and caused several important figures such as Wekwerth to leave the BE.¹⁷⁴⁴ The Brecht Dialogue was the first of a series of large-scale Brecht commemorations in the GDR. As Laura Bradley noted, it was in the nature of the East German culture of anniversary celebrations that the Brecht Dialogue became the model for later Brecht commemorations. Since the Brecht Dialogue had been such an elaborate presentation of East German Brecht expertise for an international and domestic audience, all subsequent anniversaries had to have a similar scale. If they didn't measure up to the standard set by the Brecht Dialogue of 1968, the state of East German Brecht reception, the BE, and all other organisations involved would be called into question.¹⁷⁴⁵ From 1968 onwards, further commemorations were organised in the GDR

¹⁷⁴¹ BArch DR1/23732. 1968/04/18. *Brecht-Dialog 1968. Bemerkungen zu Fragen der Organisation*, p.3

¹⁷⁴² BArch DR1/10653a. *Brecht-Dialog 1968. Ergänzende Bemerkungen des iTi-Sekretariats. Internes Arbeitsmaterial*, p.7

¹⁷⁴³ *ibid.*, p.7

¹⁷⁴⁴ Bradley. 2011. p.131-2

¹⁷⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p.126

on the important anniversaries of Brecht's birthday: the Brecht Week in 1973 for the 75th birthday, the Brecht Dialogue in 1978 for the 80th birthday, and further Brecht Dialogues in 1988 and 1998. While these did follow the format of the initial event in 1968, they also reflected the changing circumstances, shifts in personnel and other difficulties that plagued the BE, especially in the 1970s. Werner Hecht remained responsible for the organisation of the Brecht Dialogues and Brecht Weeks, first as a member of the BE and eventually as the director of the Brecht Centre, which was opened in 1978 on the occasion of the Brecht Dialogue.¹⁷⁴⁶

The ITI centre initially remained a co-organiser and was also listed as such in the publications of the 1973 Brecht Week,¹⁷⁴⁷ but largely stayed out of the actual planning of the event. Ruth Berghaus, the artistic director of the BE, complained in the lead-up to the Brecht Week that the other co-organisers hardly participated and left all the work to the BE.¹⁷⁴⁸ The absence of documents in the files of the East German ITI about the 1973 Brecht Week also indicates that the centre was not involved in a significant capacity. Despite its 1968 model, the 1973 Brecht Week was a much smaller event aimed primarily at an East German audience. Of the 39 foreign participants from 14 countries, almost all were from Eastern or Western Europe.¹⁷⁴⁹ The discussions took place between East German theatre artists and scholars, and primarily dealt with Brecht reception in the GDR. Accordingly, the involvement of the ITI centre was not required.

To the ITI centre, the cultural relations established during the Brecht Dialogue 1968 were more important than the results of the panel discussions. The members of the ITI centre and their MfK contacts had used the occasion to build new and strengthen existing relations with other ITI representatives and foreign theatre artists. Walter Felsenstein invited Jean Darcante, René Hainaux, 15 other ITI representatives, and some prominent guests of the Brecht Dialogue such as Strehler and Lyubimov to a lunch "in the course of which a lively exchange of views took place and valuable contacts were made." Kohls and Gysi held several business talks with Darcante on ITI matters, and Darcante himself took the opportunity to hold separate business talks with the Arab and Latin American guests. Separate discussions also took place with participants from

¹⁷⁴⁶ Paffrath, Elifius. 1980. *Brecht 80. Brecht in Afrika, Asien und Lateinamerika. Dokumentation*. Berlin: Henschelverlag.

¹⁷⁴⁷ Hecht, Werner. 1973. *Brecht 73. Brecht-Woche der DDR. Dokumentation*. Berlin: Henschelverlag.

¹⁷⁴⁸ Bradley. 2011. p.132

¹⁷⁴⁹ Hecht. 1973. p.337

the Global South. With Orsini, they discussed the implementation of the exchange stipulated in the friendship treaty existing between the centres.¹⁷⁵⁰ With Gaad, they negotiated the possibilities of theatrical exchange with the Egyptian centre and prepared a draft of a possible friendship agreement. With Ebrahim Alkazi, they spoke about possibilities to support the teaching of Brecht at the National School of Drama, which resulted in Bennewitz's first deployment to India. They also held further talks with Khoury, El-Ani, Anthony Morli from the Philippine Educational Theatre Association (PETA) and Khaznadar.¹⁷⁵¹ In addition, the ITI centre initiated a film documentation of Khaznadar's production of *The Exception and the Rule*, that was produced by an Arab team and the German Academy of Cinematography, and funded by MfK, MfAA and the League of Friendships between Peoples. It was intended for non-commercial use "especially in the Arab nation states (cultural centre etc.)" and "for screening at international iTi congresses."¹⁷⁵²

The contacts that the ITI centre of the GDR consolidated, among other things, in the search for suitable guests for their Colloquium and then during the Brecht Dialogue, proved particularly useful in the 1970s when the Committee for Third World Theatre was founded within the ITI. By this time, the centre already had friendly links with several of the key players. These theatre artists who had been guests at the Brecht Dialogue and remained active in ITI also became the base of later events that the GDR hosted for theatre artists from the Global South.

7.2 Seminars for Theatre Artists of the Global South

The initial contacts that the East German ITI had established with theatre artists from developing countries had simply mimicked the general methods of the GDR's development aid; the sending of East German experts to the Global South and the training of Southern scholarship holders in the GDR. They had relied on ITI contacts, without using the format of typical ITI events that aimed to discuss aspects and problems of theatre by exploring diverse perspectives. After the Brecht Dialogue, theatre artists from the Global South became a target audience for ITI events hosted by the East German centre. In November 1969, for example, Jens-Peter Dierichs wrote the

¹⁷⁵⁰ BArch DR1/10653a. *Brecht-Dialog 1968. Ergänzende Bemerkungen des iTi-Sekretariats. Internes Arbeitsmaterial*, p.10

¹⁷⁵¹ *ibid.*, p.11

¹⁷⁵² *ibid.*, p.11-12

rough draft of a concept for an international seminar about theatre directing in the GDR planned for 1971. This seminar was supposed to be a follow-up and counterstatement to the first international symposium on the professional development of young theatre directors that the Romanian ITI had organised in Bucharest in 1969.¹⁷⁵³ However, Dierichs' proposal also mentioned that the ITI centre wanted to build on the "correct central question of the Brecht Dialogue 'Politics in the Theatre', which met with particularly strong interest among the representatives of young nation states." The Brecht Dialogue, which had been a "predominantly theoretical debate", was to be the basis of a "productive conversation" based on the work of East German directors and ensembles.¹⁷⁵⁴ Accordingly, the seminar was planned as a "working or study conference with workshop events." The seminar was to be aimed at "progressive representatives of theatre in the world, especially those working in theatre in the socialist countries and the young nation states."¹⁷⁵⁵ This proposal for a seminar was never realised, though the idea to organise further events based on the international interest in Brecht's political theatre witnessed at the Brecht Dialogue and geared towards theatre artists from the Global South remained.

When the ITI centre finally started its series of seminars for theatre artists of the Third World in the 1970s, it was still committed to these ideas. In 1974, the MfAA had suggested to the ITI to hold a seminar for theatre artists from developing countries.¹⁷⁵⁶ The members of the directorate agreed that such a seminar needed to continue the experiences of the Brecht Dialogue.¹⁷⁵⁷ The circumstances had however changed quite significantly. The GDR had finally gained its international recognition and joined the UN and UNESCO. Relations with the Global South were no longer pursued in hope of diplomatic recognition, but to support official relations and influence the developing countries towards socialism. The ITI had also changed; it now had its own structures to support theatre in the Global South, namely the CTWT. And, most importantly, the members of the GDR centre had gained deeper insights into the issues of 'Third World'

¹⁷⁵³ BArch DR1/10623. 1969/11. *Rohentwurf einer Konzeption des internationalen Regieseminars (Schauspiel) in der DDR im Jahre 1971*, p.1

For more on the Romanian symposium, see: Iacob. 2018. p.204-6

¹⁷⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.1

¹⁷⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p.3

¹⁷⁵⁶ ITI/Direktorium der DDR, 1971-1974. 1974/10/15. *Protokoll der Direktoriumssitzung vom 28.9.1974*, p.2

¹⁷⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p.3

theatre both through the CTWT and Bennewitz's impressions from his first international stagings.

In January 1975, the planning commission for the seminar met for a first briefing. From the beginning, the seminar was not intended as a one-off event. Kohls already noted in the minutes of the first planning meeting:

Das Ministerium für Kultur hat die Vorstellung, diese Seminare zu einer regelmäßigen Einrichtung werden zu lassen und sie etwa alle zwei Jahre durchzuführen, um eine Kontinuität und damit eine bessere Einflußnahme, besonders auf Leitungskader in Entwicklungsländern, nehmen zu können.¹⁷⁵⁸

The goal was clear from the beginning: The GDR wanted to influence “leadership cadres” in the Third World. Continuity was considered an important prerequisite to achieve this. As envisioned in this initial meeting, there were indeed biannual events for theatre artists from the Global South from 1976 to 1982, even if they did not all have the exact same format or framework. In 1976, the first seminar on *Theatre and Social Reality* was organised for theatre practitioners from the Third World. In 1978, on the anniversary of Brecht's birth, another Brecht Dialogue was held, which made any additional but smaller event with a similar topic superfluous. While the Brecht Dialogue was not organised by the East German ITI centre, there was a panel discussion devoted to Brecht reception in the Global South. However, this one-hour colloquium was not sufficient to discuss the interests and problems of theatre artists from the Global South to a satisfying degree. The East German ITI and the Brecht Centre thus decided to cooperate and dedicate the 1980 Brecht Days “entirely to work in the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America.”¹⁷⁵⁹ A last seminar organised by the ITI centre, exclusively for theatre artists from the Global South, took place in 1982 under the title *Brecht's Work and Method to Discover and Promote Cultural and National Identity*.¹⁷⁶⁰ Even though the framework of the various seminars and colloquia was different and involved different organisers, they built on each other and offered the continuity that the MfK wanted. This was confirmed by Irene Gysi in her invitation letter for the 1982

¹⁷⁵⁸ BArch DR1/10608a. 1975/01/18. *Kurzprotokoll der ersten Beratung der Kommission zur Vorbereitung eines Seminars für Theaterleute aus Entwicklungsländern im Juni 1976*, p.2

¹⁷⁵⁹ Paffrath. 1980. p.295

¹⁷⁶⁰ The events were somewhat inconsistently referred to as seminars or colloquia during the planning and documentation. *Theatre and Social Reality* and the Brecht Days 1980 are better described as colloquia.

seminar, in which she wrote that the seminar “should be understood as a continuation of the Colloquium held in Berlin-Schildow in 1976 [...] and the 1980 Brecht-Days.”¹⁷⁶¹

7.2.1 Theatre and Social Reality (1976)

The planning of the first event in 1976 was of particular importance. Here, for the first time, it had to be determined what topics to focus on and how to specifically address an audience of theatre artists from the Global South. It was also necessary to consider how this would be feasible within the organisational structures of the ITI.

Many prolific East German theatre experts with international experience were involved in the conceptualization and realization of the first seminar. The programme was prepared by Bennewitz and theatre scholars Ursula Püschel and Joachim Fiebach,¹⁷⁶² the latter of whom had spent years as a guest lecturer in Nigeria and Tanzania. The team also included Brecht experts like Brecht disciple Wekwerth and BE-dramaturg Tenschert, Rohmer, Kohls and officials from the MfK.¹⁷⁶³

The Committee for Third World Theatre (CTWT) was of central importance. Through its establishment, the growing focus on theatre of the Global South had been given an organisational framework within the ITI. On one hand, the newly founded CTWT was very beneficial to the GDR ITI’s increased efforts concerning theatre in the Global South, since it provided an official international platform for events aimed only at artists from emerging countries. On the other hand, the GDR ITI now had to also deal with restrictions that were put in place specifically to limit outside interference. Bennewitz’s appointment as the committee’s consultant had allowed the East German ITI greater access to the work of the CTWT than was intended for other countries in the Global North. This was also beneficial for the planning of the seminar. Bennewitz’s role on the committee meant the GDR hosting an event of the CTWT would not be seen as meddling in its affairs, but instead as fulfilling the task of supporting Third World theatre that Bennewitz was explicitly mandated to take on as an appointed consultant. Thus, it was a simple choice to make Bennewitz the official host of the seminar.¹⁷⁶⁴

¹⁷⁶¹ BArch DR1/10608a. *Invitation. „Brecht’s Work and Method to Discover and Promote Cultural and National Identity”*, p.1

¹⁷⁶² BArch DR1/17543. 1975/12/1. *Kurzprotokoll der Sitzung vom 29.11.1975*, p.1

¹⁷⁶³ BArch DR1/10623. *Kurzprotokoll der Sitzung vom 25.10.1975*, p.1

¹⁷⁶⁴ BArch DR1/17543. *Protokoll über Beratung zur Vorbereitung des 3-Welt-Seminars am 31.1.1976*, p.1

The centre was well informed about current events within the CTWT because of Bennewitz's advantageous involvement in the committee. When the GDR ITI started planning its event in early 1975 between the Moscow and West Berlin Congresses, the CTWT had just gone through a power struggle between Darcante and Stewart. In Shiraz and Beirut the committee that at the time was dominated by the Arab representatives had tried to dispel Western influence by ousting Stewart. Bennewitz's contacts and his knowledge of the current issues and disagreements within the committee helped the planners to consider the sensibilities of their target group. Bennewitz had written a statement informing the members of the ITI centre and the MfK about the current situation of the committee and pointing out possible difficulties that had to be avoided for the seminar.¹⁷⁶⁵

As a non-Third World country, the GDR was technically not allowed to host an official event of the CTWT. This was a major disadvantage, as the affiliation with the ITI was considered vital. Firstly because, as with the Brecht Dialogue, the involvement of an international UNESCO-affiliated NGO legitimised the seminar as a non-political cultural event. Secondly, it provided the GDR centre with a greater reach through the ITI networks and the newsletters and publications distributed to all national centres. Bennewitz, who knew most how suspicious the CTWT currently was of outside meddling in their affairs, considered the affiliation with ITI hugely important to the success of the seminar. He advised the GDR ITI to proceed cautiously. It was, in his opinion, "out of the question to offer a seminar at the Congress that is hosted by the Ministry of Culture"¹⁷⁶⁶. The situation was especially delicate since the World Congress was hosted in West Berlin by the FRG centre. To have the benefits of an official ITI event without overtly violating the rules of the CTWT, Bennewitz proposed a "tactical" solution: The GDR ITI made their willingness to hold an event known to the board of the CTWT who would then "expressly" ask the GDR centre to host this seminar.¹⁷⁶⁷ Bennewitz volunteered to discuss this strategy with the Acting President of the committee, Lebanese playwright and theatre director Jalal Khoury. Khoury already had an existing relationship with the members of the GDR centre and was therefore a likely ally in this plan. That way, the seminar was, even if not official, still endorsed by the Committee. Further, also to emphasise the connection to the CTWT and to downplay

¹⁷⁶⁵ BArch. DR1/10623. *Stellungnahme zum Seminar „Dritte Welt“*.

¹⁷⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁷⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.1

any GDR political agenda, it was decided that the seminar would be opened with a speech by the Vice President of the CTWT, the Nigerian theatre scholar Joel Adedeji.¹⁷⁶⁸ Adedeji's advocacy of Pan-Africanism and the preservation of traditional indigenous forms of theatre was viewed with scepticism by the GDR centre who feared that his opposition to any artistic European influence in the CTWT would also reduce their access to the committee.¹⁷⁶⁹ Because of his official position in the CTWT, Adedeji's central role in the proceedings would help connect the event to the CTWT. His artistic differences with the East German ITI members would also emphasize the independence of the committee and avoided "the danger of favouritism".¹⁷⁷⁰ Ultimately, Adedeji was unable to attend. Nonetheless, these considerations illustrate that the members of the ITI were very aware of what benefit the ITI's structures provided for them. Their strategy of associating the event with the CTWT was successful enough that even Manfred Linke of the FRG ITI counted *Theatre and Social Reality* among the CTWT events.¹⁷⁷¹

Another general restriction of official ITI events was the GDR ITI not being able to autonomously decide who to invite. Instead, it was required to send invitations to all national centres belonging to the CTWT, which were then responsible for passing the information along to their members or delegate whoever they thought appropriate. During the Brecht Dialogue, this had been less of an issue. The organisers had been able to select suitable participants for the panel discussion, while most foreign guests were relegated to the audience. The seminar was, however, going to be a much smaller event with only active participants. A similar approach was therefore not possible. The directorate wanted to secure an atmosphere sympathetic and open to their political cause

¹⁷⁶⁸ BArch DR1/17543. *Protokoll über Beratung zur Vorbereitung des 3-Welt-Seminars am 31.1.1976*, p.1

¹⁷⁶⁹ This sentiment became obvious in Bennewitz's report about his visit to the Third Festival of Traditional Arts at the Maison de la Culture in Rennes: "Adedeji took the extreme opposite position and wanted to let the present mission in the discovery and preservation of the traditional alone be valid - in doing so, the danger of purism became clear (not to impute or reproach Adedeji, but certainly derivable as a danger: purism in the behaviour of tradition as the purpose and weapon of reaction and neo-colonialism)." (Bennewitz. 1976, p.3)

¹⁷⁷⁰ BArch DR1/17543. *Protokoll über Beratung zur Vorbereitung des 3-Welt-Seminars am 31.1.1976*, p.1

¹⁷⁷¹ Linke, Manfred. 1994. *Das Internationale Theaterinstitut. Das Zentrum Bundesrepublik des Internationalen Theaterinstituts*. Berlin: Papyrus Druck, p.56

and artistic ideas,¹⁷⁷² but was acutely aware of the differing artistic and ideological opinions and situations of the theatre artists grouped together in the CTWT:

An important point is to identify the needs of each country. The developing countries comprise four major cultural areas with huge differences in traditions and realities of the situation in the field of theatre. The situation in each country must be studied carefully, especially the question of who to reach, which organisations to rely on to identify the right people. The success of the seminar will depend on which people come.¹⁷⁷³

Moreover, they were also obligated to have the event be open to observers from all other ITI members states as well, which would have meant a strong presence of ITI delegates from Western Europe who were geographically close and more likely able to afford the travel costs. The team agreed to keep the number of observers from capitalist countries as low as possible.¹⁷⁷⁴ To achieve this, Bennewitz suggested that the official invitation for the seminar should state that a strict limit to the number of observers was necessary due to the small capacities of the event.¹⁷⁷⁵ This granted the GDR ITI the possibility to select only observers from countries they wanted present from all applications they received.

The members of the East German ITI also did not offer the full number of available places to the ITI. In addition to sending the official invitations to the ITI Centres they sent out invites to individual theatre artists that were already known to the members of the GDR ITI because of either guest performances, guest lectures, meetings during international theatre events or previous visits to the GDR. Ebrahim Alkazi, for example, was reinvited. Some of these invitations weren't even sent by the ITI Centre, but by the individual East German theatre experts themselves. In 1975, Ursula Püschel attended an Arab theatre festival in Damascus, where she was introduced to the work of Egyptian dramatist Alfred Farag.¹⁷⁷⁶ In the same year, Joachim Fiebach had visited Iraq and saw the production of Brecht's *Mr Puntilla and his Man Matti* directed by Ibrahim Jallal and Awni Karoumi's staging of Heiner Müller's *The Scab*.¹⁷⁷⁷ All three

¹⁷⁷² BArch DR1/10623. 1975/03/20. *Konzeptionsentwurf für die Durchführung eines Seminars für Theaterschaffende aus den Ländern der Dritten Welt*, p.2

¹⁷⁷³ BArch DR1/10608a. 1975/01/31. *Kurzprotokoll der Sitzung vom 18.1.1975*, p.2

¹⁷⁷⁴ BArch DR1/10623. *Kurzprotokoll der Sitzung vom 1.3.1975*.

¹⁷⁷⁵ BArch DR1/10623. *Stellungnahme zum Seminar „Dritte Welt“*.

¹⁷⁷⁶ Püschel writes about her impressions of the festival in: Püschel, Ursula. 1975. "Beobachtungen auf einem Festival. Über arabisches Theater" In: *Theater der Zeit*. 1975(no. 8). 30-32.

¹⁷⁷⁷ Fiebach, Joachim. 1975. "Balke in Bagdad/ Zur Theatersituation im Irak" In: *Theater der Zeit* 1975(8). 32-34.

theatre directors were invited to *Theatre and Social Reality*. Some of these additional guests were invited through bilateral cultural agreements and with the help of friendship societies.¹⁷⁷⁸ Furthermore, the ITI Centre also invited theatre artists from emerging countries that were already staying in the GDR, studying or working at a theatre as part of scholarships or exchange programs.¹⁷⁷⁹ These attendees were already more familiar with GDR theatre practice, Brecht reception and the ideological framework.

As a result of this strategy, 16 participants from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Arab World attended *Theatre and Social Reality* in 1976. Some of them were members of the respective national centre of the ITI, others had been invited through personal contacts, and a few were currently living and studying or working in the GDR.¹⁷⁸⁰ There were six East German participants, the “discussion leaders” responsible for the respective topics. Also present were six observers from the Global North: Jean Darcante, the CTWT consultants Dinora Baiterakova and Cherif Khaznadar, Ingrid Luterkort, secretary of the Swedish ITI Centre, Dana Kalvodova, Czechoslovakian theatre scholar with a focus on Asian theatre, and Koreya Senda, Japanese Brecht pioneer, director and translator who was also a regular guest at the Brecht Dialogues. In addition, the staff members of the ITI centre and MfK officials attended as observers.¹⁷⁸¹ The GDR ITI was very pleased with this composition and the lack of any political disagreement that resulted from it:

Es hat sich als günstig erwiesen, daß neben offiziellen ITI Delegierten auch Teilnehmer gekommen waren, die aufgrund langer Kontakte gezielt eingeladen worden waren und die in ihren Ländern wirkliche Multiplikatoren darstellen; dazu gehörten z.B. Prof. Alkazi aus Indien, Alfred Faragh aus Ägypten und Lutgardo Labad aus den Philippinen. Es bildete sich ein qualitativer Kern heraus, der positiv auf die anderen Teilnehmer einwirkte. Durch die Persönlichkeit von Alfred Faragh konnte es z.B. geschehen, daß politische Differenzen der arabischen Teilnehmer nicht in das Forum getragen wurden, was das Niveau der Veranstaltung wesentlich mitbestimmte.¹⁷⁸²

With all these measures in place, the GDR ITI created a space where they could circulate their ideas largely unchallenged by any Western influence, while still at least seemingly adhering to the rules of the ITI.

¹⁷⁷⁸ BArch DR1/10608a. 1975/01/31. *Kurzprotokoll der Sitzung vom 18.1.1975*, p.2

¹⁷⁷⁹ BArch DR1/10623. *Kurzprotokoll der Sitzung vom 25.10.1975*, p.2

¹⁷⁸⁰ Fiebach, Joachim. 1977. *Theatre and Social Reality. International Colloquy for Theatre People from Countries of the Third World*. Berlin: Tastomat, p.4

¹⁷⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.5

¹⁷⁸² BArch DR107/1. *Abschlußbericht über die Durchführung eines Seminars für Theaterschaffende aus den Ländern der Dritten Welt*, p.6-7

The structure and title of *Theatre and Social Reality* was indicative of the cultural policy approach that the GDR ITI had chosen for this series of seminars for theatre artists from the Global South, based on their assessment of the Brecht Dialogue 1968, their experiences with the CTWT and theatre in emerging countries: When reflecting on its successes and shortcomings, the members of the GDR ITI concluded that the concept of the Brecht Dialogue didn't fit their new interests and target audience very well.¹⁷⁸³ For *Theatre and Social Reality*, they deemed their previous restraint concerning political topics unnecessary, especially after they had already carefully selected their audience. Hence, it was decided to focus the program more on cultural politics than actual theatre practice.¹⁷⁸⁴ For the GDR ITI, this approach was self-evident, as they considered the art produced on the East German stages to be inseparably linked to the political system of the GDR. Tenschert expressed this sentiment during one of the meetings as such:

Politik auf dem Theater ist das bestimmende Element auf unseren Bühnen. Wenn wir dieses vermitteln, ist es kein Polit-Lehrgang, sondern wir gehen vom konkreten Theater aus, wo Politik mit den Mitteln der Kunst gemacht wird.¹⁷⁸⁵

From the feedback on the Brecht Dialogue, the members of the GDR ITI determined that many of the questions debated by East German theatre artists weren't useful to Global South representatives. The panel discussions there had generally assumed the possibilities of a well-equipped established European theatre house, without considering the material limitations that theatre artists from the Global South had to face. They were also hard to follow for those not up-to-date on current East German Brecht discourse,¹⁷⁸⁶ especially since high quality or any translations of Brecht's writing were still rare in many developing countries.¹⁷⁸⁷ Another significant discrepancy was the differing political and social realities. Rudolf Greiser, Deputy Head of the UNESCO/ International NGO Department at the MfK explained in accordance with Marxist-Leninist theory: The Global South was in the "stage of bourgeois

¹⁷⁸³ BArch DR1/10653a. *Brecht-Dialog 1968. Ergänzende Bemerkungen des iTi-Sekretariats. Internes Arbeitsmaterial*, p.7

¹⁷⁸⁴ BArch DR1/10608a. 1975/01/31. *Kurzprotokoll der Sitzung vom 18.1.1975*, p.2

¹⁷⁸⁵ BArch DR1/10623. *Kurzprotokoll der Sitzung vom 1.3.1975*, p.2

¹⁷⁸⁶ BArch DR1/10653a. *Brecht-Dialog 1968. Ergänzende Bemerkungen des iTi-Sekretariats. Internes Arbeitsmaterial*.

¹⁷⁸⁷ When the deputy of the Minister of Culture, Werner Rackwitz, visited the 1976 seminar to listen to the participants' suggestions about what concrete aid the GDR would be able to offer the theatre of their countries, lacking or inadequate translations of Brecht's plays were one of the primary concerns. BArch DR107/1. *Abschlußbericht über die Durchführung eines Seminars für Theaterschaffende aus den Ländern der Dritten Welt*, p.5

revolution”, with socialism not yet implemented. The current experiences of East German theatre artists in an advanced socialist society were not comparable and would “not be met with understanding.”¹⁷⁸⁸ Instead, the team believed that the struggles of the decolonizing world would be most similar to the problems the GDR had faced in the early post-war period:

Die Länder der Dritten Welt befinden sich in einem Stadium großer gesellschaftlicher Umwälzungen. Nach langer kolonialer Unterdrückung beginnen sie, sich ihrer eigenen nationalen Werte bewußt zu werden. Das progressive Theater in diesen Ländern versucht, diesen Wandlungsprozess aktiv zu unterstützen. Inwieweit ihm dieses gelingt, hängt von seinen Mittel, Methoden und Möglichkeiten ab. Nach dem 2. Weltkrieg war unser Land zerschlagen und ruiniert und stand vor ähnlichen Problemen. Der Vergleich zwischen den Situationen damals und heute spricht eine beredte Sprache, solche Entwicklungsprozesse können auch den Theaterschaffenden aus den jungen Nationalstaaten helfen, geeignete Wege zu finden.¹⁷⁸⁹

This comparison between the struggle of the early GDR, a small country isolated and bullied by the powerful Western Allies, and the struggle of decolonization was not only made to express affinity. The GDR was presenting itself as a partner in nation building, sharing the experiences of successfully overcoming these problems that would be equally useful to developing countries. Theatre was considered a tool of political and societal change and the development of GDR theatre and the GDR state were offered as models to follow. Since art produced in the GDR was presented as so closely linked to the political system of the GDR, it was impossible to talk about one without the other and impossible to follow the East German theatre artistically without also doing so politically.

The topics of the individual panels and discussions reflected the chosen focus on cultural politics and the usefulness of Brecht’s theatre to the process of nation building: “History and Theatre – Cultural Traditions” was to be about “the necessity of a conception of history to handle current societal processes” and included “thoughts on the fruitfulness of cultural traditions, the dialectics of cultural continuity and discontinuity [and the] appropriation of the cultural heritage.” It allowed the GDR experts to draw supposed parallels between the political development in their country and the new nation states of the Global South. “Forms of expression and communication in theatre” was concerned with “the presentation of social reality and critical of late

¹⁷⁸⁸ BArch DR1/10623. *Kurzprotokoll der Sitzung vom 1.3.1975*, p.2

¹⁷⁸⁹ BArch DR1/10623. 1975/03/20. *Konzeptionsentwurf für die Durchführung eines Seminars für Theaterschaffende aus den Ländern der Dritten Welt*, p.3

bourgeois attempts to mystify traditional cultural and artistic modes of communication.” The panel on “Presentation of Social Conditions and Social Attitudes in the Theatre” was considered by the members of the GDR ITI to be the main topic of the seminar and was notably given to two of the Brecht experts on the team, Wekwerth and Tenschert.¹⁷⁹⁰

Manfred Wekwerth gave the introductory lecture. The views he expressed can easily be regarded as the official position of the GDR on this issue as it had been formulated in the lead-up to the seminar. He referred to Brecht in his statement that every theatre production had to serve a concrete purpose.¹⁷⁹¹ Brecht had, according to Wekwerth, always considered two political dimensions in his productions: on the one hand, the great ideological conflict, which Wekwerth in Marxist-Leninist terms described as “the epoch of transition from capitalism to communism”,¹⁷⁹² and on the other hand, the “daily politics”, the concrete current social questions and struggles in different countries. While Wekwerth argued that it was “easy enough to dispute and argue about great epochs”, it was “much more complicated” to find out what was useful for solving more individual problems. In regard to theatre, he emphasised that in different societies and situations the same play would have a different effect. As an example, he brought up Khaznadar’s production of Brecht’s *The Exception and the Rule*, which he had staged with Arab students in the GDR in 1968 as part of the Brecht Dialogue. This production had been conceived not for an East German but for a primarily Arab audience and had differed accordingly from the Brecht reception in the GDR. With this example Wekwerth made it clear that the GDR was deliberately not trying to encourage Third World theatre artists to copy the East German style of theatre performance. Instead, they wanted to encourage them to approach their theatre productions with a similar political intention. This clearly shows how different the conception of Theatre and Social Reality was from the Brecht Dialogue in 1968. At that time, the East German participants had still argued for the use of the model books, i.e. a very purist Brecht style, to assert the expertise of the BE. In contrast, the stance taken now corresponded to Bennewitz’s approach to his Indian Brecht production of 1973.

¹⁷⁹⁰ BArch DR1/17543. *Programm – Dritte-Welt-Seminar*.

¹⁷⁹¹ As Kurt Lennartz remarked, Wekwerth tended to refer to Brecht at every opportunity. Lennartz, Kurt. 1992. *Vom Aufbruch zur Wende. Theater in der DDR*. Velber: Erhard Friedrich Verlag, p.28

¹⁷⁹² Fiebach. 1977. p.9

When Wekwerth used the opportunity to address misconceptions of Brecht again, he did so not to emphasise Brecht's link to the GDR, but to point out the political cause of Brecht's theatre. He argued against the opinion, also held "among left-wing theatre people", that art, especially Brecht and his didactic plays, were ineffective tools to achieve political change. In addition, he criticised was the tendency to treat Brecht's work as unchangeable in a changing world, thereby losing its relation to social reality.¹⁷⁹³

The seminar participants were then shown two films: the East German film adaptation of *Optimistic Tragedy* (1971) directed by Wekwerth, and excerpts from the BE production of Brecht's *Days of the Commune* (1962) directed by Wekwerth and Tenschert. The important commonality of both films was that they both depicted communist revolutions. Introducing the films, Wekwerth explained that the perspective of the citizens of the GDR living in stable socialist conditions differed from the revolutionary struggle and the national liberation movements of the Third World.¹⁷⁹⁴ The two films about revolutions were meant to prove that East German people still understood the revolutionary spirit despite that. In contrast to the Soviet Union, but also to several countries in the Global South, socialism in the GDR had not actually been achieved in the GDR through revolution, but through Soviet occupation of the Eastern part of Germany. Because of this fact, the GDR had to proof the revolutionary attitude of its people to convincingly claim solidarity with countries of the Global South in the wake of decolonisation.

Afterwards, the attendees of the seminar discussed both Wekwerth's lecture and the films shown, and reflected how they applied to the different situations in their respective countries. Alkazi, for example, brought up Gandhi's Indian revolution, which he felt was often overlooked in these discussions.¹⁷⁹⁵ Egyptian journalist and writer Rauf Mossad Bassta referred to the ongoing civil war in Lebanon to explain what opportunities an artist had to themselves play a part in such events.¹⁷⁹⁶ While they had different perspectives and drew different conclusions from the films, the participants generally agreed with the framework that Wekwerth had provided. They also agreed with the role that the GDR had cast itself in. Reoti Sarab Sharma, playwright and

¹⁷⁹³ *ibid.*, p.10

¹⁷⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p.11

¹⁷⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p.14

¹⁷⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p.15

secretary of the Indian ITI Centre, rejected the notion that the GDR centre of ITI was trying to indoctrinate the attendees or lecture them about the nature of revolutions: „Most of the third world countries have achieved some sort of revolution and they need not be taught how to make a revolution.“ The films were significant for him as artistic examples of how a revolution could be portrayed on stage.¹⁷⁹⁷ While they saw some points of connection to current situations, they were also decidedly not interested in copying the European models presented to them. Sharma reiterated:

The Third World theatre men must understand their own country and their own people and then alone they will find that they can produce a theatre that is really indigenous, that is really revolutionary, that is really original.¹⁷⁹⁸

Syrian writer and translator Adel Karasholi, who was working as a lecturer at Leipzig University, agreed with him that there was a need to study their own circumstances and understand their own people.¹⁷⁹⁹ Wekwerth confirmed their interpretation and repeated what the GDR wanted to convey both in general and in relation to theatre: “I think we are all revolutionaries in that we know that one cannot export a revolution. One can only show the methods one used in order to find out what has general validity.”¹⁸⁰⁰

Additionally, great care was taken to present the hosts and guests as equals. While the presentation of GDR theatre solutions was important, the East German ITI members were determined not to have the seminar become a one-sided lecture. The concept draft already stated: “The delegates are not students, but partners!”¹⁸⁰¹ Instead of having traditional lectures from the East German theatre experts, the GDR ITI opted for a more open discussion. Some of the guests from emerging countries were asked to hold presentations and bring films and other documentation of performances, to allow the guests to share and compare their experiences with each other.¹⁸⁰² To guide the discussion, the ITI Centre appointed one or two East German speakers for each topic who were responsible for outlining the basics of the GDR perspective in shorter contributions.¹⁸⁰³ Even Wekwerth’s introductory lecture was not called that, but instead

¹⁷⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p.16

¹⁷⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p.17

¹⁷⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p.18

¹⁸⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p.15

¹⁸⁰¹ BArch DR1/10623. 1975/03/20. *Konzeptionsentwurf für die Durchführung eines Seminars für Theaterschaffende aus den Ländern der Dritten Welt*, p.2

¹⁸⁰² *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁸⁰³ BArch DR1/17543. *Protokoll über Beratung zur Vorbereitung des 3-Welt-Seminars am 31.1.1976*, p.1

referred to as “comments” on the topic.¹⁸⁰⁴ They had to be able to contribute to all topics to some extent to support their colleagues in their arguments and to be flexible enough to respond to input from the participants.¹⁸⁰⁵ This structure was intended to “create an atmosphere of give and take”,¹⁸⁰⁶ in which the East Germans participated as equals in a discussion on the range of topics they themselves had carefully selected.

Overall, the attendees from the Third World were given much room to discuss among themselves. On the second topic, “History and Culture - Cultural Traditions”, there was no introductory lecture at all from the East German side. Instead, five participants from different parts of the world gave lectures on various related topics, which reflected their different professional backgrounds and interests: Ignacio Gutierrez spoke about Cuban colonial history and the development of Cuban theatre.¹⁸⁰⁷ Alkazi presented the „Functions and Forms of Current Theatre in India“ depicted through the activities of the NSD.¹⁸⁰⁸ Alfred Farag spoke about the challenges of using traditional forms in theatre, which were employed by both left and right wing forces for different purposes.¹⁸⁰⁹ Lutgardo Labad presented projects with which PETA aimed to contribute to the development of a national theatre culture.¹⁸¹⁰ Ebrahim Hussein spoke about his current research on African folk-tales and tale-telling as a performing art, which he illustrated for the participants of the seminar with a long acting demonstration.¹⁸¹¹ These presentations inspired the subsequent discussions, in which the participants talked in more detail about the situation in their respective countries and the different ways of dealing with, for example, traditional forms of theatre and traditional subjects and myths. They noted that despite a shared colonial past, there were often strong differences between the state of their respective theatre art or their approach to traditions. For example, they discovered that the situation in Latin America, where no indigenous performance tradition could be distilled after centuries of

¹⁸⁰⁴ Fiebach. 1977. p.9

¹⁸⁰⁵ BArch DR1/17543. *Protokoll über Beratung zur Vorbereitung des 3-Welt-Seminars am 31.1.1976*, p.1

¹⁸⁰⁶ BArch DR1/10623. 1975/03/20. *Konzeptionsentwurf für die Durchführung eines Seminars für Theaterschaffende aus den Ländern der Dritten Welt*, p.2

¹⁸⁰⁷ Fiebach. 1977. p.29-31

¹⁸⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 31-2

¹⁸⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 38

¹⁸¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 46-9

¹⁸¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 50-1

European colonialism, was not comparable to the one in India, with numerous different theatre traditions.¹⁸¹²

Rolf Rohmer, appointed to guiding the discussion on this topic, did not give a lecture of his own. Instead, he limited himself to noting the differences in the various countries and summarising various aspects of the discussion. He also brought up the possibilities and difficulties of cultural transfer. In this context, he spoke of the “world-wide significance of Brecht” and chose a European example to illustrate this. He described how in some Balkan states *Mother Courage* had not been initially understood in the Brechtian spirit, because the audiences in these countries had fundamentally different experiences of war. This had changed when the socialist countries had “economically and politically” joined forces and learned more about each other’s history: „One cannot simply take over individual cultural achievements, but one must delve into the history, into the social relations, out of which these achievements have arisen”¹⁸¹³ With this example, Rohmer conveyed one of the cultural-political key points of the seminar: that an understanding of Brecht and East German theatre was only possible with an understanding of its historical circumstances, and socialism in the Eastern Bloc had helped achieving it. While the East German participants provided impulses for the discussion, this did not prevent the conversation from often moving in different directions corresponding to the interests of the participants. For example, on the subject of “Theatre and Audience”, they discussed forms of audience participation and improvisation, which were unusual in European theatre and thus had not been addressed by Ursula Püschel in her introductory lecture.¹⁸¹⁴

The practical examples of East German theatre also had to fit the theme of the seminar and provide “basic social experiences”.¹⁸¹⁵ Consequently, the participants were shown a student performance of *The Dawns Here Are Quiet* by Boris Vasilyev at the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts in Berlin and had the opportunity to attend the GDR Workers’ Festival in Dresden.¹⁸¹⁶ These theatre performances had less resources and were not as carefully crafted to the purpose of foreign politics as the BE’s

¹⁸¹² *ibid.*, p. 39-43

¹⁸¹³ *ibid.*, p.44

¹⁸¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.60-9

¹⁸¹⁵ BArch DR1/10608a. 1975/01/31. *Kurzprotokoll der Sitzung vom 18.1.1975*, p.2

¹⁸¹⁶ BArch DR107/1. *Abschlußbericht über die Durchführung eines Seminars für Theaterschaffende aus den Ländern der Dritten Welt*, p.4

performances on its many foreign tours and were therefore considered easier to “internationalize”.¹⁸¹⁷

Theatre and Social Reality was above all an exchange about the different situations and problems of theatre in the Third World. Despite sometimes diverging interests, the participants had agreed that - as Fiebach concluded – “the encouragement of social and cultural progress” was an essential task of theatre. They had found that there were commonalities in the Third World, but also specific differences that needed to be considered just as much. After the exchange about these had taken place, it was now important to “take steps towards a deeper discussion, more intense exchange about methods of presentation, about individual questions of theatrical communication.” In this respect, the participants agreed and made several suggestions on how this more in-depth discussion should take place: Firstly, they thought it useful to organise separate meetings to discuss specific questions such as playwriting or youth theatre. Secondly, future seminars should provide more practical examples in the form of performances, group demonstrations, films, pictures and sound recordings. Based on such examples, specific topics should be discussed in more detail. Thirdly, events on Third World theatre should “be held in countries of the Third World whenever possible.” Further seminars in the GDR were, however, not ruled out in principle by the participants.¹⁸¹⁸

7.2.2 Brecht in Africa, Asia and Latin America - The Brecht Dialogue (1978) and Brecht Days (1980)

The Brecht Dialogue of 1978 was a larger event again. A variety of different colloquia were held not only by the BE or the Brecht Centre, but also by the Association of Theatre Practitioners, Humboldt University, the Academy of Sciences of the GDR and others. There was a stronger international focus again. The 1978 Brecht Dialogue was attended by 155 foreign attendees from 40 countries, 28 of whom attended from 13 countries of the Global South.¹⁸¹⁹ There were several guest performances by the Taganka Theatre and film screenings of foreign Brecht productions. The Teatro

¹⁸¹⁷ BArch DR1/10608a. 1975/01/31. *Kurzprotokoll der Sitzung vom 18.1.1975*, p.2

¹⁸¹⁸ Fiebach. 1977. p.83

¹⁸¹⁹ This number included theatre artists and scientists from countries of the Global South who were living, working or studying in the GDR at the time.

Lautaro, the theatre group of Chilean exiles in the GDR,¹⁸²⁰ performed *The Downfall of the Centaurs*, a studio production directed by Heinz-Uwe Haus. A whole series of colloquia dealt with the international reception of Brecht. In contrast to the 1968 Brecht Dialogue, the panel discussion did not lump all international guests together. Instead, they were divided according to regional and socioeconomic differences: While the VT organised a colloquium on Brecht in socialist countries, the BE and Brecht Centre organised a colloquium on “Problems of Brecht Reception in the Progressive Countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America.”¹⁸²¹ In addition, the East German branch of the International Association for Theatre Critics (IATC) organised a colloquium in which the foreign participants had the opportunity to discuss the film and theatre performances of the Brecht Dialogue.

The ITI Centre was not among the many organisers of the 1978 Brecht Dialogue and did not host any separate ITI event during it. For several reasons I would argue that the Centre’s influence was nonetheless noticeable. For once, some attendees seemed to have been invited on the basis of the same contacts. Several theatre artists that had been invited to *Theatre and Social Reality* but couldn’t make it were reinvited to the Brecht Dialogue, among them Wole Soyinka, Jalal Khoury and Ibrahim Jalal. The general approach was also similar. The discussion was chaired by Heinz-Uwe Haus. He refrained from giving a presentation on his work in Cyprus or with the Teatro Lautaro, as originally planned, and instead invited the participants to talk about their specific problems in working with Brecht’s method in their respective countries.¹⁸²²

The colloquium as documented in abbreviated form in the 1978 Brecht Dialogue publication leaves a disjointed impression, partly because of a pervasive disagreement between Khoury, Jalal and Halim Mustafa (Sudan), about the adaptability of *Puntilla*, which repeatedly interrupted the flow of conversation. The timeframe of a morning session turned out to be not remotely sufficient, and many questions could be touched upon but not adequately discussed.¹⁸²³ It was therefore decided to dedicate a separate event to the topic: the Brecht Days in 1980. The Brecht Days were organised jointly by

¹⁸²⁰ Teatro Lautaro is described in: Grahl, Wolfgang. „Teatro Lautaro - Kämpfendes Theater für das Volk Chiles“ In: *Theaterarbeit in Lateinamerika*, edited by Nilda Miranda. 86-92. Berlin: Verband der Theaterschaffenden der DDR.

¹⁸²¹ Hahn, Karl-Claus. 1979. *Brecht 78. Kunst und Politik. Dokumentation*. Berlin: Henschelverlag, 39-50.

¹⁸²² *ibid.*, 39-40

¹⁸²³ Paffrath. 1980. p.295

the Brecht Centre and the East German ITI. They took place from February 8th to 11th at the Brecht House in East Berlin and were structured similarly to the Brecht Dialogue. Werner Hecht from the Brecht Centre was responsible for the content and documentation of the event, the ITI provided its international contacts.

A total of 25 foreign theatre experts from 17 countries took part in the Brecht Days 1980,¹⁸²⁴ also an additional 28 participants and spectators from the GDR. The participants were a mixed group of theatre directors, actors, lecturers, scholars, journalists, writers and some cultural officials. Some of the guests were already staying in the GDR, for example as guest lecturers or foreign students at the Humboldt University. Among them was also a group of four Chilean theatre artists who were in exile in the GDR and either worked at an East German theatre or university or studied at one of the theatre academies.¹⁸²⁵

The programme of the Brecht Days was divided into two parts. First, so-called “analyses of the impact” (*Wirkungsanalysen*) of Brecht’s work in the four relevant ‘world regions’: Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Arab World. For each region, there was to be a report that outlined the state of Brecht reception. The report on the situation in Latin America was given by Ricardo Blanco Olivares, actor and theatre scholar from Costa Rica, who had written a dissertation at the Humboldt University in 1978. Lamice el-Amari from Iraq spoke about Brecht in the Arab countries. Joachim Fiebach spoke about Brecht in sub-Saharan Africa. These reports were supplemented by more accounts on Brecht’s reception in individual countries. Fritz Bennewitz was responsible for Brecht in Asia, but refrained from giving a report. He had written a field report for the *notate* conference paper of the Brecht Days, in which he described his own experiences in India. For the seminar itself, however, he did not feel able to give a report. Because of his limited perspective not as a scholar but a “trying practitioner”, he did not want to give the impression that his experiences were a complete account of Asian Brecht reception. Bennewitz also pointed out that “in India alone there are more books by and about Brecht than this space can hold.”¹⁸²⁶

The theatre artists’ conversations were modelled after the discussions at the Brecht Dialogues. They had the subjects “Theatre and Politics”, “Dialectics in the

¹⁸²⁴ Argentinien, Bangladesch, Chile, Costa Rica, Indien, Japan, Libanon, Libyen, Mexiko, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Syrien, Tunesien, Uruguay, UK, Yemen.

¹⁸²⁵ Paffrath. 1980. p.231-2

¹⁸²⁶ *ibid.*, p.95-7

Theatre” and “Theatre Work”. The participants talked about how Brecht reception and politics influenced each other, interrogated each other about the decisions made in their Brecht productions, and compared their experiences of addressing their specific audiences through localised adaptations of Brecht. There were also discussions on specific Brecht productions, which were shown as practical examples of Brecht reception by theatre artists of the Global South. A production of *The Exception and the Rule* premiered at the BE during the Brecht Days 1980. It was directed by Carlos Medina, who had lived in East Berlin as a Chilean asylum seeker, had studied at the Theatre Academy in Berlin and now worked as a director at the BE. The Tunisian film *La Noce* was a collective production inspired by Brecht’s *A Respectable Wedding*. They also watched the film of Khaznadar’s pan-Arab production of *The Exception and the Rule* from 1968. During a separate talk, the participants were asked to voice their wishes and proposals for how the Brecht Centre and the GDR ITI could support their work with Brecht.¹⁸²⁷

Although the ITI centre co-organised the 1980 Brecht Days – and Gysi considered them part of a series of events – the Brecht Days were not officially listed as an ITI event. The Brecht Days clearly imitated the format of the Brecht Dialogues, not that of an ITI event. Some experts such as Bennewitz or Fiebach, who were also centrally involved in planning *Theatre and Social Reality*, also participated in the Brecht Days. Overall, the ITI centre seemed less involved. While some of the attendees of *Theatre and Social Reality* or the Brecht Dialogues returned, most of the attendees had not been invited through ITI contacts. Only Bode Osayin, who had been an ITI scholarship holder in the GDR in 1974/5, had previous contact with the ITI Centre. Many of the guests already had close ties to GDR theatre or academia, a substantial number was even living and working in Germany. A larger group of participants also came from socialist countries which increasingly became the focus of the GDR’s foreign policy towards the Global South. To facilitate theatrical exchange with these countries, the ITI centre was not dependent on the ITI network, but could rely on its bilateral cultural relations. Thus, there was little effort to use the ITI network and the supposed ‘neutrality’ it was associated with. Contributing to and influencing the CTWT with the event was likewise not a priority. The Brecht Days were continued in the following years by the Brecht Centre, with changing themes. For example, in 1981

¹⁸²⁷ *ibid.*, p.200-9

participants spoke about Brecht in socialist countries,¹⁸²⁸ on Brecht and Marxism in 1983,¹⁸²⁹ and on Brecht's aesthetics in 1985.¹⁸³⁰ Naturally, the ITI centre did not help organise these events.

7.2.3 Brecht's Work and Method to Discover and Promote Cultural and National Identity (1982)

The last event organised by the East German ITI Centre exclusively for theatre artists from the Third World was the seminar *Brecht's Work and Method to Discover and Promote Cultural and National Identity*, which took place in early May 1982. As with *Theatre and Social Reality*, but unlike the Brecht Dialogues or the Brecht Days of 1980, the ITI centre was the sole organiser of this seminar.

The centre designed the programme and coordinated visits to several East German cultural institutions. The MfK barely interfered and made no specifications regarding the contents of the seminar. It merely reviewed and accepted the final programme when the ITI submitted it. The MfK took care of the administrative issues, like travel, accommodation, and visas, and also organised suitable conference rooms, provided technical equipment, and arranged for the translation of the contributions.¹⁸³¹

From the title *Brecht's Work and Method to Discover and Promote Cultural and National Identity* itself it is evident that the theoretical basis for the seminar still relied on the approach that had been decided upon for *Theatre and Social Reality* in 1976. The aim of the seminar was to “deepen practical experience in the application of the method of dialectical and historical materialism in theatre work according to the conditions of the respective national and social struggles”, “in order to thus - based on Brecht's dialectical method - give impulses for political and theatrical activities”.¹⁸³²

With no involvement from other East German cultural institutions that dictated their own formats, the GDR centre returned to the ITI and especially to the CTWT for

¹⁸²⁸ Hahn, Karl-Claus. 1981. *Brecht 81. Brecht in sozialistischen Ländern. Dokumentation. Protokoll der Brecht-Tage 1981. 9.-12. Februar*. Berlin, Henschelverlag.

¹⁸²⁹ Jahn-Gellert, Inge. 1983. *Brecht 83. Brecht und Marxismus. Dokumentation. Protokoll der Brecht-Tage 1983. 9.-11. Februar*. Berlin, Henschelverlag.

¹⁸³⁰ Hecht, Werner. 1986. *Brecht 85. Zur Ästhetik Brechts. Dokumentation. Protokoll der Brecht-Tage 1985. 10.-13. Februar*. Berlin: Henschelverlag.

¹⁸³¹ BArch DR107/106. *Festlegungsprotokoll, Zentrum für kulturelle Auslandsarbeit (ZKA), Bereich Internationale Veranstaltung*.

¹⁸³² BArch DR1/10608a. *Konzeption zum Seminar „Brechts Methode und Werk zur Entdeckung und Förderung nationaler und kultureller Identität“*, p.3

guidance. When the GDR ITI reported on the planned seminar at the CTWT meeting at the World Congress in Madrid in 1981, the delegates had suggested that the event should have a focus on theatre practice.¹⁸³³ This demand for a more practical focus had already been voiced before, for example at the closing discussion of *Theatre and Social Reality*. Neither at the Brecht Dialogue 1978 or the Brecht Days 1980, which had the prescribed format of a panel discussion, had the East German ITI Centre been able to respond to this request. Now, it was willing to do so and designed the programme accordingly. An emphasis on theatre practice required a very different focus than *Theatre and Social Reality*, which had had the character of an academic colloquium. The programme envisioned by the ITI centre for the 1982 seminar included “practical exercises, work on concrete texts, work with sound and music examples, exchange of experiences with cultural politicians, theatre scholars, theatre practitioners about concrete, practical work.”¹⁸³⁴

The first draft of the programme envisaged that the participants would be divided into three separate seminars taught by a group of theatre directors, some of which had experience with theatre in the Global South: Fritz Bennewitz, Rudolf Penka, Heinz-Uwe Haus, Klaus Erforth, and Alexander Stillmark. These seminars were to take place during almost the entire duration of the ten-day stay. In addition, Fiebach and Rohmer were to give lectures in the evenings. There was supposed to be a talk with Volker Braun at the BE, and a talk with Chilean exile artists from Teatro Lautaro, and also further colloquia and discussions with the seminar teachers.¹⁸³⁵ Accordingly, Gysi’s official invitation announced that the seminar was “to be held based on actual practice.”¹⁸³⁶ This was to be implemented through “seminaristic workshop activities on directing and interpreting exercises[sic].”¹⁸³⁷

In the end, however, the seminar went very differently. For the first time, there were far fewer attendees than anticipated: The ITI Centre had invited participants from 30 countries of the Global South, but only theatre practitioners from 10 countries took

¹⁸³³ *ibid.*, p.1

¹⁸³⁴ BArch DR1/12152. *Bericht über das Seminar „Brecht’s Werk und Methode zur Entdeckung und Förderung nationaler und kultureller Identität“ vom 3.-13.5.1982*, p.2

¹⁸³⁵ BArch DR1/10608a. *1. Entwurf Tagungsprogramm Brecht-Kolloquium 1982*.

¹⁸³⁶ BArch DR1/10608a. *Invitation. „Brecht’s Work and Method to Discover and Promote Cultural and National Identity”*, p.1

¹⁸³⁷ *ibid.*, p.2

part in the event. Instead of the expected 25 participants, there were only 13 visitors.¹⁸³⁸ According to the ITI Centre, the reason for this was primarily financial.¹⁸³⁹ It was the same problem that the centre had already experienced with their scholarship programme. The GDR funded the participants' stay, but not their travel costs,¹⁸⁴⁰ which was unfeasible for most of their intended audience. Thus, the only participants drawn from the ITI network were delegates from countries particularly active in the CTWT and the ITI with which the East German centre already had long-standing contacts. Orsini took part as the current president of the CTWT and PETA sent a Philippine theatre artist. Other attendees came from countries with which other cultural agreements existed, such as Cuba, the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic and Vietnam.¹⁸⁴¹ For the most part, the participants did not overlap with those of the previous events. Apart from Orsini, only Lamice El Amari and Nabil Haffar, both theatre scholars working in the GDR, had already been guests at the Brecht Days 1980. This made any continuation or deepening of previous discussions unfeasible.

Brecht's Work and Method to Discover and Promote Cultural and National Identity took place from May 3rd to 13th. The time devoted to the actual seminar was severely reduced. First, it was reduced to two and a half days, plus a final colloquium on the last day.¹⁸⁴² In the final programme, the actual seminar took up only one and a half days, the whole of May 4th and the morning of May 5th. The programme for the remaining days was focussed on introducing the participants to various theatre and cultural institutions in the GDR. On May 6th, they visited the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts, where they first saw an audition by the drama students and then had a discussion with Heinz Hellmich, the head of the Drama Department, about the methodological aspects of actor training. On May 10th there was a "mask demonstration" with Wolfgang Utzt, the DT's chief make-up artist. On May 11th they visited the State Ballet School Berlin and met with its director Martin Puttke.¹⁸⁴³

¹⁸³⁸ BArch DR1/12152. *Bericht über das Seminar „Brecht's Werk und Methode zur Entdeckung und Förderung nationaler und kultureller Identität“ vom 3.-13.5.1982*, p.17

¹⁸³⁹ *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁸⁴⁰ BArch DR1/10608a. *Invitation. „Brecht's Work and Method to Discover and Promote Cultural and National Identity“*, p.2

¹⁸⁴¹ BArch DR1/12152. *Bericht über das Seminar „Brecht's Werk und Methode zur Entdeckung und Förderung nationaler und kultureller Identität“ vom 3.-13.5.1982*, p.3

¹⁸⁴² BArch DR107/106. *Tagungsprogramm für das Brecht-Seminar vom 3.-13.5.1982 in Werder bei Potsdam.*

¹⁸⁴³ BArch DR1/12152. Attachment 1: *Tagungsprogramm.*

The focus on Brecht that was promised by the title of the seminar was also greatly diminished. One day was spent at the Brecht Centre, which featured a dense schedule that the ITI Centre had coordinated with Hecht. The programme included a film screening, a guided tour of the Brecht Centre and the living and working spaces of Brecht and Weigel, a lecture by Hecht on aspects of international contemporary Brecht reception followed by a discussion with some Brecht experts, and a seminar on “Zuschaukunst” also led by Hecht.¹⁸⁴⁴

During their stay in the GDR, the participants saw only three plays: *Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Volksbühne, the stage adaptation of Kafka's *The Hunger Artist* by Tadeusz Różewicz in Potsdam, and *Mother Courage* at the BE, the only practical example of East German Brecht adaptation. Sightseeing trips filled up the rest of the programme and included a visit to a collectivised farm, the New Palace, the Cecilienhof and the Film Museum in Potsdam, a city tour and a boat trip on the Havel.¹⁸⁴⁵ While these representative excursions had also been part of the accompanying programme of previous events, they took up a much larger space here.

For the much-shortened seminar itself, significant changes were made as well, which the GDR ITI itself described as “some methodological shifts in emphasis”.¹⁸⁴⁶ The ITI centre gave two explanations for this in the final report: On the one hand, the participating theatre professionals from the limited number of countries that were able to take part in the seminar were not interested in practical exercises:

Von diesen Teilnehmern waren die meisten nicht an praktischen Übungen interessiert, sondern in erster Linie an einem wirklichen Erfahrungsaustausch, an einer Verständigung über Fragen der generellen Zusammenarbeit der Länder auf dem Gebiet des Theaters sowie über Möglichkeiten, mit dem Theoretiker und Stückeschreiber Brecht bzw. verallgemeinernd mit seiner dialektischen Methode in den jeweiligen Ländern unter Berücksichtigung konkreter Bedingungen zu arbeiten.

On the other hand, it had turned out at the beginning of the seminar that there was still no common understanding of “national and cultural identity” among the foreign attendees. Therefore, it had been necessary to centre the course on “the role that theatre has for the respective history of the specific society.”¹⁸⁴⁷ What was originally intended and advertised as a practical continuation of the results of the previous events became

¹⁸⁴⁴ BArch DR107/106. *ITI-Tag im Brecht-Zentrum am 7.5.1982, Ablaufplan vom 7.5.82.*

¹⁸⁴⁵ BArch DR1/12152. *Bericht über das Seminar „Brecht's Werk und Methode zur Entdeckung und Förderung nationaler und kultureller Identität“ vom 3.-13.5.1982, p.3*

¹⁸⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁸⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p.3

instead, at least in part, a repetition of topics that the ITI Centre had already conceived and presented for *Theatre and Social Reality* in 1976.

The 1982 seminar did not get its own publication. Instead, the ITI Centre's final report provided summaries of some contributions that the participants from both the GDR and the Global South gave at the seminar. These give at least some insight into the topics discussed: Contrary to the original concept of the seminar, there was no work with Brecht's text and no practical exercises. The East German theatre directors who participated spoke mainly of their experiences when adapting Brecht in the Global South. Bennewitz spoke about his productions of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and pointed out the success of *Chalk Circle* adaptations in general. He then explained his two adaptations of *Life of Galilei* in Manila and Calcutta in the early 1980s. He compared and contrasted the two productions, which were notably different from each other, but both had been equally motivated by the play's topicality. He also compared the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) and PETA. Both organisations he interpreted as an expression of a larger trend and shared need among theatre artists in the Global South to support the development of a national identity through the discovery of a national artistic expression.¹⁸⁴⁸ Like Bennewitz, Heinz-Uwe Haus also spoke of his directing experiences abroad. He compared his productions of *Mother Courage* in Weimar and Nicosia, which he had staged in quick succession, and elaborated on the changes he had made for the Cypriot adaptation.¹⁸⁴⁹ Stillmark, Fiebach and the Vietnamese director Vinh Mao presented Stillmark's conception of an adaptation of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* planned for autumn 1982. They addressed both which elements traditional Chèo theatre had in common with Brechtian theatre and which differences had to be taken into account.¹⁸⁵⁰ Taken as a whole, the contributions of the East German theatre directors represented the common principles of their strategy in dealing with Brecht adaptations, taking into account the respective traditional theatre forms and socio-political circumstances. With their collective examples, they argued for adaptations that differed because of concrete historical and social realities, but were based on a method that was generally applicable.

¹⁸⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.4-8

¹⁸⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.15-16. This is also the topic of a contribution Haus made to the 1985 Brecht Days, see: Hecht, Werner. 1986. *Brecht 85. Zur Ästhetik Brechts. Dokumentation. Protokoll der Brecht-Tage 1985. 10.-13. Februar*. Berlin: Henschelverlag, 50-60.

¹⁸⁵⁰ BArch DR1/12152. *Bericht über das Seminar „Brecht's Werk und Methode zur Entdeckung und Förderung nationaler und kultureller Identität“ vom 3.-13.5.1982*. p.16-7

Among the foreign attendees, too, there was general agreement with the East German perspective regarding Brecht's significance and his use for the purpose of social change. They reported on the history and current state of Brecht reception in their countries, reflected on earlier failed attempts at Brecht adaptation or presented individual projects in more detail: Ghassan Maleh from Syria summarised the history of early Brecht reception in the Arab world, Nabil Haffar spoke about more recent Syrian Brecht productions. Walid Kulattli, representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), spoke on the use of Brecht's dialectical materialism in the process of revolutionary liberation. Michael Damite Fernando Celhissage talked about how Brecht's theory and practice supported the development of an independent national theatre in Sri Lanka. Weni Gamboa talked about PETA's Brecht productions, Emmanuel Mbogo talked about opinions on and uses of Brecht in Tanzania and Africa in general, and Berta Martinez spoke about the influences of Brecht and worker's theatre in Cuba.¹⁸⁵¹ Unlike at *Theatre and Social Reality*, the short time frame likely did not allow for any in-depth exchange about these experiences.

As the ITI Centre no longer shared the role of host with the BE or the Brecht Centre, questions concerning the ITI and especially the long-term direction of the CTWT came back into focus. While few of the participants were members of the CTWT or even came from countries with active ITI Centres, both Bennewitz and Orsini were notably preoccupied with the CTWT's future. Bennewitz presented the East German perspective on the relation of theatre and national identity as the one shared by the majority of the CTWT. He addressed several other conflicting artistic styles and viewpoints, that both Bennewitz and allegedly the CTWT had rejected categorically. This included Polish theorist Jan Kott, who had given a keynote speech at the ITI World Congress in Madrid, touching on questions of identity, Eugenio Barba's "Third Theatre" and Jerzy Grotowski's approach, which Bennewitz dismissively described as "theatrical adventures". He used these examples to explain the difference between "progressive and reactionary explorations of identity."¹⁸⁵²

Orsini was similarly concerned with disputing opposing viewpoints and proclaiming an official position for the CTWT. He discussed "polemical opinions" of Latin American authors "who doubt or even reject the usefulness of Brechtian theory

¹⁸⁵¹ *ibid.*, p.10-15

¹⁸⁵² *ibid.*, p.6

and practice for national and cultural identity formation”. Orsini also stressed that the CTWT did not agree with this view. According to him, Brecht was “indispensable in the process of cultural self-liberation.” He also spoke of mistakes that had been made in the “appropriation and application of Brecht” in Venezuela, which had ensured that the plays had been misunderstood and that there had not been a “connection with the social reality of Venezuela”.¹⁸⁵³

In his final assessment, Orsini was positive about the results of the seminar, although he regretted the low number of attendees:

Das ist für die III. Welt das erste Mal, daß zum Ausdruck gebracht wurde, daß das Theater Brechts beitragen kann zur Entdeckung der nationalen und kulturellen Identität, weil diese Identität mehr beinhaltet als nur Folklore, und weil sie grundlegende soziale Probleme durchdringt.¹⁸⁵⁴

Otherwise, Orsini’s evaluation was mainly concerned with the CTWT and the upcoming ITI Congress in East Berlin in the following year. He considered the question of the concept of ‘cultural identity’ to be significant and wanted to discuss it further at the World Congress in East Berlin next year, using Brecht’s dialectic materialism.¹⁸⁵⁵

Even if the ITI centre reported the seminar a success,¹⁸⁵⁶ it had obviously failed to meet its original ambitions. What was intended as a dense seminar with in-depth examination of Brecht’s text and practical exercises, with additional lectures by East German theatre scholars and practitioners, instead became a much shorter and shallower repeat of Theatre and Social Reality supplemented by generic representative excursions to show off various GDR theatrical institutions. As evidenced by the first draft programme, the problem was not a lack of expertise or suitable personnel. The members of the ITI centre were also still aware of the expectations held by their ITI audience. However, outside problems had prevented them from reaching them.

7.3 Theatre Work according to Brecht. Workshops for Theatre Directors (1985-1988)

The last series of events held by the East German ITI centre in the second half of the 1980s were workshops for theatre directors. These took place five times from 1984 to 1988 under the title *Theatre Work according to Brecht*. The workshops were organised

¹⁸⁵³ *ibid.*, p.8-10

¹⁸⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.17

¹⁸⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p.17

¹⁸⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.18

by the ITI Centre together with the Institute for Directing at the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts and later with the BE. Bernd Gerwien, first as a staff member of the Institute for Directing and later as deputy artistic director of the BE, was responsible for the overall organisation. The ITI was responsible for the invitations, the visa formalities and the and in organisationally supporting the guests.¹⁸⁵⁷ It did not oversee the artistic programme of the course.

The workshops were led by director Konrad Zschiedrich, with the assistance of Hildegard Buchwald. Zschiedrich had worked as a director mainly at the BE from the late 1970s onwards and from 1986 onwards primarily lived in Barcelona, where he directed at various theatres and also taught at the Institut del teatre and the Teatre Akadèmi.¹⁸⁵⁸ Zschiedrich had extensive experience in directing international theatre workshops. According to his own statement, he had already conducted over 50 similar workshops up to 1988. Among other things, he also worked with the GDR's national centre of the International Amateur Theatre Association (IATA) for their workshops, which were also aimed at foreign participants and took place every three years.¹⁸⁵⁹ Hildegard Buchwald was described in the workshop brochure as "the methodologist of movement training in the GDR", who had worked with the actors of the BE for over two decades.¹⁸⁶⁰ There are no documents in the files of the ITI centre or the MfK that suggest that this series of workshop was as meticulously conceptualised as the previous seminars for theatre artists from the Third World. This can likely be attributed to the experiences of those involved. Because of this wealth of experience, it did not appear a problem that Zschiedrich was not in the GDR but in Barcelona during the organisational preparations.¹⁸⁶¹

For the workshops, the ITI centre attempted to change several elements of its previous approach to all of its international events. Compared to the seminars for theatre artists from the Third World, this series was finally to have a much stronger practical

¹⁸⁵⁷ BArch DR1/13618. 1988/07/20. *Abschlußbericht 4. Internationale Regiewerkstatt „Theaterarbeit nach Brecht“*, p.1

¹⁸⁵⁸ Zschiedrich talked about his work and his experiences with the Spanish theatre in: Zschiedrich, Konrad. Pietzsch, Ingeborg. 1995. "Theaterland Spanien" In: *Theater der Zeit* 1995(2). 68-70.

¹⁸⁵⁹ BArch DR1/26185. *Bericht über die 4. Internationale Regiewerkstatt „Theaterarbeit nach Brecht“ vom 5. bis. 19. 6. 88 in Berlin*, p.1

¹⁸⁶⁰ BArch DR107/107. Brochure, Workshop 1986.

¹⁸⁶¹ BArch DR1/13618. 1988/07/20. *Abschlußbericht 4. Internationale Regiewerkstatt „Theaterarbeit nach Brecht“*, p.2

focus.¹⁸⁶² The official English translation of the title of the seminar was *Theatre Work according to Brecht*. The original German title *Theaterarbeit nach Brecht* was chosen to be deliberately ambiguous. On the one hand, the German *nach* did suggest, as in the official translation, that the workshop focussed on Brecht's method – “die für die meisten Theaterleute der DDR bestimmend geworden ist”. On the other hand, *nach* can also more literally be translated as *after*. That second meaning therefore stressed the “temporal distance to Brecht” and indicated that the workshop would also deal with more current trends of GDR theatre. In the report about the first iteration of the workshop in 1985 the ITI centre confirmed that this equivocation was intentional¹⁸⁶³ and reflected a deliberate attempt to break away from the almost one-sided focus on Brecht that had existed for the previous events. In the translation, however, this nuance was lost.

The two meanings of the title, Brecht's method and current East German theatre, were the two focal points in the programme, although they were not featured equally. The first aspect was addressed by the workshop itself. It took place every day in the morning and early afternoon at the bat-theatre, the studio stage of the Academy of Dramatic Arts, for the whole duration of the participants' stay in the GDR. Depending on the rest of the day's programme, these sessions varied in length. The course was described as “intensive practical training in directing to get to know or to deepen Brechtian methodology.” In it, Zschiedrich dealt with both text analysis and the dramaturgical preparation of a production. According to the official report, “methodological reflections were part of practical exercises and vice versa.”¹⁸⁶⁴

Dabei wurden die methodischen Termini und Sachverhalte erklärt: Situationen suchen, Widersprüche entdecken, Drehpunkte markieren, Haltungen beschreiben, Vorgänge formulieren usw. Diese theoretische Vorarbeit wurde dann in der praktischen Arbeit realisiert. [...] Die Teilnehmer inszenierten sich gegenseitig und kritisierten ihre Arbeiten. Improvisationen, Warm-ups und

¹⁸⁶² However, the East German ITI Centre was initially hesitant to call this new event a workshop. Thus, the official ITI and Hochschule für Schauspielkunst report on the 1985 event speaks mostly of an “international directing seminar.” At one point, the report referred to “the seminar, also called a workshop” without explaining further, and then described that Zschiedrich ran a “dramaturgical workshop”. (BArch DR1/26185. *Bericht über das internationale Regieseminar 1985*, p.1) To what extent this series of events were seminars and to what extent they were workshops is not entirely clear from the available sources. The ITI Centre of the GDR used both terms alternately and often seemingly synonymously. It was not until the later iterations that the term workshop began to be used consistently in the ITI Centre's reports as well.

¹⁸⁶³ BArch DR1/26185. *Bericht über das internationale Regieseminar 1985*, p.1

¹⁸⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.1

Spiele wurde systematisch genutzt, um zu zeigen, wie man über solche Übungen hin zur szenischen Arbeit kommen kann.¹⁸⁶⁵

Zschiedrich's course was complemented by movement exercises led by Hildegard Buchwald. Her focus was on "methodical exercises on the use of the physical for narrative theatre." Among other things, the participants dealt with the presentation of poses, physical movement sequences and the boundaries of choreography.¹⁸⁶⁶ The parts of the workshop organised by Zschiedrich and Buchwald only changed slightly over the years, only the plays they covered varied. In 1985, for example, it was *The Horatians and the Curiatians* and *The Mother*,¹⁸⁶⁷ in 1986 it was *Horatians* once again and *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*,¹⁸⁶⁸ in 1987 it was *Mother Courage*.¹⁸⁶⁹

The second focus was on "conveying impressions of the diversity of Berlin theatre work today". The insights into East Berlin's theatres that the workshop participants were to gain were deliberately concentrated on only two theatres, the BE and the DT. According to the report, "the basic intention of the whole seminar was not so much to impart broad knowledge as to give the participants the opportunity to become more intensively familiar with the theatres." Accordingly, during their stay in Berlin, the participants mainly attended rehearsals and performances in these two theatres.

The programme, of course, slightly differed in all iterations of the workshops. In the first year of the workshop, for example, the participants watched the final rehearsals for *Troilus and Cressida* at the BE, directed by Wekwerth and also attended the premiere of the production at the end of their stay. They also visited the rehearsals of Calderón's *Life Is a Dream* at the DT, directed by Friedo Solter. As these were the initial rehearsals, Solter explained his process and early considerations regarding "text version, conception, stage design, costumes" for the course participants. Other members of the directing team also gave the participants information about their approach to the play. The make-up artist and mask-maker Wolfgang Utzt, for example, reported in detail about his work and then guided the participants through a mask

¹⁸⁶⁵ BArch DR1/12950. *Bericht über die 2. Internationale Werkstatt für Schauspielregisseure 1986, Theaterarbeit nach Brecht*, p.3

¹⁸⁶⁶ BArch DR1/26185. *Bericht über das internationale Regieseminar 1985*, p.2

¹⁸⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.1

¹⁸⁶⁸ BArch DR1/12950. *Bericht über die 2. Internationale Werkstatt für Schauspielregisseure 1986, Theaterarbeit nach Brecht*, p.2-3

¹⁸⁶⁹ BArch DR1/13618. *Protokoll der Direktoriumssitzung vom 25.9.1987*, p.3

exhibition in the Pankow Gallery.¹⁸⁷⁰ Since the workshop's participants watched three productions by Alexander Lang at the DT, they also met him to discuss "questions of dealing with actors, casting, acting methodology, the structure of the characters." The participants were given a guided tour of both theatres, saw the theatre archives and were able to talk to actors and staff during rehearsal breaks and in the canteens. According to the ITI Centre, the focus on the DT and BE made it possible to "highlight both the commonalities of the leading theatres in our republic and their differences in artistic profile."¹⁸⁷¹ In the years that followed, this primary focus on the BE and DT remained, but was expanded to include a few productions at the Volksbühne. Another part of the programme was a visit to the Academy of Dramatic Arts that co-organised the workshop. There, director Hans-Peter Minetti talked about actor's training and the development of art academies in the GDR. At the bat-theatre, the participants also watched the studio production of Heiner Müller's *Philoktet*.

The performances that the participants attended depended entirely on the theatre's repertoire and did therefore not mirror the workshop's focus on Brecht. In 1985, there was only one play by Brecht among the eight productions, *Round Heads and Pointed Heads* at the DT directed by Alexander Lang. Perhaps to compensate for the lack of Brecht productions in the repertoire, there were other Brecht-related programme items in 1985. For example, Werner Hecht informed the participants about the work of the Brecht Centre. In addition, they were shown the film recording of Brecht's *Mother Courage* of the 1949 production starring Helene Weigel. Many of those theatre professionals who made themselves available to introduce the foreign guests to their work in East German theatre remained largely the same throughout the years, among them Wekwerth at the BE, Solter at the DT, and Minetti at the Hochschule für Schauspielkunst.

With the intensive work on dramatic texts, practical exercises and deep insights into East German theatres, the workshops were what the 1982 seminar had been intended to be. The ITI Centre viewed them as such, emphasising that young artists "from Africa, Asia and Latin America" were the main target group.¹⁸⁷² However, the workshops were not exclusively aimed at participants from the Global South. The only

¹⁸⁷⁰ BArch DR1/26185. *Bericht über das internationale Regieseminar 1985, veranstaltet vom ITI, Zentrum DDR, und vom Institut für Schauspielregie*, p.2

¹⁸⁷¹ *ibid.*, p.4

¹⁸⁷² BArch DR1/26185. Ebermann, Wolf. 1989. "30 Year ITI Centre in the GDR" In: *ITI Bulletin*. No. 1/1989, p.4

qualifications specified by the promotional brochure of the workshop were: “Drama directors and assistant directors with practical experience may participate.” The number of participants was limited to 20. One significant change had a huge impact on the workshop’s composition. Whereas for previous events the ITI Centre had covered the participants’ accommodation and living expenses, and in some cases even their travel fares, now a fee of 500 US dollars had to be paid to participate.¹⁸⁷³ This shift was a sign that the economic realities of the GDR had finally caught up to the ITI Centre as well. The East German ITI had become less and less able to finance their contacts with foreign theatre artists by itself, making the participants from the capitalist countries an important financial resource for the organisers due to the fee that had to be paid in US dollars. Some comments in the documents of the workshop suggest that the fees of the Western visitors were even used to supplement the lack of financial resources. The report of the 1988 workshop remarked about the event:

Da der Kurs gebührenpflichtig war (500 Dollar), konnten Valuta-Zahlungsmittel eingenommen werden. Jedoch wurde das geplante Einnahmesoll aufgrund des unentschuldigten Ausbleibens einer Reihe von Gästen aus kapitalistischen Ländern nicht erfüllt.¹⁸⁷⁴

Zschiedrich commented on the low attendance that year in a similar fashion: “Und schade ums Geld, wenn wir nichts einnehmen.”¹⁸⁷⁵

At the directing workshop in 1985, 18 participants had registered, 13 of whom actually attended. In the first year, the participants came almost exclusively from the capitalist West. Five participants came from Spain, two from Australia, two from Turkey, the rest from Sweden, Denmark, Canada and Hungary.¹⁸⁷⁶ With this group of mostly Western theatre artists, the workshop’s programme worked as intended. For the following iterations, however, the situation became increasingly more complicated.

The ITI centre of the GDR was still interested in training theatre experts from the Global South and to build on the experiences of the previous series of events. While the first workshop had gone smoothly, the organisers thus tried to attract a more diverse group of participants for the second iteration of the workshops in 1986. The MfK began inviting more participants through its own channels again. Those theatre artists invited by the MfK through bilateral cultural agreements did not have to pay the 500-dollar fee,

¹⁸⁷³ BArch DR107/107. Brochure, Workshop 1986.

¹⁸⁷⁴ BArch DR1/26185. 1988/12/23. *Tätigkeitsbericht für das Jahr 1988*, p.6.

¹⁸⁷⁵ BArch DR1/26185. *Bericht über die 4. Internationale Regiewerkstatt „Theaterarbeit nach Brecht“ vom 5. bis. 19. 6. 88 in Berlin.*

¹⁸⁷⁶ BArch DR1/26185. *Bericht über das internationale Regieseminar 1985*, p.5

which made the event more accessible to non-Westerners again. As a result, the group of the 1986 workshop was far more heterogenous: there were 14 attendees, from Canada, Greece, Norway, the USSR, Bulgaria, the GDR, Syria, Iraq, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Ecuador.¹⁸⁷⁷

The organisers believed that this more diverse composition of the group of attendees had to be addressed. This was the only significant change in the programme from 1985 to 1986: The workshop was split into two consecutive parts: First, there was an additional course from May 23th to 31st for the directors from developing countries, to prepare them for the actual workshop. The regular workshop was held from June 2nd to 6th and was significantly shorter than in the previous year. Both parts of the course were conducted by Zschiedrich. The first course was meant as an introduction to Brechtian theory and dealt with Brecht's didactic play *The Horatians and the Curiatians*, which had been chosen "for political reasons".¹⁸⁷⁸ The regular part of the workshop then focussed on Brecht's *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*.

The lessons to be taught were also geared towards the participants from the Global South. Brechtian *Verfremdung* was explained with a strong emphasis on its potential to contribute to social change. Stylistic elements were presented as secondary and dependent on the social reality and cultural traditions in the respective country:

Im Kurs wurde stets hervorgehoben, daß es sich um eine marxistische Sicht auf das Theater und die Gesellschaft handle, daß diese Theorie in die nationalen Traditionen zu integrieren und also schöpferisch angewandt werden müsse, keinesfalls aber deutsches Theater und deutsche Schauspielkunst kopiert werden können. Dieser Gedanke wurde verstanden und in E. Chambulikazis Schlußworten im Namen der Teilnehmer dankbar erwähnt, da in anderen Werkstätten oft Anweisungen erteilt würden, ohne die nationalen Probleme zu respektieren.¹⁸⁷⁹

This was in line with the position that the ITI Centre had taken at previous seminars for theatre artists from the Global South, and with the style of Brecht adaptations favoured by Bennewitz and other East German theatre artists working in the Global South.

As before, organisers also took great care not to simply lecture, but to facilitate exchange among the participants. The report of the 1986 workshop shows that they considered this approach a distinguishing feature of their workshop:

So war es sicher für die meisten Gäste überraschend, daß ihnen selbst die schöpferische Anwendung der Theorie übertragen wurde, statt ihnen Rezepte

¹⁸⁷⁷ BArch DR1/12950. *Bericht über die 2. Internationale Werkstatt für Schauspielregisseure 1986, Theaterarbeit nach Brecht*, p.1-2

¹⁸⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁸⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p.3

dogmatisch zu geben. Während der Arbeit sah man die Bereicherung der Arbeit durch den kulturellen Austausch, wenn etwa in einer Szene ein Lateinamerikaner, ein Bulgare und ein Afrikaner gemeinsam spielten, jeder seiner Tradition entsprechend, sehr unterschiedlich, und dennoch gemeinsam. Dieser politische Faktor wirkte dieses Jahr noch stärker, und die Wirkung der Arbeit auf die Teilnehmer war offenbar auch noch stärker als vorheriges Jahr.¹⁸⁸⁰

The attempt to still focus on theatre people from the Global South, despite the mixed audience, led to some difficulties. Even in 1985, with a mostly Western audience, the organisers had already noted that the participants' "theatrical knowledge and experience, especially with regard to Brecht, were very disparate and, above all, in need of supplementation".¹⁸⁸¹ This was amplified in 1986, when both the "very different levels of education" and "the very different national traditions" meant that a "common set of interests" had first to be worked out. The attendees from other socialist countries were already well-trained in the workshop's topics and therefore underchallenged.¹⁸⁸² Splitting the workshop into two parts had been one attempt to address the differing levels of knowledge among the attendees. The ITI was not entirely satisfied with this solution, since it caused a lot of repetition between the two courses,¹⁸⁸³ but was still committed to have theatre people from the Global South its main target audience. At the 3rd workshop in 1987, the organisers agreed that they would intensify their support for theatre artists from developing countries the next year.¹⁸⁸⁴

At the fourth and last iteration of the workshop in 1988, the problems that stemmed from the heterogeneous composition of the group and had already been noticeable in 1986 became more undeniable. In his report, Zschiedrich was very critical and open about the difficulties he faced, saying by way of introduction: "Diese Werkstatt war für mich die schwierigste und anstrengendste nach mehr als fünfzig sehr verschiedenen Werkstätten." He compared the ITI event unfavourably to the similar director's workshop held by IATA in which he was also involved. To Zschiedrich, one decisive difference between them was that all IATA participants so far had only come from European countries.¹⁸⁸⁵

¹⁸⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.5-6

¹⁸⁸¹ BArch DR1/26185. *Bericht über das internationale Regieseminar 1985*, p.1

¹⁸⁸² BArch DR1/12950. *Bericht über die 2. Internationale Werkstatt für Schauspielregisseure 1986, Theaterarbeit nach Brecht*, p.2

¹⁸⁸³ *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁸⁸⁴ BArch DR1/26185. 1987/12/18. *Jahresbericht 1987 über die Mitarbeit im ITI*, p.5

¹⁸⁸⁵ BArch DR1/26185. *Bericht über die 4. Internationale Regiewerkstatt „Theaterarbeit nach Brecht“ vom 5. bis 19. 6. 88 in Berlin*, p.1

The incoherence of the group of attendees were in Zschiedrich's mind the main source of the workshop's problems. Officially, 12 guests took part in the workshop, seven more had registered but did not attend.¹⁸⁸⁶ The GDR ITI had received only very few applications and therefore contacted 15 European ITI centres by telephone after the registration deadline to secure more participants without much success, six additional guests were invited through cultural exchange programmes of the MfK. There were four European theatre artists, three attendees from Switzerland and one from the GDR. The other participants came from African and Asian countries: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Tunisia, Zimbabwe and one artist from the PLO. The participants had not given any information about their artistic activity when they registered, so Zschiedrich "could not get an exact picture of the prerequisites and interests of the people in question".¹⁸⁸⁷ According to Zschiedrich, only a few attendees had actual theatre experience: The Iraqi participant was a theatre scholar with little knowledge of German and no knowledge of English. The participants from Ethiopia and Zimbabwe he described as "functionaries". The participant from Bangladesh had experience with street theatre, which Zschiedrich dismissed as irrelevant. In contrast, the participant from the GDR was a trained dramaturge, the Swiss attendees also experienced theatre professionals. The two Tunisian participants "had great resources and knowledge" but were disappointed because they had "expected something like the Brecht Dialogue". They arrived late, came to three sessions to demonstrate their approach, but otherwise did not interact with the course. The theatre artist from the PLO, who was also very experienced, declared on the first day that "he was not interested in the work and did not come again". Thus, the remaining eight attendees split into two groups: one group of four German-speaking European theatre professionals and one group of four participants from Africa and Asia with little practical experience. Because of these stark differences, Zschiedrich found it difficult to mix the groups despite his efforts:

Diesmal war die Gruppenbildung extrem: es gab zahlende und nichtzahlende Gäste [...], es gab Zentraleuropäer und Außereuropäer, es gab Theaterpraktiker und Laien, es gab Interessierte und Nicht-Interessierte, und zudem waren viele dieser Widersprüche kulturell oder eben europäisch und afrikanisch-asiatisch bedingt. Und einige ‚Weiße‘ verhielten sich da nicht demütig genug, aber warum

¹⁸⁸⁶ BArch DR1/13618. 1988/07/20. *Abschlußbericht 4. Internationale Regiewerkstatt „Theaterarbeit nach Brecht“*, p.1

¹⁸⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p.2

auch, sie hatten gezahlt. Die geäußerten Interessen waren sehr speziell, sie konnten die Gesamtgruppe nicht stimulieren.¹⁸⁸⁸

In its own report, the ITI Centre largely shared Zschiedrich's assessment, although it took issue with the "division of the course into Europeans and non-Europeans" that Zschiedrich had asserted. Otherwise, the ITI confirmed that for the theatre professionals from Switzerland and Tunisia, the expectations of the course had not been met. Their differences in experience to the other participants were deemed "severe".¹⁸⁸⁹ According to Zschiedrich, the participants from developing countries were satisfied with the work and had worked in a "very disciplined and very interested way" despite their lack of experience. Ulf Keyn agreed that the approach of the workshop in its current form was mainly geared towards attendees from the Global South:

Für die Gäste aus den Entwicklungsländern erwies sich dieses Herangehen als sinnvoll, da eine fundierte Kenntnis Brechts in diesen Ländern nicht immer vorausgesetzt werden kann. Für die europäischen Kollegen bedeutete das ein zeitweiliges Zurückstecken ihrer Ambitionen.¹⁸⁹⁰

There were further problems that plagued the 1988 workshop. Instead of the bat-Theater, the course now took place at the BE and was repeatedly disrupted by ongoing rehearsals.¹⁸⁹¹ Visas were issued or granted too late and several attendees missed the first day of the workshop.¹⁸⁹² These additional problems only exacerbated the difficulties caused by the lacking group dynamic. The members of the East German ITI had been only minimally involved in the actual workshop and instead had been occupied primarily with administrative problems, including the late issuing of visas for participants.

Both Zschiedrich and the ITI Centre and the BE agreed that the next iteration of the workshop would need to be revised both in terms of content and organisation.¹⁸⁹³ Zschiedrich was convinced that there was still foreign interest in the title *Theatre Work after Brecht* because it promised "craftsmanship" "in the time of superficial

¹⁸⁸⁸ BArch DR1/26185. *Bericht über die 4. Internationale Regiewerkstatt „Theaterarbeit nach Brecht“ vom 5. bis. 19. 6. 88 in Berlin*, p.3

¹⁸⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p.3

¹⁸⁹⁰ BArch DR1/26185. 1988/12/23. *Tätigkeitsbericht für das Jahr 1988*, p.5

¹⁸⁹¹ BArch DR1/26185. *Bericht über die 4. Internationale Regiewerkstatt „Theaterarbeit nach Brecht“ vom 5. bis. 19. 6. 88 in Berlin*, p.2

¹⁸⁹² BArch DR1/13618, 1988/07/20. *Abschlußbericht 4. Internationale Regiewerkstatt „Theaterarbeit nach Brecht“*, p.2

¹⁸⁹³ *ibid.*, p.4

dilettantism”.¹⁸⁹⁴ The members of the ITI centre, however, also wondered if their reluctance to change the topic of the event was detrimental to the attractiveness of the workshop. Brecht had been – apart from Felsenstein and his *Musiktheater* – the almost exclusive focus of all events hosted by the GDR ITI, especially in regards to their Third World activities. He had attracted strong international interest and had been an ideal figurehead to promote East German theatre in connection with East Germany’s socialist system. Thirty years after his death, Brecht still was considered a hugely influential artist, but the exclusive focus on him did not reflect foreign interest in GDR theatre anymore and certainly did not reflect the state of East German theatre itself. And while the workshop still focussed on Brechtian method, the organisers had attempted to incorporate current East German theatre and highlight the work of East German theatre artists that Brecht had inspired. This attempt, however, remained reluctant at best. Among the performances that were meant to represent current GDR theatre, there were almost no plays by any contemporary East German playwrights, with the studio production of Heiner Müller’s *Philoktet* being the only exception. The foreign representation of East German theatre had clearly become more and more detached from actual current theatre practise in the GDR. After 1988, the ITI Centre considered broadening the focus of the workshop to include current German drama “after Brecht”:

Aus unserer Perspektive stellt sich die Frage, ob man dem breiten Interesse fast aller Kursanten nun endlich nachkommen sollte und den Schwerpunkt auf Heiner Müller, Volker Braun und Christoph Hein legen sollte. Die DDR-Dramatik baut im wesentlichen auf Brecht auf und die genannten Dramatiker haben in der ganzen Welt eine hohe Wertschätzung erfahren. Speziell im Bezug auf Heiner Müller ist das Interesse sehr groß – hier muß eine empfindliche Lücke geschlossen werden.¹⁸⁹⁵

In Zschiedrichs opinion, the “unfortunate” composition of the group of participants had to be changed. He affirmed that he would “not want to work again under such circumstances”.¹⁸⁹⁶ Thus, despite assurances that the course had been a success despite all adversities, everyone agreed that the conception of the workshop urgently needed to be revised. As Zschiedrich put it and as the ITI agreed with: „Es geht nicht ,seinen

¹⁸⁹⁴ BArch DR1/26185. Zschiedrich, Konrad. *Bericht über die 4. Internationale Regiewerkstatt „Theaterarbeit nach Brecht“ vom 5. bis. 19. 6. 88 in Berlin*, p.4

¹⁸⁹⁵ BArch DR1/13618. 1988/07/20. *Abschlußbericht 4. Internationale Regiewerkstatt „Theaterarbeit nach Brecht“*, p.4

¹⁸⁹⁶ BArch DR1/26185. *Bericht über die 4. Internationale Regiewerkstatt „Theaterarbeit nach Brecht“ vom 5. bis. 19. 6. 88 in Berlin*. p.4

sozialistischen Gang'. Was einmal gut war, muß immer neu befragt und verändert werden, mit Verantwortung.“¹⁸⁹⁷

In this closing remark, Zschiedrich quoted the East German idiom “*Das geht seinen sozialistischen Gang*” [It’s going its socialist way]. This phrase was originally meant to express one’s abilities to muddle through despite adverse circumstances, while mildly mocking the inflationary labelling of all things as “socialist” by the GDR authorities. After the East German singer-songwriter and dissident Wolf Biermann had famously used the phrase during his West German tour during which he was expatriated by the SED in 1976, its usage had become linked to his more serious criticism.¹⁸⁹⁸ Zschiedrich’s statement that things simply would not go “its socialist way” can easily be interpreted as the exasperation of a theatre artist working abroad, whose travel privileges also allowed him to make critical comparisons between self-presentation and the actual situation in the GDR. Zschiedrich also complained that the GDR’s promotional materials could no longer keep up with those of other workshops in other countries. He reported on the various brochures of events advertised in Barcelona. In contrast to the East German materials, these were multi-coloured and printed on gloss paper. The GDR’s promotional material was, in Zschiedrich’s opinion, “the mark of the poorest.”¹⁸⁹⁹

This was not the first time that one of the people involved in an event organised by the ITI Centre had voiced criticism. The ITI had also been unequivocally critical of the first Brecht Dialogue in 1968 for similar reasons, and after assessing the effectiveness of their activities, had adjusted their approach accordingly. Still, this criticism had always been cushioned by assurances of continued successes. While Zschiedrich and the ITI Centre still attempted to highlight the positives, their criticism in 1988 reads a lot less placably. The problems that Zschiedrich and the ITI Centre encountered despite their rich experiences with this kind of work were beyond their control and can be attributed to the failing economy of the GDR.

Another iteration of the workshop was planned for 1989, but could not take place because the necessary accommodations for the participants could not be

¹⁸⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p.4

¹⁸⁹⁸ Wollé, Stefan. 2009. *Die heile Welt der Diktatur*. 3rd ed. Berlin: Links. p.310

¹⁸⁹⁹ BArch DR1/26185. *Bericht über die 4. Internationale Regiewerkstatt „Theaterarbeit nach Brecht“ vom 5. bis 19. 6. 88 in Berlin*, p.4

organised.¹⁹⁰⁰ The workshop for drama direction became the last major event of the GDR Centre of the ITI. There is little material on the cancelled fifth iteration of the workshop in 1989. The mentions of it that do exist do not suggest any radical change from the previous years.¹⁹⁰¹ The workshop was still aimed “primarily at young directors from developing countries and progressive actors/directors from capitalist foreign countries.”¹⁹⁰² To solve the problems that had arisen from the differences between those two groups of participants, it was suggested to divide the workshop into a beginner and an advanced course.¹⁹⁰³ To solve the problems that had arisen from the differences between those two groups of participants, it was suggested to divide the workshop into a beginner and an advanced course.¹⁹⁰⁴

The members of the ITI centre remained very committed to supporting the development of theatre in the Global South even in the face of growing unrest in their own country. To celebrate the centre’s 30th anniversary and the GDR’s 40th anniversary, they wanted to host a colloquium on the topic of “National identity and international cooperation” in October 1989.¹⁹⁰⁵ In early 1990, after the fall of the Berlin wall, they still planned to hold another course in the summer, this time exclusively for participants from Africa, Asia and the Arab world.¹⁹⁰⁶

In retrospective, Zschiedrich’s concluding statement seems almost fateful. It may be too convenient to narratively link the difficulties of the theatre directors’ workshop in the late 1980s to the decline of the GDR. However, it can hardly be denied that the difficult situation of the GDR in these last years also affected the work of the ITI centre. This was mainly due to the economic difficulties the GDR was facing, which also affected the state-subsidised ITI’s ability to act.

Because of their experiences with the Brecht Dialogue 1968, the ITI centre had already been aware that a too broad audience with very different interests and levels of experience could not be addressed at the same event to everybody’s satisfaction. For the seminars for theatre artists from the Third World, the ITI centre had therefore

¹⁹⁰⁰ BArch DR1/13618. *Direktoriumssitzung vom 31.1.1989*, p.2

¹⁹⁰¹ BArch DR1/26185. 1988/12/14. *Arbeitsplan 1989 des Sekretariates internationaler Theaterorganisationen*, p.2

¹⁹⁰² BArch DR1/26185. 1988/12/14. *DDR-Zentrum des ITI – Schwerpunkte*, p.2

¹⁹⁰³ BArch DR1/26185. 1988/12/23. *Tätigkeitsbericht für das Jahr 1988*, p.5

¹⁹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p.5

¹⁹⁰⁵ BArch DR1/13618. *Direktoriumssitzung vom 31.1.1989*, p.3

¹⁹⁰⁶ BArch DR1/26185. *Vorläufiger Arbeitsplan. 15.01.1990*, p.2

adjusted their strategy accordingly. But because of the national debt of the GDR state, this approach was no longer feasible. The balancing act between the intention to still focus primarily on theatre-makers from the Global South in terms of content and the financial necessity to include Western guests was obviously impossible for the organisers to manage. While the ITI centre had previously very carefully screened the participants of their events for their artistic and political suitability, now, they were no longer able to do so. They were financially dependent on the attendees from the West, and could literally not afford to be selective. Instead of trying to reduce the number of participants from the West as it had done in the past, the ITI centre now tried to attract more participants even after the deadline for applications had passed. The friendship agreements that the GDR had signed with various ITI centres from countries of the Global South had in the past also helped with the selection of suitable guests and scholarship holders. The fact that these agreements circumvented the non-convertibility of the GDR's domestic currency had previously enabled the East German ITI to maintain contact and facilitate exchanges with theatre artists from other countries. But because of its debt, the GDR had moved away from these clearing agreements and instead had become focussed on earning hard currencies. The fee of 500 dollar inadvertently prioritised Western participants, who were often the only ones able to pay that money. Since the only remaining way to achieve a more diverse group of attendees was with the help of the MfK and the use of the GDR's cultural exchange programmes, the East German ITI had considerably less control over the suitability of the participants. And, while this did create a more heterogeneous group of workshop participants, it also created unfortunate inequalities. The ITI centre was aware of this, but powerless to change it.

In the past, the ITI centre had faced external challenges that had threatened to prevent them from participating in the activities of the ITI or fulfilling their political objectives. But while travel restrictions and lack of diplomatic recognition had spurred them on and forced them to carefully consider their strengths, weaknesses and alternative routes to success, the financial difficulties of the GDR had undermined this approach.

8 Conclusion

The case study of the East German centre provides insight into the International Theatre Institute (ITI) as a definitive Cold War organization. The structure of the national centres, which followed the model of UNESCO and SUDT, meant that the members of each centre almost out of necessity represented national interests. It was therefore inevitable that the geopolitical conflict that the ITI sought to counteract in the post-war period would begin to dominate it.

The case of East German participation in the ITI illustrates this fact because the German share in the Cold War can be seen as exemplary for the entire conflict. The two Germanies were conspicuous because they were locked in a very direct rivalry on the front lines of the Cold War. They felt the threat of the opposing sides more acutely than most of their allies, were more dependent on their respective superpowers to protect them, and thus, claimed to be and acted as models for their respective camps. It is therefore not surprising that it was the inter-German conflict, in particular, that shattered the illusions of apolitical unity within the ITI. Competition between the two German centres pervaded their work within the ITI throughout their existence. Even though the individual members of the East and West German centres had long since begun to cooperate in ExCom and in hosting ITI events, they were repeatedly held back by the constraints of inter-German politics. This was a permanent restriction especially for the East German centre, as it was integrated into the ministerial administration and subject to heavy political control.

Just as development in the Global South was viewed through a Cold War lens both in the East and West, the various efforts of the East German ITI theatre experts to promote theatre in developing countries were also conceived within this framework. This overt political instrumentalization seemingly challenges the notion that the theatre experts of the ITI were a part of an epistemic community with a shared set of beliefs, that was the value-based basis of the activity of its members. Whatever unity the theatre experts who met at UNESCO in 1947 represented, their successors became divided along the lines of the geopolitical conflict soon afterwards. Political disagreement and internal power struggles within the ITI often dominated debates and activities, and became an obstacle to the actual theatrical exchange that the ITI wanted to promote. Nowhere was this more evident than in the Committee for Third World Theatre

(CTWT), which was in a constant tug-of-war between influences from East and West, North and South and the often strongly divergent ideas of the members on both artistic and political issues.

At the same time, the national interests obviously represented in the ITI must not be understood merely in opposition to the goals of the epistemic community. Mai'a K. Davis Cross argues against a simplistic view of epistemic communities and their relationship with governments. She notes that state and non-state actors can comprise the epistemic community,¹⁹⁰⁷ which can also be fully or partially located within government structures, while still exercising independent agency.¹⁹⁰⁸

The systemic proximity of East German theatre experts to the state administration and official cultural policy does therefore not negate their membership of the international theatre community. Instead, the case of the East German involvement in the ITI demonstrates that national interests did not only obstruct the activities of the international theatre community, but in other cases facilitated them. It had been the Ministry of Culture (MfK) that had first assembled a group of East German theatre experts to work within the ITI. On the one hand, the oppressive nature of the GDR party-state, its travel cadre system and foreign policy guidelines greatly restricted the work of the centre, but on the other hand, the ITI members were able to draw on the resources and contacts of the GDR state. The fact that the ITI centre was treated as a subordinate office to the MfK also meant that the expert advice of the ITI members had considerable influence on what activities the GDR pursued to promote international theatre exchange.

Even if they were not fundamentally opposed, there were still tensions between the national interests and the goals of the ITI. And while the internal power struggles within the ITI certainly do not speak of strong cohesion, I would argue that, at least in regards to the idea of theatre as a medium of development in the Global South, the activities of the members of the ITI were still guided by a shared belief: The ITI was committed to the international exchange of theatrical knowledge and practice, which it facilitated by expanding its network and creating a global community of theatre artists. Since the ITI had decided to hold its first congress in Prague despite the political tensions, it had defined its own claim to internationality through its neutrality in the

¹⁹⁰⁷ Cross. 2012, p.147

¹⁹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p.153

East-West conflict. When confronted with the clashing national interests of the two German centres, the ITI acted according to the guiding principle that admitting the GDR into the ITI would expand its international network and add to its theatrical exchange. This initially matched the interests of the GDR regime, trying to overcome its diplomatic isolation through participation in international organisations. To the cultural officials in the GDR, the ITI was at first primarily a means to establish cultural exchange where it was impossible to do so through official channels. Later, the success of the East German ITI members was seen as indicative of the shifting international opinion towards Eastern bloc socialism. The idea shared by the epistemic community of theatre as a means of cultural development and their state's foreign policy towards the Global South was compatible with the basic assumption of the GDR's cultural policy that art was meant to serve the development of society.

Both the general secretariat of the ITI and the East German experts acted as intermediaries between the national interests and the values of the international community. To maintain the ITI's theatrical exchange, the general secretary needed to negotiate the national interests of the member states that facilitated their involvement in ITI. The need to compromise increased from the 1970s onwards, when the financial resources of ITI headquarters were greatly reduced. To the theatre experts of the GDR, involvement in the ITI was associated with extraordinary privilege, since it enabled them to travel abroad and make contact with theatre professionals in other countries. While their experiences allowed them more nuanced perspectives that did not correspond to the official narratives in the GDR, they also needed to embrace national priorities. While their allegiance to their state was much more pronounced, the East German theatre experts also became very accustomed to working in international circles. Whether they subscribed to the principles of the GDR's foreign policy or were motivated mainly by personal or professional reasons as theatre artists interested in a rare opportunity to engage in transnational exchange with foreign colleagues, they needed to represent both the values of the ITI and the policies of the GDR. Their status as theatre experts in a transnational environment was dependent on both. That they needed to compromise and allow themselves to be drawn into cultural politics was a familiar reality for them.

Of the various activities the East German centre directed towards developing theatre in developing countries, some, like the granting of scholarships for foreign theatre artists to study in the GDR and the sending of East German theatre directors

abroad, were typical methods of the GDR's foreign policy towards the Global South. Others, like the seminars and workshops that allowed the participants to engage with each other's theatrical traditions and experiences, were much more rooted in ITI traditions. The East German ITI experts drew on the experiences they had gained by attending international events, following the discourse within the organisation, and building up relationships with theatre artists worldwide. The search for suitable foreign guests for events of the East German centre, especially for the Brecht Dialogue of 1968, led to new contacts that the centre expanded upon with invitations and scholarship grants and Bennewitz's first foreign assignments. This support for Third World theatre consolidated their influence on the CTWT through Bennewitz's appointment as consultant. All these experiences culminated in a series of events that the East German Centre organised for theatre-makers from the Global South. In all of them, the East German ITI experts pursued the same strategy.

The success of the East German theatrical exchange with the Global South was rooted in the careful selection of suitable experts. The circle of East German theatre practitioners able to participate in the ITI centre was limited to a small group. This group included the artistic directors of prestigious theatres and experts the ITI centre began to recruit in developing countries. The quintessential expert of the GDR centre was Fritz Bennewitz, who had methodically been built up as such. He became involved in the GDR centre in 1961 and attended ITI events with increasing frequency before he was introduced to various exchange partners. His first assignments to South Asia resulted in further engagements and in his position as a consultant in the CTWT. Apart from Bennewitz, the ITI centre also enlisted other East German theatre professionals who had experiences working in the Global South, and drew upon their expertise when organising its events. The careful selection of personalities also applied to the partners of the GDR centre, such as suitable candidates for scholarships and guests for events. As this exchange had a limited scope, the centre focused strongly on specific countries or personalities that held important positions. When the East German ITI began to lose this ability to strategically select a suitable audience, it was reflected in how coherently and successfully the ITI was able to communicate its positions.

Even from the limited perspective provided by the files of the East German ITI, it is obvious that the foreign partners in the Global South were not just recipients of development aid programmes infused with ideological teachings, but engaged with the offers made by the East German ITI centre in accordance to their own interests. This

was evident with many of the key actors within the CTWT. Some, such as Humberto Orsini or Jalal Khoury, saw the members of the East German centre as allies for shaping the committee according to their own visions. Yet others such as Cecile Guidote also pursued relationships with the East German ITI centre, even though its members supported efforts to curtail her and Ellen Stewart's involvement in the CTWT. As the example of the two German ITI centres shows, Guidote and PETA, instead of engaging in the political power struggle of the CTWT, remained in regular contact with organisations from both sides of the Cold War divide to secure invitations and scholarships for PETA artists and recruit experts such as Bennewitz to come work on PETA projects. The opposing policies were ignored, tolerated or even intentionally pitted against each other for the resources they provided.

Brecht was central to almost all activities of the GDR centre, especially its support for the development of theatre in the Global South. The East German centre had been set on that path since the Festival International d'Art Dramatique in 1954, where the Berliner Ensemble (BE) had performed to much critical acclaim, and its several returns to Paris in the following festival seasons of the Theatre of Nations, which had introduced international theatre artists and audiences to Brecht's plays and style and fostered the ITI's interest in an East German ITI membership. The Brecht Dialogue of 1968, organised by the ITI centre in collaboration with the BE, had confirmed this trajectory. For one, it alerted the East German ITI experts to a strong interest in Brecht in the Global South. In addition, the attendees of the Brecht Dialogue also formed the basis on which the centre selected guests and partners for future activities. Subsequently, Bennewitz and other East German theatre directors working in developing countries throughout the 1970s staged mostly Brecht productions, while Brecht's 'method' was the focus of both the series of seminars for theatre artists from the Global South from 1975 to 1982 and the workshops on theatre directing from 1985 to 1988. In the end, the one-sided focus on Brecht was so entrenched in the centre's activities that the East German ITI experts struggled to integrate more contemporary East German drama.

There was a common approach to the activities of the East German ITI centre in support of theatre in developing countries. They were meant to show or teach the participants a specific method of adapting Brecht, designed to fit their needs in accordance with the GDR's foreign policy. Key concepts of Brecht's theories, such as Epic Theatre and *Verfremdung*, went mostly unmentioned, and typical stylistic aspects

of his work were considerably de-emphasised. Instead, the ITI experts of the GDR did focus on the capacity of Brecht's work to contribute to social change. This emphasis on nation building allowed them to draw deliberate parallels between how art and culture had assisted the development of socialist society in East Germany and the search for national identity in the decolonising world. In line with the GDR's foreign policy claim that its own relations with developing countries represented a new kind of relationship free from exploitation and inequity, the East German theatre experts presented themselves as equal partners. After working with Vijaya Mehta, Bennewitz emphasised that collaboration with a local theatre director was a central element of his *Chalk Circle* project. For *Theatre and Social Reality*, where the East German theatre experts formulated their general strategy, they were very careful not to appear lecturing and patronising. This cooperation was necessitated by the fact that historical and social circumstances of each country needed to be taken into account. This aspect mirrored the GDR's own efforts to separate itself from the notion of an all-German culture by appropriating the artworks produced in different periods and under different social conditions for use in the GDR's socialist society. Following the same logic, the work of Brecht and other dramatists needed to be attuned to national circumstances. Adaptability was therefore to be a key aspect of the approach imparted by the East German ITI experts. The theatre people from the Global South were instructed not to copy East German theatre practice or aesthetics, but instead use a universal method to appropriate Brecht to fit their own conditions.

The idea of theatre as a tool of social change and cultural development was widespread in the international community. The fact that Brecht's work could be reduced to this function with the consent of the playwright himself added to its appeal. While this was by no means unique to the East German approach, and regardless of whether the theatre people from the Global South applied it entirely in the way the GDR had intended, the East German Brecht expertise was generally well appreciated.

The foreign cultural policy of the GDR could neither achieve diplomatic recognition the roundabout way, sway the non-aligned world towards socialism nor later prevent or delay the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc. The fact that some of the transnational activities of the East German ITI experts outlived both the GDR and the East German ITI centre, shows that they cannot be reduced to these political functions. This was not a foregone conclusion, since the German reunification resulted in many replacements and breaks in continuity in the theatre institutions of the former GDR.

Meanwhile, Wolf Ebermann, whose work was greatly appreciated within the ITI, carried on the secretariat of the Music Theatre Committee until his death. Fritz Bennewitz, who, disillusioned with domestic developments, had already focussed more on his international career in the 1980s, continued to be invited to South and Southeast Asia by his long-time collaborators after 1990, when he was no longer sent there on behalf of the party state.

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Theaterexperten für die Dritte Welt:

Das ITI der DDR und die Entwicklung des Theaters in der Zeit des Kalten Krieges

Das Internationale Theaterinstitut (ITI) entstand in der Nachkriegszeit aus dem Wunsch heraus, künftige globale Konflikte durch kulturellen Austausch und Verständigung zwischen Künstlern zu verhindern.

Der Zweite Weltkrieg hatte den internationalistischen Geist der Zwischenkriegszeit erschüttert. Der Völkerbund, die erste zwischenstaatliche Organisation, hatte sein Ziel, den Weltfrieden zu erhalten, ganz offensichtlich verfehlt. Viele nichtstaatliche Organisationen, die den internationalen Austausch von Kunst, Kultur und Wissenschaft fördern sollten, waren mit dem Ausbruch des Krieges entweder aufgelöst worden oder hatten ihre Tätigkeit faktisch eingestellt. Dies war auch das Schicksal der ersten internationalen Theaterorganisation, der Société Universelles du Théâtre in Paris (SUDT), deren Arbeit mit dem Einmarsch Nazideutschlands in Frankreich beendet wurde.

Die internationalistischen Ideale der Zwischenkriegszeit verschwanden jedoch nie, auch nicht während der Schrecken des Zweiten Weltkriegs. Einige der internationalen Organisationen, die noch existierten, wurden wiederbelebt, andere aufgelöst und ersetzt. Die Vereinten Nationen (UN) sollten dort weitermachen, wo der Völkerbund gescheitert war. Die beratende kulturelle Organisation des Völkerbundes, das Internationale Komitee für geistige Zusammenarbeit, wurde von der Organisation der Vereinten Nationen für Erziehung, Wissenschaft und Kultur (UNESCO) abgelöst.

Das ITI teilte die internationalistischen Ideale der UNESCO. Sein Ziel war es laut Charta, "den internationalen Austausch von Wissen und Praxis in der Theaterkunst zu fördern". Der Dramatiker Maurice Kurtz, der die Gründung des ITI initiiert hatte, hatte dem UNESCO-Generaldirektor Julian Huxley seine Absichten so mitgeteilt: "Ich habe gerade drei Jahre im Krieg verbracht. Jetzt würde ich gerne drei Jahre lang für den Frieden arbeiten. Was kann ich für die Unesco und das Theater tun?" Auch der englische Schriftsteller und Kritiker J. B. Priestley, einer der Gründer des ITI, sprach in seiner Eröffnungsrede auf dem 1. ITI-Kongress im Juli 1948 in Prag diese Denkweise an:

"In einer Welt, die von gigantischen Konflikten bedroht ist, mag es als eine Kleinigkeit erscheinen, ein internationales Theaterinstitut zu gründen, aber er war mit dieser Sichtweise nicht einverstanden. Jede internationale

Organisation, die Grenzen überschreitet, sei zumindest ein Faden im Gefüge einer Weltgesellschaft. Der Versuch, Theater miteinander zu verbinden und dafür zu sorgen, dass die Menschen in den Genuss der besten Dramen der Welt kommen, zeugt von einer Bewegung hin zur internationalen Verständigung".

Er vertrat die Ansicht, dass das Theater aufgrund seines grundlegend kommunikativen Charakters ein ideales Instrument im Kampf gegen neue globale Konflikte sei:

"Die besondere Natur des Theaters zwang die Akteure, sich mit realen Menschen konkret und intim auseinanderzusetzen. Die Art von Ungeheuern, die in politischen Reden und Artikeln zu finden ist, hatte nichts mit dem Theater zu tun. Im Theater konnten die Menschen erfahren, wie andere leben, denken und fühlen. Um im Theater Erfolg zu haben, musste man die allgemeine menschliche Natur kennen, mit ihr mitfühlen und an sie glauben."

Bei allem Idealismus, der in diesen Aussagen zum Ausdruck kommt, waren sich die Gründer des ITI der Bedrohung, die die neuen geopolitischen Spannungen für das ITI darstellten, nicht bewusst. Bereits in der Gründungsphase hatten sie erfahren, wie der Kalte Krieg den von ihnen angestrebten internationalen Austausch von Theaterkunst behindern würde.

Trotz ihres internationalen Anspruchs waren die UNO, die UNESCO und die unter dem Dach der UNESCO gegründeten Organisationen de facto westliche Organisationen. Der Sitz der UNO befand sich in New York, der der UNESCO in Paris. Folglich wurde die von diesen Organisationen vertretene Vorstellung von Internationalität zweimal in Frage gestellt, zunächst von den sozialistischen Ländern des Ostblocks und dann von den sich entkolonialisierenden Ländern des globalen Südens.

Als eine der UNESCO angegliederte Organisation sah sich das ITI ähnlichen Herausforderungen gegenüber. Auf dem ersten Treffen 1947 in Paris war beschlossen worden, dass der erste ITI-Kongress 1948 in Prag stattfinden sollte, wo die Organisation offiziell gegründet werden sollte. Anfang 1948 ergriff jedoch die kommunistische Partei die Macht in der Tschechoslowakei und machte das Land zu einem sowjetischen Satellitenstaat. Die Initiatoren des ITI zogen kurzzeitig eine Verlegung der Veranstaltung in Erwägung, entschieden sich dann aber dagegen, um den nicht-staatlichen Charakter ihrer neuen Organisation zu beweisen. Die Delegierten des US-amerikanischen ITI-Zentrums nahmen dennoch teil, wenn auch nur als inoffizielle Beobachter. Nach neun Jahren des Boykotts trat die Sowjetunion 1954 der UNESCO

bei. Die UdSSR wurde elf Jahre nach ihrer Gründung auf dem 8. ITI-Kongress in Helsinki 1959 Mitglied des ITI. Neben ihr traten auch Rumänien und die Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR) bei. Zu diesem Zeitpunkt war der Ostblock vollständig im ITI vertreten.

Die Gründer des ITI sahen in einer neutralen Haltung gegenüber den Ländern des Ostblocks und in einer Einladung an diese angesichts der zunehmenden geopolitischen Spannungen einen entscheidenden Ausdruck des internationalen Charakters des ITI. Dies zeigt, dass sie anfangs noch unter dem Paradigma einer bipolaren Welt agierten, die durch die Zugehörigkeit zum kapitalistischen Westen oder zum sozialistischen Osten definiert war. Neben dieser "Ersten Welt" und "Zweiten Welt" wurde die Existenz der "Dritten Welt" in der Gründungsphase des ITI noch kaum anerkannt.

Diese anfängliche Gleichgültigkeit gegenüber dem globalen Süden änderte sich mit dem Beitritt weiterer Zentren. Vor allem aber löste die Welle der Entkolonialisierung ab den 1960er Jahren eine deutliche Akzentverschiebung innerhalb der internationalen Organisationen aus. Die UNO und damit auch die UNESCO erklärten die 1960er Jahre zum Jahrzehnt der Entwicklung. Nachdem sich die Erwartungen nicht erfüllten und die Erfolge ausblieben, wurde 1970 eine zweite Entwicklungsdekade ausgerufen. Nachdem immer mehr entkolonialisierte Länder der UNESCO beitraten, wurde die Organisation ab Mitte der 1960er Jahre zunehmend durch den Aktivismus dieser Länder geprägt. Ab Mitte der 1970er Jahre verlagerte sich der Schwerpunkt der UNESCO mehr und mehr auf die Entwicklungshilfe. Als UNESCO-nahe Nichtregierungsorganisation gewann die Unterstützung des Theaters der Dritten Welt auch innerhalb des ITI zunehmend an Bedeutung.

Die Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR) trat dem ITI auf dem Kongress in Helsinki 1959 bei. Obwohl sie durch die Umstände des Kalten Krieges in ihrer Mobilität stark eingeschränkt waren, gehörten die ostdeutschen ITI-Experten schnell zu den aktivsten Teilnehmern der Organisation. Nach der Auflösung des Zentrums fügte Manfred Linke, der Sekretär des westdeutschen Zentrums, der 1994 erschienenen Neuauflage seines Buches ein kurzes fünfseitiges Kapitel über das DDR-Zentrum bei, in dem er die "Ziele und Strukturen, Leistungen und Aufgaben" des ITI und des westdeutschen Zentrums beschrieb. Er räumte ein, dass dieser Platz nicht ausreiche, um die Arbeit des Zentrums angemessen zu würdigen. Diese "Zukunftsaufgabe" erfordere die akribische Sichtung der vorhandenen Materialien, Akten, Korrespondenzen und

Publikationen des Zentrums. Linke war jedoch von der entscheidenden Rolle des DDR-Zentrums innerhalb des ITI überzeugt: "Das 1959 gegründete und zum 31.12.1990 aufgelöste Zentrum der DDR hat seit seiner Aufnahme in die Organisation deren Entwicklung wesentlich mitbestimmt."

Schon ein oberflächlicher Blick scheint die Behauptung von Linke zu bestätigen. Das Ostdeutsche Zentrum war seit 1971 ständiges Mitglied des ITI, führte ab 1969 das Sekretariat des Musiktheaterausschusses und veranstaltete eine Vielzahl von Seminaren und Kolloquien, die die verschiedenen Fachausschüsse des ITI unterstützten und den Diskurs zu verschiedenen Theaterthemen prägten. Neben dem Musiktheater war die Unterstützung des Theaters in der Dritten Welt ein wichtiger Schwerpunkt des DDR-Zentrums. Diese "theatrale Entwicklungshilfe" nahm verschiedene Formen an: die Organisation von Veranstaltungen, die Vergabe von Stipendien zum Studium des Theaters in der DDR und die Entsendung von Regisseuren wie Fritz Bennewitz, die in Gastinszenierungen und Seminaren Brechtsche Methoden vermittelten.

In dieser Arbeit werde ich untersuchen, wie die Mitglieder des ITI-Zentrums der DDR am Wissensaustausch des ITI und der Theaterkunst teilnahmen. Meine Forschung über die ostdeutsche Beteiligung am ITI ist Teil des ERC-Projekts "Developing Theatre: Building Expert Networks for Theatre in Emerging Countries after 1945", das die komplexen Prozesse untersucht, die zu einer Institutionalisierung des Theaters in Schwellenländern führten. Die Untersuchung verschiedener Arten von transnationalen Interaktionen, wie z. B. die Einrichtung der Abteilung für Theaterstudien an der Universität von Ibadan, die Unterstützung professioneller Theateraktivitäten durch private amerikanische philanthropische Organisationen, das sowjetische und osteuropäische Engagement in kulturellen und theatralischen Aktivitäten in Indien sowie die Professionalisierung des Theaters und der Aufbau von Theaterhäusern in der arabischen Welt, zeigen, dass private Stiftungen, Regierungen, Gemeinschaften und Einzelpersonen das Theater als Instrument der kulturellen Entwicklung verstanden.

Sie können als Teil einer epistemischen Gemeinschaft angesehen werden, "einem Netzwerk von Fachleuten mit anerkanntem Fachwissen und Kompetenz in einem bestimmten Bereich und einem maßgeblichen Anspruch auf politikrelevantes Wissen in diesem Bereich oder Themenfeld". Der Begriff wurde von dem Politikwissenschaftler Peter M. Haas im Kontext der internationalen Beziehungen geprägt, und die Forschung hat sich auf epistemische Gemeinschaften konzentriert, die

ein hohes Maß an technischem und wissenschaftlichem Fachwissen erfordern, wie z. B. der Klimawandel oder die nukleare Abrüstung. Christopher Balme argumentierte jedoch, dass das Konzept angepasst werden kann, um zu beschreiben, wie sich Theaterkünstler, Wissenschaftler, Kritiker und Pädagogen als eine solche Gemeinschaft mit den Elementen der Professionalisierung, der Organisationsstrukturen und der transnationalen Konnektivität organisieren, die wissenschaftliche und technische epistemische Gemeinschaften auszeichnen. Die Gründung des ITI als Nachfolgeorganisation der SUDT war ein wichtiger Schritt in der Institutionalisierung dieser transnationalen epistemischen Gemeinschaft. Immer bestrebt, sein globales Netzwerk von Theaterexperten zu erweitern, unterstützte das ITI die Gründung anderer nationaler oder internationaler Organisationen und Komitees und knüpfte und pflegte Kontakte zu Theaterleuten in aller Welt.

Die vorliegende Untersuchung des ITI zeigt, dass die spezifischen politischen und sozialen Bedingungen in einem Land einen großen Einfluss darauf hatten, wie und zu welchem Zweck sich Theaterleute im ITI engagieren konnten. Dies galt insbesondere für die Theaterexperten aus der DDR und anderen sozialistischen Ländern, deren Mobilität durch den Parteistaat eingeschränkt war. Das Treffen bei der UNESCO im Juli 1947, bei dem die Gründung des ITI erörtert wurde, wurde im offiziellen Bericht als Treffen von "Theaterexperten" bezeichnet. Es gab zwar keine formalen Kriterien für die Fachkompetenz, aber die biografischen Angaben zu den Mitgliedern, die an der internationalen Theatertagung teilnahmen, geben einige Hinweise: Fast alle anwesenden Experten hatten einen beruflichen Hintergrund im Theaterbereich.

Die Anforderungen an einen Experten aus einem sozialistischen Land waren spezifischer. Was sie grundlegend von anderen Experten in internationalen Organisationen unterscheidet, ist, dass sie "formell Agenten von geplantem, ideologisch bedingtem Wissen sind, das untrennbar mit einem Projekt des gesellschaftlichen Wandels verbunden ist, das von einer bestimmten Form von Parteistaat umrissen wird."

Wie das Ziel der epistemischen Gemeinschaft der Theaterexperten, das Theater als Medium kultureller Entwicklung zu fördern, mit dem Ziel des DDR-Staates, Kultur als Instrument der Außenrepräsentation und die ostdeutsche Unterstützung des Globalen Südens als Mittel der diplomatischen Beziehungen zu nutzen,

zusammenspielte, ist somit der Faktor, der die Arbeit des DDR-Zentrums des ITI bestimmte.

Es ist daher wichtig, zunächst den nationalen Kontext zu bestimmen, in dem das ITI-Zentrum der DDR entstanden ist und arbeitet. Kapitel 2 zeichnet die Geschichte der Gründung des ITI-Zentrums der DDR und seiner Aufnahme in das ITI nach. Die Tatsache, dass diese Geschichte nicht unabhängig von der Geschichte des westdeutschen Zentrums erzählt werden kann, zeigt bereits, dass die innerdeutsche Rivalität ein prägendes Element beider deutscher Zentren war. Die ostdeutschen Theaterleute hatten bereits vor ihrem Beitritt zum ITI trotz der prekären Lage der DDR über das ITI-Festival Theater der Nationen in Paris Kontakte zur ITI-Gemeinschaft geknüpft. Die ostdeutschen Gastspiele leisteten einen bedeutenden Beitrag zum internationalen Theater, allen voran die des Berliner Ensembles von Bertolt Brecht, die dazu beitrugen, Brecht in der Welt bekannt zu machen. Die eigentliche Gründung und Akzeptanz des ITI-Zentrums muss im Kontext des innerdeutschen Konflikts verstanden werden. Hinter den Kulissen des Weltkongresses in Helsinki kollidierte die idealistische Vision des ITI mit der Realität des Kalten Krieges: Das westdeutsche Zentrum widersetzte sich nicht nur vehement der Aufnahme Ostdeutschlands als neues ITI-Mitglied, sondern nutzte auch diplomatische Kanäle, um diese zu verhindern. Entgegen dem unpolitischen Charakter der ITI handelten die beiden deutschen Zentren im Einklang mit der jeweiligen Außenpolitik ihrer Länder gegenüber dem anderen Deutschland. Die Konfrontation in Helsinki war daher nicht nur unvermeidlich, sondern auch bezeichnend dafür, wie die innerdeutsche Rivalität ihr Engagement in der ITI in den folgenden Jahrzehnten bestimmen würde. Sie veranschaulicht die inhärente Spannung zwischen den nationalen Interessen der Mitgliedstaaten und den gemeinsamen Zielen der epistemischen Gemeinschaft.

In Kapitel 3 untersuche ich dann die Strukturen der ITI-Zentren, um festzustellen, welche Art von Experten durch sie gefördert wurde. Die nationalen Zentren waren in ihrer Struktur und Organisation sehr unterschiedlich. Das ostdeutsche ITI war in dieser Hinsicht ungewöhnlich, weil es sehr stark einschränkte, wer sinnvoll an der Arbeit des Zentrums teilnehmen konnte. Dies geschah, weil das ITI der DDR ganz bewusst eine kleine Gruppe von Experten aufbaute, die am ITI teilnehmen sollten. Um den Schwerpunkt der Arbeit des ITI-Zentrums zu bestimmen, ist es auch notwendig, sein Verhältnis zu den staatlichen Behörden sowie zu anderen Theaterorganisationen zu untersuchen. Ebenso wichtig ist in diesem Zusammenhang

das System der Reisekader, durch das die Arbeit der ostdeutschen Theaterexperten staatlich kontrolliert wurde.

Nachdem die Strukturen, die die Arbeit der ostdeutschen ITI-Experten sowohl erleichterten als auch einschränkten, gründlich ermittelt wurden, konzentriere ich mich nun auf die verschiedenen Formen des theatralen Austauschs, die sie förderten. In Kapitel 4 wird untersucht, wie das ostdeutsche Zentrum das ITI-Netzwerk nutzte, um Beziehungen zu Theaterkünstlern im globalen Süden aufzubauen. In den Anfangsjahren waren die Möglichkeiten noch sehr begrenzt, da das Zentrum aufgrund von Reiseverboten nicht an vielen ITI-Veranstaltungen teilnehmen konnte. Ab Mitte der 1960er Jahre konnten die ostdeutschen ITI-Experten ihre Kontakte stark ausbauen und einen regelmäßigeren Austausch etablieren. Von besonderer Bedeutung war dabei das venezolanische Zentrum, mit dem das ITI-Zentrum eine Partnerschaft einging und die Bedingungen des Theaterraustausches in einem bilateralen Freundschaftsabkommen festlegte. Solche Austauschabkommen, die die ostdeutschen ITI-Mitglieder auch mit anderen Zentren im Globalen Süden aushandelten, waren zwar nicht von langer Dauer, bildeten aber den Auftakt für das Stipendienprogramm des ITI-Zentrums, bei dem Theaterkünstler aus dem Globalen Süden die Möglichkeit erhielten, an DDR-Theatern zu hospitieren. Das ITI-Zentrum konzipierte mehrteilige Programme für die Stipendiaten, um sowohl ein repräsentatives Bild des Theaters in Ostdeutschland zu vermitteln als auch individuelle Interessen zu berücksichtigen.

In Kapitel 5 befaße ich mich mit den ostdeutschen Theaterregisseuren, die als Experten zu Gastinszenierungen in Länder des Globalen Südens entsandt wurden. Unter ihnen ragt Fritz Bennewitz heraus. Er kam Anfang der 1960er Jahre zum ersten Mal mit dem ITI-Zentrum in Kontakt und wurde zu einem der wichtigsten Theaterexperten aufgebaut. Durch Kontakte, die das ITI-Zentrum vermittelte, wurde Bennewitz 1970 erstmals nach Indien entsandt, was seine Karriere als Theaterregisseur in Süd- und Südostasien einleitete. Dieses Kapitel soll die bestehende Forschung zu Bennewitz' Karriere ergänzen, indem es einen Einblick in seinen Aufbau als Experte und die Umstände, die dies ermöglichten, gibt. Darüber hinaus versuche ich aufzuzeigen, wie Bennewitz' Herangehensweise an seine internationalen Inszenierungen, die Rolf Rohmer als interkulturelles Theater definierte, von den ostdeutschen Diskursen über die Interpretation der Klassiker inspiriert war, an denen Bennewitz als Mitglied der Shakespeare-Gesellschaft und Regisseur am Nationaltheater in Weimar teilnahm. Auch wenn Bennewitz der bekannteste

ostdeutsche Theaterregisseur war, war er bei weitem nicht der einzige. Ein Vergleich mit der Arbeit anderer Regisseure soll Aufschluss darüber geben, ob sie eine gemeinsame Methode anwandten.

Kapitel 6 untersucht die Strukturen, die innerhalb des ITI zur Unterstützung des Theaters im Globalen Süden aufgebaut wurden. Als das ITI begann, sich von seinem euro-amerikanischen Schwerpunkt zu lösen und versuchte, Theaterkünstler aus den Ländern der Dekolonisierung für das ITI-Netzwerk zu gewinnen, stieß es bald an seine finanziellen Grenzen. Um diese zu überwinden, förderte das ITI in den 1960er Jahren regionale Vereinigungen, wie das Lateinamerikanische Theaterinstitut und das Arabische Theaterkomitee. Auf den Kontakten, die das ITI auf diese Weise gewonnen hatte, baute in den 1970er Jahren das Komitee für das Theater der Dritten Welt auf. Vor und nach seiner Gründung war das Komitee für das Dritte-Welt-Theater das Schlachtfeld für verschiedene Visionen, wie man das Theater im Globalen Süden am besten unterstützen könnte. Dieser Kampf wurde sowohl unter den Mitgliedern des Komitees als auch unter seinen Beratern ausgetragen, zu denen Ellen Stewart vom La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club und Fritz Bennewitz gehörten. Aufgrund der Beziehungen, die die ostdeutschen ITI-Experten durch Austauschprogramme, Stipendien und die Arbeit von Fritz Bennewitz aufgebaut hatten, hatten sie einen erheblichen Einfluss auf den Ausschuss. Zusammen mit einigen gleichgesinnten Theaterexperten im Ausschuss versuchten sie, diesen nach ihren Vorstellungen von antiimperialistischer Solidarität zwischen sozialistischen und blockfreien Staaten zu gestalten. Der Ausschuss veranschaulichte, wie sich die epistemische Gemeinschaft in den 1970er Jahren aufspaltete, als die Enttäuschung über die Ideen des Developmentalismus und die Ergebnisse der früheren ITI-Bemühungen zunahm. Er stellte auch einen Fall von "Lock-in" dar, einer Struktur, die aufrechterhalten wurde, obwohl die meisten Beteiligten sich ihrer Unwirksamkeit bewusst waren.

Verschiedene Seminare, Kolloquien und Workshops, die vom ostdeutschen ITI-Zentrum veranstaltet wurden, sind Thema von Kapitel 7. Diese richteten sich entweder ausschließlich an Theaterleute aus dem Globalen Süden oder betrachteten sie zumindest als ein wichtiges Publikum. Die erste und einflussreichste Veranstaltung war der Brecht-Dialog im Jahr 1968, der gemeinsam mit dem Berliner Ensemble organisiert wurde und die ostdeutsche Brecht-Kompetenz präsentieren und stärken sollte. Für das ITI der DDR war der Brecht-Dialog besonders wichtig, weil er die Beziehungen zu den eingeladenen Gästen festigen konnte und weil die Rückmeldungen der Teilnehmer aus

dem globalen Süden dem ITI-Zentrum erlaubten, deren Wünsche und Interessen zu erkennen. Auf den Brecht-Dialog folgte eine Reihe von Veranstaltungen, die das ostdeutsche ITI-Zentrum von 1976 bis 1982 für Theaterleute aus Entwicklungsländern organisierte. Diese Seminare waren gewissermaßen der Höhepunkt der Förderung des Theaters im Globalen Süden durch das Ostdeutsche Zentrum. Die Erfahrungen, die die ostdeutschen ITI-Experten durch ihre Kontakte zu Partnern aus Entwicklungsländern, ihre Teilnahme an zahlreichen ITI-Veranstaltungen zum Theater der Dritten Welt und ihre Mitarbeit im Komitee für das Theater der Dritten Welt gesammelt hatten, sowie die Reisen von DDR-Theaterregisseuren konnten genutzt werden, um ein Programm zusammenzustellen, das sowohl auf die Bedürfnisse der Teilnehmer zugeschnitten war als auch mit den außenpolitischen Zielen übereinstimmte. Die letzte Veranstaltungsreihe waren Workshops zur Brechtschen Theaterregie, die von 1985 bis 1988 stattfanden und dem Wunsch nach Praxisnähe entsprachen. Die späteren Wiederholungen dieser Workshops zeigten jedoch auch, wie die Bemühungen des ITI-Zentrums um die Ausbildung von Theaterpraktikern aus dem Globalen Süden zunehmend durch die sich verschlechternde finanzielle Situation der DDR behindert wurden.