



Pre-History to the Foundation of the AGTV

2009 marked the 30th anniversary of the formation of the Association of German Teachers in Victoria. The following notes were recorded by Heather Stock, a Life Member of the AGTV and was published in SZENE in 1979.

By early 1973, it was clear that the interests of German teachers and teaching could not be entirely met by the MLTAV Committee as it was then constituted. Dr. Bertram Werwie had arrived in Melbourne in mid-late 1972 to establish the Goethe-Institut, and was keen to “push” German and help teachers in any way he could. There was also a lively German Foreign Language Advisory Committee (GERFLAC) under the aegis of the Education Department that included among its members Vicky Cullen and Ruben Ketchell. There was a feeling that German would need to be “handled” rather more independently than just by MLTAV, so a subcommittee of MLTAV, including, I gather, some who were not members of the MLTAV committee, was set up and by mid-July 1973 was meeting at Monash University. Geoff Allport was chairman, and Helen Adorjan became its secretary.

After Dr. Werwie’s untimely death (he and his wife were killed in a plane crash off Tahiti on their way home on leave in 1973), his role was taken by Christiane Hyduke, of whom I have especially fond memories, as she visited my school and patiently bore such naive questions as “Has anyone ever told you that you look like Carol Burnett?” (There were no limits to the deviousness of us German teachers in promoting our subject!) She also took part in Congress, and was on her way to a teachers’ inservice in Canberra when she was killed in a road accident in September 1974. Later, the Goethe-Institut under Dr. Manfred Triesch offered the subcommittee the use of its premises as a meeting place, an offer most gratefully accepted because of its central location. This move also, of course, helped to foster the close relationships between the Goethe-Institut and German teachers which they and other LOTE teachers, too, see as an inherent part of their support system today.

One immediate focus of the German subcommittee’s attention was organising the Werwie Memorial Lecture, the first of which was held in 1974. Other activities undertaken included informing German teachers throughout Victoria of the sub-committee’s existence and surveying them for their interests and needs. There were also plans afoot to discuss with a representative of the ABC the provision of “German Educational Programmes”. Later in the year these discussions included a request that the ABC arrange to interview German exchange students, in Melbourne under the auspices of SAGSE, as part of the German programme.

Monash University German Department, especially Professor Leslie Bodi and Associate Professor Michael Clyne, were also keen to see German develop an image as a community language and for German teachers to be active in promoting their subject; they could foresee the developments that were afflicting all LOTEs by the end of the 1970s – a rapid decline in the numbers of senior students and an apparently increasing perception in the community at large (including many school administrators) that LOTEs were “useless” and did not deserve serious consideration in the curriculum changes that were underway. Professor Bodi was tireless in his efforts to make German teachers more “political” and, although the sub-committee was less than enthusiastic about his urgings, it did see an urgent and continuing need to support (often lonely) German teachers in their battles and to work hard to meet need.

I don’t remember when I joined the subcommittee, though Geoff thought it might have been in 1974 or 1975. I remember that he was still Chairman and Ruth Brass, Tibor Endrody and Roger Rivenell were among the other members; Ossy Greulich may also have been a member. Certainly

all of them, as well as Mathi Rivenell (now Gottlieb-Drucker), were very active in such regular events as the Author's Night, *Bunter Nachmittag* and Congress. At some stage after becoming a member of the subcommittee, I also became a member of the MLTAV Committee. I also became a member of its Current Issues subcommittee in which Ruben Ketchell and Lyn Martin were the leading lights. (Both were Education Department Language Consultants and thus were constantly aware of the issues involved in the promotion and defence of LOTEs). This was also the era of the development of the so-called "monolingual teachers' association": VILTA already existed, as did VATI, but others were also taking an independent role and suggestions were increasingly being made that all LOTEs should be represented by "monolingual" associations of equal status, with MLTAV as a kind of umbrella organization. My recollection is that similar noises, and perhaps movements, were also being made interstate. I found myself being increasingly convinced by the argument that MLTAV should no longer be a body de facto dominated by French and German teachers and feeling that the German Sub-Committee should aim to become an independent association of German teachers, with representatives on the MLTAV Committee, as was suggested for all the newer "monolingual" associations.

As might be expected, such changes did not occur quickly. In the meantime, Erika Stahr joined the subcommittee and by the end of 1977, Geoff decided that the pressure of other commitments meant he could no longer continue his membership. By now Peter Apelt and Peter Hubrich had leapt on to the Goethe-Institut's tandem and were riding madly in all directions ("madly" often seemed the operative word), but chiefly in that of promoting German and supporting the work of the German Sub-Committee and the suggested development of an independent association. I was elected Chairperson (?) – I'm not sure that word was "in" then – of the subcommittee to replace Geoff, and promptly took off with Ruth Brass on a Goethe-Institut Winterkurs in München and Berlin. In our absence, Erika ably managed things.

During 1978, we must have organized all the usual events: Congress, Author's Night, *Bunter Nachmittag*, as well as taking part in other activities in association with the Goethe-Institut and, presumably, Arno Becker. I assume, though I don't recollect the exact dates, that he must have already started as our first *Pädagogischer Berater*. I do remember that I found myself increasingly attending meeting and talking about the establishing of a German teachers' association. It was Michael Clyne who, inimitably, pointed out the value of having initials with rhythm or acrostic possibilities (I've always suspected him of inventing "LOTE" which sounded so right, it's now an indispensable part of our professional language). After some reflection "AGTV", with its hint at up-to-date audio-visual technology, came into being. The subcommittee now included Eva Conway, Brigitte Remmen and the Education Department German Consultant Milena Pellaghy, who went with it into 1979. Early that year, we decided to draw up a constitution and to present it to MLTAV, since that body was still undecided as to whether to accept its role as umbrella organisation.

In May 1979, after a hectic term of preparatory activity, a general meeting of German teachers was held at the Goethe-Institut. The new constitution for the Association of German Teachers of Victoria, modelled largely on the MLTAV constitution, was accepted by the meeting. Milena Pellaghy, was elected President of the new association.

(To mix my "literary" allusions, I rode off into the sunset of a forthcoming year as an International Teaching Fellow in Germany, with a satisfying feeling that my duty had been done.)

The rest, I hope, is already history, well-preserved in the Minutes, but more detail could undoubtedly be supplied by Geoff (Sunshine Secondary College) or Eva Conway.

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