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## Preservation for the Masses: The Idea of *Heimat* and the *Gesellschaft für Denkmalpflege* in the GDR.

When one thinks of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the terms *Heimat* and historical preservation are not two that immediately spring to mind. The enduring vision of the GDR has not been one of preserved medieval city centers, nor one of intense searches for the intimacy of local identity. Rather it has been one of anonymous rows of prefabricated apartment buildings punctuated by the occasional utopian attempt to create a new Socialist architecture, an architecture designed to flatten regional differences and erase local loyalties. This paper will briefly explore how *Heimat* and preservation interacted with each other in the GDR, in particular through the activities of the *Gesellschaft für Denkmalpflege*, or the Society for Historic Preservation.<sup>1</sup>

These preservation activists resisted, with some degree of success, attempts by the Socialist Unity Party (SED) and GDR to eliminate local identities or at least subsume them into a larger, national narrative of progressive socialism. In fact, by 1989, a great deal of volunteer preservation activity focused on areas that did not support a centralized vision of the GDR, occasionally resulting in confrontation with the SED's cultural policies. But the *Heimat* of 1989 was significantly different from the supposedly reactionary *Heimat* of the 1940s against which the SED continued to struggle up until the collapse of the GDR as East Germans reacted more against local anonymity than in favor of older class relations. By appropriating the dialogue of socialist cultural policies, members of the *Gesellschaft für Denkmalpflege* often found themselves at once praised for their cultural work while being punished for their love of their *Heimat*.

### Heimat and Preservation in the GDR

I want to offer up a very short history of historical preservation and *Heimat* activities in the GDR.<sup>2</sup> The two, of course, go hand in hand, as they have since the early 19th century, when state organized historical preservation and *Heimat* associations both arose as a consequence of phenomena such as nationalism and industrialism.<sup>3</sup> Preservation in Germany has traditionally

been a local or regional responsibility, organized first at the level of the principalities, kingdoms, or as in Prussia's case, provinces.<sup>4</sup> Remarkably, these royal state offices, or *Landesämter*, continued to work largely uninterrupted in the early days of the GDR and it was here that the coincidence of *Heimat* identity and preservation persisted. The offices from Saxony, Brandenburg and Saxony-Anhalt continued without interruption from the previous regime while the Mecklenburg office was forged out of the remains of the Pomeranian one. Only in Thuringia did preservation institutions have to be built from scratch. In 1952 these five *Länder* were dissolved in favor of 15 regions, or *Bezirke*, a move that in itself represented a deliberate attempt by the SED to undo the idea of there being a Prussia, a Saxony or a Mecklenburg. But the five old state offices were not broken up and divided among the *Bezirke*, leaving them intact as branch offices of a new central *Institut für Denkmalpflege* (Institute for Historic Preservation), thereby remaining as a continuing reminder of the existence of East Germany's former provinces.

Hans Nadler, the head of the Dresden office, even reached deep into Saxon history in defining his territory, considering it as «Saxony in its borders before the Vienna Congress», in other words the *Bezirke* of Dresden, Leipzig, Karl-Marx Stadt plus Cottbus.<sup>5</sup> While the old state offices were to be subordinate to the central office, the perseverance of tradition allowed the old offices to continue operating as they always had.<sup>6</sup> The influence of the former state offices was so great that in 1956 they caused the central office to collapse, giving the former state offices virtual autonomy until 1961 when they were finally reigned in under a stronger, central Institute for Historical Preservation.<sup>7</sup>

It was under Hans Nadler that early attempts to bring *Heimatpflege* and historical preservation went the furthest, with both ideas unified for a brief time under the *Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Heimatpflege* in Saxony.<sup>8</sup> Under Nadler, the Dresden preservation office held weekly slide show programs and excursions that made an unambiguous link between local identity and

local architecture. Fritz Löffler's 1956 book *Das Alte Dresden*, a sentimental look back at the city destroyed by Allied bombing, was both a runaway best seller as well as condemned by the Bezirk government. While it had gone through 11 printings by 1990, Löffler and Nadler were forced to give up their support of *Heimat* related preservation activities, especially as their lectures and slide show presentations grew increasingly critical of plans to rebuild Dresden.<sup>9</sup>

Elsewhere in Germany, *Heimat* stood on even shakier ground. It was generally condemned as reactionary for its alleged connections to the Nazi regime and because German socialists held that the continued division of the German nation had made it weak and susceptible to the predations of every politician from Metternich to Hitler. In the early 1950s, *Heimat* groups were forcibly dissolved or else forced to join the *Kulturbund*, the cultural arm of the SED and many East Germans, like their West German counterparts, preferred to look more towards their future than their destructive historical past.<sup>10</sup>

Despite this, in 1954, a Society for Nature and *Heimat* (*Gesellschaft für Natur und Heimat*) was formed, which had little ideological guidance until 1958, when two of its journals, the *Märkische* and *Sächsische Heimat*, ceased publication for a year while *Kulturbund* officials decided what was an acceptable part of the *Heimat* and what was not. The tone before and after 1958 is indicative of the change; in 1956 the *Märkische Heimat* praised the preservation of the baroque Wilhelm-Staab Straße in Potsdam but by 1959 the tone had shifted to Stalinstadt and the creation of a new, socialist *Heimat*.<sup>11</sup>

By the 1960s, the flavor of the Society for Nature and *Heimat* was one of complete subservience to SED ideology, that *Heimat* activities should be, «... striving to use the examples of *Heimat* histories to correctly demonstrate the laws of historical development and to give the people a true picture of the past that they are capable of new efforts for the building of socialism.»<sup>12</sup> The *Kulturbund's* preservation efforts of the 1950s were roundly condemned by the the Ministry of Culture and the SED. «The tendency towards overvaluing folk art and folk architecture (partially from the side of state preservation offices in the GDR and especially strongly represented in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the People's Republic of Poland) did not fail to influence active

participants of the *Kulturbund* in the area of historical preservation, rather led, paired with rudiments of *Heimattummelei* to excesses and unjustified historical preservation demands.»<sup>13</sup>

It was not a coincidence that this desire to subordinate local identities to a new, East German one happened at the same time that the 1961 Decree on the Preservation of Historical Monuments was handed down. As a result of this decree, the former *Landesämter* were not only weakened, but preservation funding was to be expressly dedicated to a central list of the most important national historical monuments – buildings and ensembles such as Sanssouci, Wörlitz, Platz der Akademie as well as a few inner cities in places like Görlitz, Meißen and Quedlinburg.<sup>14</sup>

By shifting preservation funding and priorities towards these national monuments, the SED discouraged local governments from undertaking preservation measures and prevented the five branch offices of the *Institut für Denkmalpflege* from preserving the shape and form of East Germany's *Altstädte*. Local and regional identities were to be submerged into a socialist one and Germans were to think of monuments in terms of pointing to national achievements rather than to local customs.

Not only was local initiative removed, but central funding was sharply reduced, and was to be used exclusively on monuments that had national importance. Nadler and Walter Ohle of the Schwerin office both protested these measures, with Nadler preferring to care for greater numbers of less important monuments than focusing on a few important ones.<sup>15</sup> By the early 1970s, both preservation and *Heimat* activities had reached a nadir, to the point that Ludwig Deiters, the Chief Conservator for the *Institut für Denkmalpflege* wrote a worrying memo to the Ministry of Culture that if the situation did not improve, his employees would likely quit, retire or defect.<sup>16</sup> There is no direct link between this decree and the building of the Berlin Wall the same year, but both actions can be seen as measures designed to reinforce loyalty to the state, with one measure being considerably less subtle than the other.

The preservation situation changed with the IX. *Parteitag*, which reflected Erich Honnecker's move away from the unrealizable economic goals of Walter Ulbricht towards a more modest variant of an East German welfare state.<sup>17</sup> After the IX. *Parteitag*, the Socialist *Heimat*

was to be considered part of the Socialist heritage, or *Erbe*. In SED ideology, heritage was the progressive element that could be extracted from German history and be integrated into the socialist state – which was distinctly different from *Tradition* which was the thread of socialist and proletariat struggle which had found its culmination in the GDR.<sup>18</sup> For the SED, this was to be another means of creating an emotional attachment between East German citizens and their state, binding them together with a common architectural heritage. This ultimately resulted in increased preservation funding, the creation of independent preservation construction capacity and the passage of a Historical Preservation Law in 1975.<sup>19</sup> Unlike the 1961 formulation, preservation was now to extend down to the district (*Kreis*) level, to motivate citizens to see local preservation as part of a successful national policy that bound all East Germans together in their common socialist *Heimat*.

### The Gesellschaft für Denkmalpflege

Citizen preservation activities, which had been sporadically coordinated by the *Kulturbund* since the mid 1960s were organized under a new *Gesellschaft für Denkmalpflege* (Society for Historic Preservation) in 1977, which was ostensibly to carry out the SED's preservation priorities in support of the state. Preservation was not supposed to be an act of nostalgia, but instead an act of faith in a state on its way to socialist victory, «Preservation of today is not a satisfaction of nostalgic desires for the apparently holy world of yesterday. It is a necessary means of making us conscious about our being and existence in time and the natural environment and as a lesson for overcoming the future.»<sup>20</sup>

Given that citizens were creating their own preservation initiatives anyway, one *Kulturbund* member stressed the importance of forming an official channel in order to maintain ideological control of the socialist *Heimat* line, that if the state and party did not get involved in supporting local efforts, the state would be confronted with «worse instances of individualism.»<sup>21</sup> The *Gesellschaft für Denkmalpflege* grew quickly from its inception; by time the GDR collapsed in 1989, there were over 7000 members in the society with active groups in every district.

Perhaps the most important undertaking of the *Ge-*

*sellschaft für Denkmalpflege* was the *Gepflegte Denkmale und Ihre Umgebung* competition, roughly translated as Caring for Monuments and their Environments, an outgrowth of the earlier *Schöner Unsre Städten und Gemeinden* (Beautify our Cities and Towns) movement. The competition had two main goals, from the SED's point of view. The first was to mobilize volunteer labor to acquire cheap labor for simple repairs while avoiding large investments to help citizen groups interested in undertaking more complex projects.<sup>22</sup>

If the reports from the competition are to be believed, between 1982 and 1987, more than 100,000 volunteers performed 55 million Marks worth of labor on East German monuments, meaning that in this sense, the competition was a success.<sup>23</sup> But citizen groups often wanted to do more than the state and party would allow them. The state wanted cheap labor to be performed on simple objects while volunteer groups wanted to supplement their work with construction resources and building materials, which were either unavailable or whose use was refused by local governments. In Potsdam, there was so much enthusiasm among citizens that Joachim Giersberg, then the chief preserver at the Sanssouci palace complex, complained to *Kulturbund* officials for them to find projects to that he wouldn't be constantly pestered by amateur preservationists.<sup>24</sup>

The other goal was to maintain ideological control over preservation, specifically to mobilize preservation to commemorate the history of the GDR, liberation from the Soviets and anti-fascist resistance. In this area, the GDR was not as successful as it hoped. While citizens groups took to the competition enthusiastically, government approval of their efforts was half hearted, mainly due to how monuments were being chosen. The goal may have been to get people more involved in local connections to the grand narrative of victorious socialism, but with most groups choosing to tend to their local medieval wall over their local Soviet tank, competition organizers were forced to fudge their numbers a bit in order to make it appear to the public that this competition was vigorously supporting the official version of history.

In 1984, when not enough work had been done on socialist monuments, the *Kulturbund* fulfilled their cultural-political goals by changing their definitions, claiming to have worked on 317 monuments of political hi-

story, which lumped together everything from historical trains to churches to socialist memorials, after it was clear that nobody was doing work in the category of GDR history. In 1989, the Plauen district proudly assembled photos of ten examples of work done to honor the 40th anniversary of the Soviet victory over «Hitler-fascism», but three photos clearly show the same people in the same clothes scrubbing memorial tablets giving them a trifecta for a couple hours work. The ten monuments amounted to 1000 Marks worth of work, which paled in comparison to the total of two million Marks work that was done in the Karl-Marx-Stadt region in 1987.<sup>25</sup>

In the Gera region, an astounding 71 out of 108 monuments there were dedicated to anti-fascist resistance in 1986, which looks impressive until one realizes that most of them were individual markers on the Buchenwald Death March. Most of the labor and value done in Gera actually centered on more traditional objects like the Chain Bridge in Weida or half timbered houses in the Stadtroda district.<sup>26</sup>

### Finding an East German Heimat

The question remains, then, what was going on in the rest of the *Gesellschaft für Denkmalpflege* at the ground level? Many members were surprisingly young and most of them believed that their local identity was in danger of becoming extinct, that their cities and towns were beginning to look suspiciously alike and that compared to Berlin, they were also looking increasingly neglected. The people who joined historical preservation societies in the 1970s and 1980s were not hold overs from previous generations of pre-war *Heimatlers*. At the first meeting of the Pfingstberg group in Potsdam, for example, the oldest participant was 36, the average age was 25 and the youngest member was 18.<sup>27</sup>

Of the 42 individuals given national awards for preservation work in 1988, their average age was 48 with some given out to members as young as 16.<sup>28</sup> These were all people who had grown up within the GDR and who had been educated in the socialist values of the SED. They were also people who did not have a nostalgia for a long lost *Heimat* of the past, but who were concerned that their *Heimat* of the present was being paved over by rows of the ubiquitous *Plattenbau* WBS 70 apartment blocks.

They had good reason to be concerned. While the

*Plattenbau* suburbs were being built, the inner cities had been neglected. Many buildings had not been repaired or renovated since before the Second World War. From the 1950s to the 1970s, most East Germans would not have noticed the neglect, apart from the fact that the buildings were becoming increasingly shabby. But by the 1980s, the threat had become dangerously acute.

A report assembled by the Dresden office of the *Institut für Denkmalpflege* stated that between 9 and 17% of the older buildings in Altenberg, Bautzen, Goerlitz, Meißen, Pirna and Zittau had been lost between 1950 and 1987, but that within the next five to seven years the cities would lose, on average, nearly 40% of their remaining older building stock, or 22 to 73 protected buildings per city.<sup>29</sup> Thus, many East Germans were reacting out of a real threat to the physical shape of their *Heimat* rather than out of a kitschy sentimentality.

Because these volunteer preservers had grown up in the GDR, their language indicates that many believed in the principles, if not the real, existing practice, of socialist democracy. The Pfingstberg group in Potsdam came together to rescue two 19th buildings, the Pomonatenpel, Schinkel's first architectural commission, and an Italianate imperial tea palace, mostly out of pure disgust that the buildings, which according to socialist principles belonged to them, had been neglected and vandalized.

Within a year, the group had grown to nearly 50 members who met every other weekend to clear away brush and overgrowth and to collect the stucco pieces that had been smashed and strewn about the garden lands by careless vandals and Soviet soldiers.<sup>30</sup>

In 1989 they even organized a successful benefit music festival that raised 11.000 Marks. The festival poster was an expression of the anger its members felt towards the state and SED; the poster showed four possible variants of the monument: the ruins of doing nothing, the *Plattenbau* alternative, a swipe at construction policy, the LMAA – or *Leck Mich Am Arsch* (kiss my ass) alternative of it being torn down and finally their alternative of a fully restored Pfingstberg.<sup>31</sup>

The affiliated ARGUS group of Potsdam held an exhibition denouncing the destruction of Dorutstraße and other buildings in Potsdam's baroque Second City Expansion (*Zweite Stadterweiterung*) but by doing so they believed that they were acting as a citizen group in the

corporate interest of their city in a way that corresponded with socialist principles, even though they knew that their opinions were unwanted by the party and the regional and city governments. This led to a conflicted relationship between state, party and citizen; the Pflingstberg group, for example, was at once featured in a *Kulturbund* article on preservation in Potsdam while being investigated by the Stasi for subversive tendencies.<sup>32</sup>

The policy of a Socialist *Heimat* that favored national monuments struck the smallest communities in the GDR the hardest and when the state's collapse seemed imminent, many communities formed groups to protest the decline of their architectural identity. Their protest often took shape in attacks on Berlin or funding being funneled away from small towns and rural communities to the larger cities. A group in Osterwieck, in the Halberstadt district, protested the fact that of the 60 million spent on preservation in the Kreis, only 150.000 Marks were allocated to them in 1990, despite the city being more architecturally intact than Halberstadt.<sup>33</sup>

This chain of accusations went up the chain, though, as *Gesellschaft für Denkmalpflege* members in Halberstadt protested to the Halle regional government that all the regional funding was going to Quedlinburg. The blame inevitably went all the way to the top and to Berlin, where most preservation funding had been concentrated, in particular on the Platz der Akademie, or Gendarmenmarkt, with its German and French Cathedrals, along with Schinkel's Schauspielhaus. One petitioner to the *Institut für Denkmalpflege* complained about the neglect of his parish church in Tuchen, which sat on a route used by convoys of Soviet armor. In response to his petitions to local officials, he was told, «The next time a Russian tank will be stopped, a cable will be thrown around the tower and given a good pull.» The petitioner complained that the state and church were conspiring to destroy part of the town's «*Heimatgefühl*» at Berlin's expense. «This is just the same for us as if the Berliners had to witness their Rotes Rathaus slowly but surely fall apart.»<sup>34</sup>

Even in Berlin, citizens took action to protect local identity. In the mid 1980s, the Berlin government restored the Husemannstraße in Prenzlauer Berg with shoddy work and a great deal of fanfare.<sup>35</sup> But the future of Prenzlauer Berg was ultimately that it should look like Marzahn, with the first buildings to fall lying a block

away from Käthe-Kollwitz-Platz in 1990. The whole block of buildings bordered by Kollwitz-, Sredzki-, Wörther- and Rykestraße were to be replaced by the standard WBS 70 apartment buildings. The Berlin office of the Institute for Historical Preservation objected, noting that while the Mitte and Friedrichshain parts of the city had been devastated by the Second World War, Prenzlauer Berg continued to reflect the influence of Hausmann, «which is important for the cultural and architectural history, for the development of urban and residential building design in the 19th century.»

Here, the citizens in the local residents' association protested and were able to fend off the «Plattenbauing» of their part of Berlin by appealing directly to Günther Schabowski, then the party secretary of Berlin. In this encounter, the changing nature of *Heimat* was clearly illustrated. To the bohemians and artists of Prenzlauer Berg, the older buildings represented an alternative to the sterile, standardized buildings of real existing socialism. But to Schabowski, the old rental barracks were not only representative of a failed, capitalist ideology what separated rich from poor, but because he had grown up in the misery of them, their architecture had a particularly repressive quality to it.<sup>36</sup>

This desire to retain a distinctive identity played an important role in citizen preservation activities. Many East Germans feared being subsumed into an anonymous state where every city looked like the other, that a person from one city would not know that one from any other, as a petitioner from Greifswald complained in a petition to the *Institut für Denkmalpflege* in 1989, responding to an IfD official opposing the destruction of some of the city's last historical buildings, that

«They are merely empty words, that you would never allow the face of a city like Greifswald to be further changed, to the point that it would be unrecognizable. With your words, 'An identification of the citizens with their city and their Heimat is not possible in this way.' We demand that everyone with responsibility clearly recognize the protection of the Altstadt.»<sup>37</sup>

Dresden, which had a long standing tradition of citizen involvement in preservation, often to the consternation of party officials, pronouncements by the New Forum made a direct link between the city's appearance and the identity of its inhabitants:

«The catastrophic condition, the accelerating decay of many of our historical cities and building monuments

force the consideration and determination of necessary measures that must happen immediately to protect our living environment, our cultural diversity and our identity.»<sup>38</sup>

In the end, the SED's policy of promoting a Socialist *Heimat* was a failure, especially in the eyes of those who were engaged in *Heimat* related activities themselves. By conflating the concept of a Socialist *Heimat* with the whole East German nation, the SED essentially made its own language meaningless to significant numbers of its own citizens by making the distinction between the local intimate environment and the larger national one irrelevant. While cultural and social organizations such as the *Kulturbund* were able to depict ideological successes to the public, the activities of the members directly involved in preservation often had less to do with reinforcing socialist themes than an assertion of local identity, one that was not reflective of a supposedly lost and sentimentalized past, but which was in opposition to the state and party's attempts to literally level any difference between East Germans.

## Abbreviations

BArch: Bundesarchiv

BLDAM: Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologisches Museum

BLHA: Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv

IUGR: Institut für Umweltgeschichte und Regionalentwicklung – please note that these files have since been handed over to the Bundesarchiv at Berlin-Lichterfelde.

SAPMO: Stiftung Archiv Partei und Massenorganisationen der DDR

## Notes

1 *Heimat* is roughly translated as «homeland» in English, but contains other meanings related to belonging to a particular place, including local customs, dialect and architecture, for example.

2 The most comprehensive look at early preservation efforts is Brandt 2003, *Geschichte der Denkmalpflege*. Two former East German preservers have also written overviews: Goralczyk 1996, *Städtebaulicher Denkmalschutz*, pp.300-315, and Magirius 2001, *Denkmalpflege in der DDR*, pp. 125-141.

3 The best book on this topic is Rudy Koshar's *Germany's Transient Pasts* which gives a good overview of historical preservation in Germany, as does Winfried Speitkamp's *Verwaltung der Geschichte*, which looks specifically at monuments created to foster national unity. Celia Applegate's *A Nation of Provincials* looks at how *Heimat* activities mediated phenomenon such as nationalism and industrialism in the Palatinate.

4 Kiesow 1989, *Einführung*, pp. 8-12.

5 Helbig 1997, *Nadler*, p. 47.

6 This phenomenon is too complex to state in detail here, but confusion over preservation funding allowed some preservers,

especially Hans Schubert in Halle, to tap into several sources for work on historical buildings simultaneously. If he was refused money from the Bezirk he would turn to the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of the Interior or to local governments without the other branches being aware of how he was getting the money.

7 Again, this would make for an interesting article, but Schubert in Halle and Walter Ohle in Schwerin refused to recognize the authority of the Institute of Historical Preservation and communicated only with the Ministry of Culture. In 1956 a report by the Zentrale Kommission für Staatliche Kontrolle found the Central Office to «be a waste of paperwork» which was interfering with the work of the regional offices. The reports can be found in BArch DC 1, Nr. 5154.

8 Kneschke 1951, *Deutsche Heimat*, p. 3.

9 BArch DC 1 5154, p. 378. «Tagesbericht – Aussprache im IfD, Außenstelle Dresden, mit Dr. Nadler, Dr. Löffler am 7. November 1956.» DR 1 7907, p. 141. «Bericht über die Verhandlungen mit der Außenstelle Dresden des Instituts für Denkmalpflege.»

10 Heider 1993, *Politik, Kultur, Kulturbund*, pp. 154-156, and Schulmeister 1977, *Neue Kultur*, p. 202.

11 Mielke 1955, *Wiederaufbau Potsdams*, pp. 5-8, Bartsch 1960, *Stalinstadt*, pp. 213-222. BLHA C Rep 533, No. 413. «Entwurf einer Grundkonzeption der Zeitschrift die ‚Märkische Heimat‘» 23.07.1958, from Alfred Schultz, secretary of the Gesellschaft für Natur und Heimat in Potsdam Bezirk.

12 BArch SAPMO DY 27 Nr. 2677. «Grundsätze für die fachliche und kulturpolitische Tätigkeit der auf dem Gebiet Heimatgeschichte und Ortschronik arbeitenden Fachgruppen der Natur und Heimatfreunde.» by Dr. W. Gutsche, about 1960.

13 BLDAM IfD Report: «Einleitende Bemerkungen zum Gespräch mit dem Minister für Kultur, Genossen Bentzien am 22.11.1965» *Heimattümelei* can be roughly translated as sentimental, i.e. reactionary, attachement to the German *Heimat*.

14 BArch SAPMO DY 30/IV 2/9.06 Nr. 98. Letter Pischner to Wagner, «Kurze Information zur Denkmalpflege in der DDR», 22.2.1961.

15 BArch DR 1 8024, 70 and 72-73. Aktenvermerk 18.9.1963 by A. Wüsten, «Beratung mit der Arbeitsstelle Schwerin des Instituts für Denkmalpflege aufgrund der am 18.9.63 erfolgten Festlegungen im Ministerium für Kultur» and Aktenvermerk 23.9.1963 by Wüsten, «Beratung am 23.9.1963 im Institut für Denkmalpflege Arbeitsstelle Dresden.»

16 BLDAM Letters from Deiters to Thiele, on 13. and 14. April 1972.

17 Wiesz 1997, *German Communism*, pp. 374-375. *Protokoll des IX. Parteitages der SED. Vol. 2*, Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1976, pp. 246-248.

18 *Die SED und das kulturelle Erbe 1986*, pp. 7-8.

19 The preservation construction capacity was in the form of a *VEB Denkmalpflege*, or a state firm for preservation. The 1975 preservation law was actually created over the objections of preservers, who had been working on a new preservation decree to try and undo the worst effects of the 1961 decree and were upset that writing a law would further delay reform. The fact that the law was passed in the same year as the European Preservation Year was simply coincidence.

20 IUGR Lothar Hiersemann, «Einige theoretische, geschichtliche und praktische Gesichtspunkte zur Denkmalpflegearbeit im Bezirk Leipzig.» 1. Bezirksfachtagung Denkmalpflege, 24-25.9.1977, p. 5.

21 BLDAM Protokoll über die Tagung des Rates für Denkmalpflege am 19.10.1982 in Berlin.

22 BArch DR 1 7336, Letter from Halle *Bezirk* cultural officials to members of the *Kulturbund* and National Front. 3.1.1983.

23 IUGR *Gepflegte Denkmale und ihre Umgebung*, report from 31.3.1988.

24 BLHA C Rep. 533, No. 196. Letter from Siegfried Schubert to *Kulturbund* der DDR Bundessekretariat Abteilung Information/Organisation, 19.2.1988.

25 IUGR «Aktivitäten anlässlich des 40. Jahrestages des Sieges über den Hitlerfaschismus und der Befreiung des deutschen Volkes.» in Plauen, 1989.

- 26 IUGR *Kulturbund* der DDR Bezirkssekretariat Gera, «Übersicht wichtiger Ergebnisse in der Weiterführung der Initiative 'Gepflegte Denkmale und ihre Umgebung» 23.1.1985.
- 27 Documents from Pflingstberg Verein e.V. in Potsdam.
- 28 IUGR *Gepflegte Denkmale und ihre Umgebung*, the statistics come from «Auszeichnungsvorschlag» (commendation recommendation) forms sent from the regional leadership to the national GfD organization in 1988. There was no information about age or party affiliation from the Leipzig or Frankfurt an der Oder reports.
- 29 BLDAM «Zur Denkmalpflege in der DDR» o. D. 1990 – note attached 21.5.90.
- 30 If you go to the Pflingstberg, Russian graffiti can still be found in some interior rooms. One likely reason the building was allowed to decay was its location; from the tower a visitor would have a commanding view of the extensive Soviet barracks complex at Potsdam.
- 31 Documents from Pflingstberg Verein e. V. in Potsdam.
- 32 Meinel 1991, *Mit tschekistischem Gruß*, pp. 86-91. Eschenburg 1989, *Pflingstberg*, pp. 16-23.
- 33 BLDAM Letter: «Rettet unsere Stadt – Offener Brief der unterzeichneten Bürger von Osterwieck an alle, die es angeht!», Dezember 1989.
- 34 BLDAM Eingabe 219 from Jürgen Lange – Kirche in Tüchen, 01.08.1989.
- 35 Ladd 1997, *Ghosts of Berlin*, pp. 107-108.
- 36 BLDAM Eingabe 223 from WBA 65 to IfD Central Office, 4.3.1989 and BLDAM «Gutachterliche Stellungnahme» from IfD Berlin, 31.3.1989. Also: Blankenburg 2001, *Rykestraße*, pp. 253-261.
- 37 BLDAM Letter from Kathrin Teichert to IfD Central Office, 6.11.1989.
- 38 BLDAM «Grundsatzklärung der Arbeitsgruppe 'Stadterhaltung und Denkmalpflege' im NEUEN FORUM Dresden», undated.
- Kiesow 1989, *Einführung*,  
Gottfried Kiesow, *Einführung in der Denkmalpflege*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchhandlung, 1989.
- Kneschke 1951, *Deutsche Heimat*,  
Karl Kneschke, *Von der Liebe zur Deutschen Heimat*, in: *Mitteilungen des Landesamtes für Volkskunde und Denkmalpflege*, vol.1, no. 1, 1951.
- Ladd 1997, *Ghosts of Berlin*,  
Brian Ladd, *Ghosts of Berlin. Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 1997.
- Magirus 2001, *Denkmalpflege in der DDR*,  
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## Summary

This paper explores the links between historical preservation and *Heimat* in the German Democratic Republic. How did East Germans view their *Heimat* through the lens of their historical landscape, how did this change and what effect did party and government policy in the GDR have on this? Early citizen preservation activities were brought under the aegis of the *Kulturbund*, where older concepts of a German *Heimat* persisted until the late 1950s when the SED initiated an effort to promote a new „socialist *Heimat*“ over the more traditional one. This hurt citizen preservation activities until the early 1970s when SED policy towards the cultural *Erbe*, or heritage, changed. In 1977 a *Gesellschaft für Denkmalpflege* within the *Kulturbund* was formed to promote preservation activities, so long as they reinforced ideological goals. But despite attempts by the SED and GDR to create and impose a „socialist *Heimat*“ the focused on recent historical events, most society members devoted their attention to older objects. As more East German became involved in volunteer preservation activities, they voiced a growing dissatisfaction with construction and preservation policies which were eliminating the individual character of cities and towns throughout the GDR while funneling resources towards Berlin.

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