

# DEATH IN EAST GERMANY, 1945–1990

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# DEATH IN EAST GERMANY, 1945–1990



Felix Robin Schulz



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For Otto and Lotti Löffler



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Death in our time is regaining visibility – it might even never have truly lost it – but I still contend that much of sepulchral culture, such as the systems for disposing of the dead, remains just beyond the everyday gaze. For the historian this adds a substantial problem as this distance translates generally in dispersed archival holdings – both geographically as well as thematically speaking. This in turn makes the historical study of death, dying and disposal complex, thus explaining why much still remains to be studied for the two Germanies (and beyond). The insights that can be gained about a country through examining its sepulchral culture – about its politics, culture and society – outweigh the logistical difficulties. Moreover, the historical developments and what inelegantly might be called the structure of the sepulchral culture that operates behind the mere statistics of death reveal a lot, especially if a comparative approach is utilized to show similarities and differences. For example, the death rates in the GDR meant that from the late 1950s onwards, the state had to dispose of about 227,000 corpses a year. This was quite a challenge for the socialist state and its planned economy, and this often showed in the experience of its citizens, yet the GDR (as well as Hungary) always looked enviously at the successful sepulchral reform in Czechoslovakia. This resulting volume concentrates on the administrative side that shaped the sepulchral culture of East Germany; the personal experience of the bereaved are all too often not recorded in the state and church archives.

What can be found in these pages has been the work of more than a decade. Over that period, I learned a lot about death on an abstract as well as a personal level. Over that time I received much goodwill, and I am indebted to a great number of people. The people I tested most were the numerous archivists and librarians in East Germany, who vehemently insisted that very little could be found in their holdings on such a ‘sad’ topic, yet they patiently allowed me to order numerous files and books. This work would not have been possible without their work and dedication. Enthusiastic guidance and, in times of need, help was always provided by Richard Bessel and Corey Ross. Working at Lancaster and Newcastle University led to the encounter of many extraordinarily dedicated colleagues and friends. Without their generosity of spirit this volume would have been weaker. Corinna M. Peniston-Bird not only read and commented on numerous drafts of

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## GLOSSARY

AFD	<i>Arbeitskreis Friedhof und Denkmal</i> (Working Group Cemetery and Memorial, Kassel), the West German think-tank, advisory body and industry pressure group on sepulchral culture.
Communality	Used in the sense of solidarity (as it is in the OED), but also specifically referring to the connotations of the German word <i>Gemeinsamkeit</i> .
<i>Ehrenfriedhöfe</i>	Special cemeteries or parts of cemeteries to honour specific groups such as party members or victims of oppression; alternatively sometimes the terms <i>Ehrenhain</i> or <i>Ehrenfeld</i> are used.
<i>Grabfeld</i>	Grave field, subsection of a cemetery, containing individual grave plots, normally separated by wider paths, greenery, or trees.
IfK	<i>Institut für Kommunalwirtschaft</i> , set up in 1962 in Dresden, a think-tank for all issues concerning the municipal services, including cemetery administration and burial service providers. In those fields it mirrored the work of the AFD.
Inhumation	This term is used to differentiate this form of disposal from the other main type of disposal: to differentiate the burial of the whole body in the ground (inhumation, as in <i>Erdbeigängnis</i> ) from the burial of the cremains (urn burial).
<i>Kissensteine</i> <i>Leitbetrieb</i>	Flat headstones. Leading concern, normally the largest VEB in a region, charged with coordinating best practice and implementing policies.
<i>Musterfriedhofsordnung</i>	Standard regulation for cemeteries, generally issued as guidelines prescribing the usage of cemetery space and the design of gravestones and plots. Some sections can

	be compulsory. The first regulation for Germany was issued in 1922.
Propagation	Concerted popularization and promotion of ideas through agitation, propaganda, regulations and incentives.
<i>Reihengrabstelle</i>	Allocated burial plot within the grid system of normal grave fields, normally for one person. Traditionally situated in the less easily accessible centre of a grave field.
Region	I use region as a translation of the East German word <i>Bezirk</i> . The regions replaced the German states in 1952 and the regional administration of state and party (BT/RdB) were the highest level of administration below the national level. In some histories of the GDR the word is translated as 'district', which I use for the German word <i>Kreis</i> (the middle level of administration), since the word denotes a smaller geographical area.
SED	<i>Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands</i> , the Socialist Unity Party of Germany.
UGA	<i>Urnengemeinschaftsanlage</i> , an anonymous communal area for the internment of urns.
VEB (st) (k) (b)	<i>Volkseigener Betrieb</i> (People's Own Concern), generally nationalized company, sometimes organized in combines. Control can be exerted from different levels of the administration, at municipal (st), district (k), or regional (b) level. Considered to be <i>Volkseigentum</i> (people's property).
<i>Wahlgrab</i>	A grave plot that can be freely chosen, normally for two inhumations. Traditionally on the more prestigious outer perimeter of a grave field. An <i>Urnenwahlgrab</i> is a burial plot for up to four urns. A <i>Familienwahlgrab</i> is a larger plot for up to six members of a family.

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## INTRODUCTION



On 27 March 2002, Charlotte Ulbricht died. Her final resting place was not, as was usual, next to her husband, the first post-war leader of the GDR, Walter Ulbricht. He had been buried in the Special Cemetery for Socialists (*Gedenkstätte der Sozialisten*) alongside communist heroes Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and Ernst Thälmann, as well as fellow SED politicians such as Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl, in Berlin-Friedrichsfelde. Since its reopening in January 1951 the Friedrichsfelde site had become effectively the GDR's Valhalla – not only for its politicians but also for writers and poets such as Erich Weinert, Friedrich Wolf, or Willi Bredel. However, the ashes of the 'Queen Mum of Communism', as *Der Spiegel* referred to Lotte Ulbricht, found their last resting place in an anonymous communal area for the internment of urns (*Urnengemeinschaftsanlage* or UGA) at the farthest end of the Berlin-Weißensee cemetery.<sup>1</sup> Her ashes were buried in a place that the workers of this ordinary Berlin cemetery refer to as 'the cauldron' or 'dell' (*Der Kessel*). Much was made in the media of the fact that she actually did not want to be buried anywhere else, and that her explicit wishes had been followed both in the ceremony as well as in the choice of her burial site.<sup>2</sup> Despite the humble choice, this socialist funeral was unusual in character: falling somewhere in between being a private ceremony and, in a sense, the state occasion of a defunct regime – one might possibly even call it the last state funeral of the GDR. About two hundred people had gathered to pay their respects to one of the last remaining icons of German communism, amongst them the last leader of the GDR, Egon Krenz (on day release from prison).<sup>3</sup> As well as former comrades and officials there were also friends, family and party members. Few fitted in the ceremony

room. The eulogy was delivered, as Lotte Ulbricht had requested, by Ursula Benjamin.<sup>4</sup> The whole ceremony, despite private grief and the undoubted feeling of loss, therefore had a deeply political character. Thereafter, the urn was carried to the *Urnengemeinschaft* where, to the sounds of music from a portable CD player and towards the end a single trumpeter intoning ‘The Little Trumpeter’, her remains were lowered into the ground.

1.

Of all our comrades  
none was to us as dear and good  
as our little trumpeter,  
of jolly red guard stock;  
as our little trumpeter,  
of jolly red guard stock.

...

3.

Then came an enemy bullet  
during a cheerful play;  
with a contented smile  
our little trumpeter, he fell;  
with a contented smile  
our little trumpeter, he fell.

4.

We took pickaxe and spade  
and dug him a grave in the morning,  
and those who loved him most,  
they lowered him in silence;  
and those who love him most,  
They lowered him in silence.

...

6.

You did not fall in vain,  
your work we have now completed.  
We built the state,  
That brought us all freedom and peace.  
Therefore, let the shout be heard with honour:  
Long lives the workingman’s might.<sup>5</sup>

As at other GDR funerals, this song was chosen because of its evident revolutionary zeal and the sentiment celebrating a ‘fulfilled’ life: that is, a life devoted to the advancement of socialism. This was precisely what Lotte Ulbricht’s funeral intended to highlight, a point that Egon Krenz’s final farewell accentuated. He culminated with a socialist rallying cry: ‘We know that the decline of the GDR was not the death of the socialist idea. The socialist idea lives on!’<sup>6</sup> The whole ceremony ended, in archetypical GDR fashion, with the collective and defiant singing of the *Internationale*.

In many ways this funeral signifies more than a ritual accompanying the death of an iconic figure of German communism. It was the ‘surreal’ conclusion to a state and political system, in the way that Erich Honecker’s death in 1994, in far-away Chile, had not been. Honecker’s death could not function as a true last act, or apotheosis, of the ‘collective memory’ because of its timing and location. The director of Lotte Ulbricht’s funeral, overwhelmed by media interest, felt forced to issue a press release; even that hints, albeit very implicitly and reverberating with that peculiarly bureaucratic German, at something definitive:

Lotte Ulbricht was buried in a cobalt-blue decorated urn [*Schmuckurne*] with an ash capsule that, depending on the soil conditions, will have dissolved completely and without any residue, in accordance with the law, in a maximum of fifteen years.<sup>7</sup>

By which time the remains will have become one with the surrounding soil; the physical remains of Charlotte Ulbricht will finally have become inseparable from the anonymous mass urn grave, and a remnant of the GDR will have gone. In the face of on-going waves of *Ostalgie*, in which views seem to have become either markedly less differentiated or highly polarized, it is timely to explore the development of the sepulchral culture of the GDR.<sup>8</sup>

Germany's rural conservation movement of the early twentieth century articulated wonderfully the extent to which cultural manifestations in response to death, dying and disposal have been employed as an index of the cultural development of an era:

At all times and with all peoples, the human race has seen it as a solemn and inescapable duty to attain a decent burial for the deceased. The cult of death, although differing in its forms, is, therefore, always an interesting expression of the culture of the specific era. In a certain sense the burial sites are thus a measure of the artistic culture of an era, similar in a way to human dwellings and their interior decoration. They [burial sites] in future will continue to bear loud and clear witness to the outlook of those who brought them into being.<sup>9</sup>

Traditionally, such fields as archaeology, anthropology, or ethnography have scrutinized the social codes of death.<sup>10</sup> It took time for historians to decipher the social, economic, political and cultural responses to death. Most famously Philippe Ariès's work on death sought to chart the evolution of Western attitude to death, in order to learn more about the individual in his or her time.<sup>11</sup>

East Germany between 1949 and 1989 was a state that had officially adopted materialism as the underpinning of state ideology. The materialist interpretation of death is one that is as straightforward as it is technical. Death is the end of one's existence as well as the subsequent state of non-existence. Death is thus the unequivocal end. This means that, unlike in Christian theology, materialism views life not as a path – and death as redemption through a 'better' afterlife. To materialists life is a task, a challenge and ultimately an end in itself:

For we adherents of the materialistic view of life (*Weltanschauung*), life is not a mere 'transit point' on the way to that 'better world' and death is not 'a redemption'. We understand the world and life as a task.<sup>12</sup>

Hence, the ideal of a productive life, in a political as well as a material sense, became the central point of reference and was actively promoted according to the ideals of socialist humanism. The productive individual, striving to better one's society, became the ideal to which one should aspire – what Brecht tried to reveal as the 'Good Person' (*der gute Mensch*).<sup>13</sup> In this secular philosophical system, a general tribute to examples of positive conduct in society had to substitute for the concept of God honouring good deeds and punishing misdemeanours. However, this intense orientation to life meant that the GDR ultimately had a problematic relationship to death as the antithesis of life.

Charlotte Ulbricht's funeral epitomizes the GDR's official attitude to death in terms of burial place, cremation as the preferred form of disposal, the music played, the tone and content of the graveside eulogy, and even the type of urn used; all have their roots in the GDR's sepulchral culture. While individual elements have a longer proletarian or socialist tradition, often stretching back to the mid or late nineteenth century, these elements only came together in the second half of the twentieth century to form the phenotype of a modern socialist secular funeral. Consequently, one is faced with a complex ideological as well as political response to death. This, in turn, formed a unique sepulchral culture. Analysis of sepulchral culture discloses much about a society and its epoch.<sup>14</sup>

Contemporary perceptions of death in past societies are either too romanticized, sometimes to an astonishing degree, or they follow Ariès's thesis that death has become less present.<sup>15</sup> These misconceptions construct a nostalgic sepulchral culture. There is a further distortion: the longing to escape the 'evils' of modern society, understood as the fragmentation or individualization of life concomitant with the realities of urban life. This expresses itself in the desire to transcend the 'relentless' advance of technology and bureaucracy into every aspect of death in all its inevitability.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, these forces have played a significant role in the development of the sepulchral culture of modernity via such phenomena as the emergence and professionalization of undertaking and later, fully fledged funeral directing. Much more research at the comparative, macro as well as the micro level is needed to provide a more coherent picture of how death has been understood and evolved in the past. Only in this way can one trace how societies responded to death: the roles played by religion, politics, ideology and economics; the balance struck between individuals and social convention; and the forces that dominated, and when.

In order fully to comprehend the 'culture of death' of a specific era, there is a clear need for a fairly broad foundation, ideally covering the spectrum from the interpretations of the meaning of death to the choice of funeral rites, on the individual level, and from the organization of the system of disposal to the prevailing design of cemetery space, on the societal. The preoccupations of these two frames of analysis are all too often diametrically opposed: personal grief and loss tends to collide with public concerns about health, order and regulation. The compulsory cremation that operates in places like Shanghai exemplifies this opposition. The case of the cemetery in the modern era further illustrates this relationship, since the cemetery itself can be defined as being both a public and a private space. Julie Rugg rightly emphasizes this as a key issue in defining the nature of cemetery space, even if her remarks primarily concern the ownership patterns of cemeteries in the Anglo-Saxon world:

Cemetery space can be regarded as sacred, in that it acts as a focus for pilgrimage of friends and family and is protected from activities deemed 'disrespectful'. However, cemeteries are principally secular spaces: ownership is almost always by municipal authorities or private sector concerns. The sites are intended to serve the whole community, and in doing so are

closely integrated in to community history. The sites are able to carry multiple social and political meanings.<sup>17</sup>

The existence of church cemeteries in Germany does not fundamentally alter that relationship, because church cemeteries are, despite their ownership, essentially public spaces serving the community. A cemetery is a public space used for the disposal of a community's deceased, yet the burial site also exists as a private space for mourning and commemoration. Moreover, the addition of sites of public commemoration such as war memorials can add further public and thus political significance.<sup>18</sup> However, added significance does not end there; even the burial of certain individuals can complicate the balance between the private and the public function of the local cemetery. The ceremony for Lotte Ulbricht makes this point emphatically. This private farewell was held in a public space with the press in attendance. The entire ceremony had clear political overtones, and yet for some friends and family members the ceremony was primarily a means to express their shared grief. Yet it was the explicit political overtones and the quaint socialist idiosyncrasies that provoked most comment.<sup>19</sup> This volume will certainly draw upon the kitsch in socialist sepulchral culture, but it aims to go deeper, by eschewing antiquarianism in favour of an exploration of the sepulchral culture of East Germany in its fullness.

Since 1990, the GDR's sepulchral culture has attracted academic interest on particular details, but all too often with limited parameters and rigid assumptions, rather than on the wider cultural responses to death.<sup>20</sup> In 2009 Jane Redlin (who first studied funerals in East Berlin back in the mid 1980s) published her very detailed ethnographic study of the link between the public state funeral and the private funeral in the GDR. While the volume is hugely insightful and very detailed and rightly stresses the importance of state funerals as precursors and models, it suffers from the lack of a historical perspective that acknowledges change over time as well as from overemphasizing the normative nature of public funerals celebrating the death of party members in the tradition of the funerals of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. That view overlooks the real diversity of ritual (see chapter six).<sup>21</sup> Barbara Happe stresses the totalitarian nature of the GDR and thus has primarily focused much of her work on GDR cemeteries on the two extremes of the UGA and anonymous burial, whilst only indirectly including cremation.<sup>22</sup> Norbert Fischer addressed cremation and the role and design of cemeteries in Germany before 1945 and contemporary issues and trends, such as virtual commemoration.<sup>23</sup> Gerti Maria Hoffjan published on socialist cemetery culture, though without the historian's appetite for sources.<sup>24</sup> Rituals and liturgy have attracted more scholarly attention. Albeit from their own largely religious perspective, Klemens Richter, Ansgar Franz and Jan Hermelink have studied the effect of GDR policy on church rituals and the extent of the proliferation of secular ceremonies.<sup>25</sup> With the exceptions of Monica Black's wonderful work on Berlin<sup>26</sup> and the work of Jane Redlin, systematic attempts to unlock the subject have been limited to shorter pieces often coming from a

specific ideological angle.<sup>27</sup> In addition, there remain those writing on sepulchral culture in Germany, such as Fischer, Happe and Sörries, who are involved with the work of the professional association and think-tank *Arbeitskreis Friedhof und Denkmal* (AFD). It was that institution that shaped West German sepulchral culture after 1945. Hence those who formulate policy and try to steer the public tastes are close to those who write the history of sepulchral culture.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, discussions of the GDR's sepulchral culture have also opened the troublesome debate on the extent to which the GDR's political *Weltanschauung* determined its sepulchral culture.<sup>29</sup>

In general these contributions have tended to overemphasize individual peculiarities of the GDR's sepulchral culture – such as cremation rates in east German cities and rates of secular funerals in Berlin. This tendency is not unique to the literature dealing with death, dying and disposal in the GDR – individual areas, such as cemetery design, see a disproportionate scholarly attention.<sup>30</sup> An approach stressing the ideological eccentricities of the GDR's sepulchral culture is an all too tempting alternative to serious comparative contextualization. Research into GDR history is further complicated by the fragmented methodology.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, it is no surprise that the historical literature on German sepulchral culture remains rather patchy, and the period after 1945 remains relatively neglected.<sup>32</sup> This leads to a curious paradox: diversity of experience has not engendered a fuller and richer literature but its opposite, a dearth.

One reason for this historiographical neglect is that increasingly during the twentieth century sepulchral culture became subject to political intervention – especially under the influence of fascism (Sabine Behrenbeck) and communism (Catherine Merridale) – ultimately making its analysis more demanding.<sup>33</sup> Thomas Lindenberger rightly identifies the key problem of writing a social history of the GDR as establishing the degree and scope of politicization of everyday life.<sup>34</sup> The historiography of the GDR has lingered over the question of the centre's domination of all aspects of life at the periphery (or the state's encroachment into the individual's private life).<sup>35</sup> Fundamentally this hinges on whether the party and government simply enforced their ideals through the application of political power (as in a *durchmachete Gesellschaft*) or if there is, to any degree, an *interaction* between party and society as the concept of a consensus dictatorship (*Konsensdiktatur* – Robert Gellately) implied.<sup>36</sup> The latter view sees governance, even in a Leninist-Marxist state, more in terms of social practice (*Herrschaft als Soziale Praxis*) and thereby acknowledges both mechanisms of negotiation and limits of power.<sup>37</sup> This concept affords a less rigid base than Jürgen Kocka's initial thesis of a *durchherrschte Gesellschaft*.<sup>38</sup> The revised concept of a *durchherrschte Gesellschaft*, therefore, allows more room for exceptions, subtle differences, interaction, complaints and shifts, whilst it avoids the notions that this was a state that offered real freedom or actual pluralism.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, this view of the GDR also avoids the superficiality perception dangers of merely calling it a totalitarian state.<sup>40</sup>

Differentiation, despite its inherent hazard of relativization of 'structural certainties', has to underpin a more precise understanding of the history of GDR



**Figure 0.1** View along the main avenue of the *Südfriedhof* Leipzig. The graves in the middle and the memorial at the far end are the remaining pieces of the SED's design.

and its sepulchral culture.<sup>41</sup> The evidence is not always unambiguous, but it is revealing. Hence, conscious of the dangers of relativization, this volume examines death from a broader perspective, to comprehend its peculiarities, limitations and organization, comparatively situated in relation to the sepulchral culture of other countries.<sup>42</sup> This has necessitated a focus on 'normal' deaths; in other words, those that can be classified as 'cases of normal or everyday mortality', specifically excluding suicide, the victims of the death penalty, those who died attempting to cross the Iron Curtain, fatalities in accidents or commemoration of the war dead.<sup>43</sup>

An overview of long-term regional, national and transnational processes that have resulted in the making of modern German sepulchral culture is provided in the first chapter. Such comparisons disclose the intertwined and overlapping developments of sepulchral culture in the last two hundred years and its gradualism. The subsequent chapters address individual elements of sepulchral culture: the organization of disposal, cemeteries, cremation, the UGA and ritual formation. To do justice to the diverse nature of this interplay of scales was necessary given my aspiration to write a comprehensive history of the GDR's sepulchral culture and to satisfy my explanatory ambition.

The present research into the GDR's sepulchral culture began nearly exactly a decade after 3 October 1990. In those ten years considerable change had taken

place, not least with regard to the physical evidence that the GDR had left in its cemeteries.<sup>44</sup> The first alterations normally concerned the more overt expressions of socialism, such as memorials to ‘victims of fascism’ (*Opfer des Faschismus/OdF*) and other politically charged spaces – most famously the splendid main path leading towards the Leipzig crematorium.<sup>45</sup>

Inscriptions were modified and they were subjected to other ‘metamorphoses’, for example the *OdF* memorial in the city of Gotha (Thuringia) had its inscription changed from the standard phrase: ‘Honour and eternal memory to our comrades, companions and friends – For Peace and Socialism’ to a simple and less challenging: ‘The Dead admonish’.<sup>46</sup> These were usually specific and politically motivated alterations. More significant in regard to this work, and less politically motivated, was the second wave of change that accompanied Western investment and management addressing the state of dilapidation of East German cemeteries. Restoration aimed at creating decent useable public spaces often necessitated serious alterations in the physical fabric of cemeteries. This, combined with legislation that allowed for the rapid re-use of burial plots, typically between fifteen and twenty-five years, meant that East German cemeteries have changed a great deal since 1990. Adding a further difficulty for the researcher in Germany, more so than in Britain (due to the abandoning of re-use of graves around 1850), German cemeteries are public landscapes in constant flux. This analysis still relies on material and impressions collected during numerous personal visits to all varieties of cemeteries in East Germany, from small Church-administered rural cemeteries in rural Mecklenburg to the largest municipal cemetery of the former GDR in Leipzig, from the cemetery of Schwerin opened in 1975, designed in strict accordance to socialist ideas about cemetery layout, to the *Stadtgottesacker* of Halle/Saale established in 1529 imitating an Italian arcade cemetery.

In order to avoid a regional distortion or a rural/urban imbalance I have consulted a wide array of state, regional, institutional and local archives, in conjunction with the archives of the churches. However, there were some lacunae in the historical record. Key papers of the Ministry of Regional Industry (*Ministerium für Bezirksgeleitete Industrie*), the body that finally received the authority to coordinate issues relating to funerals in the GDR in the 1980s, were inaccessible because of fungal growth and may be beyond recovery.<sup>47</sup> The files of the IfK were in private custody and those deposited in the *Stadtarchiv* Dresden had not been catalogued, and despite extensive negotiations access could not be gained – hence I had to rely on IfK papers deposited in other sections of the *Stadtarchiv* Dresden and other repositories. Church archives mostly applied a strict interpretation of the thirty-year rule. This meant that few internal church materials pertaining to the period after 1973 could be accessed, with the exception of purely administrative and synod files.

Ultimately, this evidence points to the existence of a specific East German sepulchral culture not reducible to the transnational march of modernity. It was, as the existing scholarship suggests, formed at least partly by ideological considerations. Clear ideas of how death, dying and disposal should be dealt

with in a socialist environment existed and at very least informed deliberations. Nevertheless, there were other more powerful influences, such as the obstructive powers of communal and institutional traditions. The significance of these is evident in the tenacity of rural customs and in the persistence of the ideals of the late nineteenth-century cemetery reform movement that permeated institutions on both sides of the Iron Curtain. In the 1980s, ideological disenchantment began to play an important role, when more people decided to opt for silent funerals, rejecting secular, socialist, or religious alternatives. Ultimately, though, it was economics and the drive for efficiency that would prove to be decisive in shaping East German sepulchral culture. However, despite this specificity, it is also evident that many transformations of the sepulchral culture of the GDR mirrored those in other industrialized countries.<sup>48</sup> This underlines that German history, even that of the Germanies after 1945, should not be written 'as if it were quite unlike the history of anywhere else', since only then can we do justice to true peculiarities such as Lotte Ulbricht's funeral – with all its choices and political posturing.<sup>49</sup>

## Notes

1. A. Smolczyk, 'Ortstermin: Begräbnis der Witwe des ehemaligen Staatschefs Walter Ulbricht in Berlin', *Der Spiegel*, No. 17, 22 April 2002, 86; other newspapers also used variations, the left-leaning newspaper *taz* referred to her as the 'Queen Mum of the GDR' as well as the 'Queen Mum of the Majakowskirings' (the infamous secluded living quarter of the East German Politburo). The UGA is also called the 'collective for the hereafter' (*Kollektiv fürs Jenseits*).
2. B. Bollwahn de Paez Casanova, 'Kampfgruß an Queen Mum der DDR', *taz*, No. 6729, 19 April 2002, 6.
3. Lotte Ulbricht was even celebrated posthumously in print. A vivid example is a piece entitled 'Extremely Diligent', in the left wing paper *Junge Welt*, a year later, on the day that would have been her hundredth birthday: N. Podewin, 'Extrem Tüchtig', *Junge Welt*, 19 April 2003, 15. The author framed the piece in the form of a glowing recollection of her life and her achievements and finished with a polemic on the fact that a federal agency had confiscated the €3657 that were left after the funeral in an act of victor's justice to pay for the renovation of the house that had been given to her by the GDR.
4. Bollwahn de Paez Casanova, 'Queen Mum der DDR', 6; P. Ahne, 'Rote Nelken für Lotte Ulbricht', *Berliner Zeitung*, 19 April 2002, 19. Ursula Benjamin is the widow of Michael Benjamin, a prominent member of the Communist Platform and son of Hilde Benjamin the infamous former GDR secretary of justice.
5. BLHA Potsdam, Rep. 531, KL Brandenburg, No. 1295: *Kondolenzkarten*. This is the FDGB version.
6. 'Wir wissen, dass der Niedergang der DDR nicht der Tod der sozialistischen Idee war. Die sozialistische Idee lebt weiter.' This was apparently followed by an outraged shout by Krenz that those who gave their life for the GDR did not need to be ashamed: Ahne, 'Rote Nelken', 19.
7. *Der Spiegel*, 22 April 2002, 86.
8. While the term 'sepulchral culture' is infrequently used in English I find it invaluable. In the

- context of this volume it offers a usefully comprehensive description of the political, social, economic and cultural response to the human condition that is death: from the transportation of the corpse via burial to the design of cemeteries and the evolution of funeral rites. On the neologism *Ostalgie* see the work of the late D. Berdahl, ““(N)Ostalgie” for the Present: Memory, Longing and East German Things’, *Ethnos*, 64:2 (1999), 192–211.
9. ‘Zur Friedhofsanlage’ in *Blätter für lippische Heimatkunde*, No. 2 (April), 1914, 22.
  10. Compare the interesting, but methodologically problematic, R. Habenstein and W. Lamers, *Funeral Customs the World Over* (Milwaukee: Bulfín, 1974).
  11. P. Ariès, *Western Attitudes to Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present* (London and New York: Marion Boyars, 1976); P. Ariès, *The Hour of our Death* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983).
  12. G. Freidank, *Alles hat am Ende sich gelohnt – Material für weltliche Trauerfeiern* (Leipzig: Zentralhaus für Kulturarbeit der DDR, 1975), 4.
  13. B. Brecht, *Der Gute Mensch von Sezuan* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1982).
  14. For example the innovative essay collection: J. Whaley (ed.), *Mirrors of Mortality* (London: Europa, 1981); or a revealing monograph: G. Laderman, *The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes towards Death, 1789–1883* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); or on reading cemetery spaces in the modern context: B. Mann, ‘Modernism and the Zionist Uncanny: Reading the Old Cemetery in Tel Aviv’, *Representation – Special Issue: Grounds for Remembering*, 69 (2000), 63–95; the most outstanding example will be G. Gorer, *Death, Grief and Mourning in Contemporary Britain* (London: Cresset, 1965).
  15. N. Fischer, *Wie wir unter die Erde kommen – Sterben und Tod zwischen Trauer und Tod* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1997), 18; T. Walter, ‘La Visibilité des Morts dans la Société Moderne’, in *Proceedings of the Dying and Death in 18th–21st century Europe International Conference* (Cluj-Napoca: Accent, 2009), 11–18.
  16. There is a sizeable literature, but an insightful place to start is R. Kegan, *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994).
  17. J. Rugg, ‘Defining the Place of Burial: What Makes a Cemetery a Cemetery’, *Mortality*, 5:3 (2000), 259.
  18. C. Tacke, *Denkmal im Sozialen Raum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1995).
  19. ‘Whenever a piece of the GDR is set to rest, the East revives’ (*Immer wenn ein Stück DDR zu Grabe getragen wird, lebt der Osten wieder auf*): Bollwahn de Paez Casanova, ‘Queen Mum der DDR’, 6.
  20. Reiner Sörries, as chairman of the AFD e. V. (Working Group Cemetery and Memorial, Kassel), the German think-tank, advisory body and industry pressure group, has, as his predecessor Helmut Boehlke, continued to publish on sepulchral culture. For example: R. Sörries (ed.), *Großes Lexikon der Bestattungs- und Friedhofskultur – Wörterbuch zur Sepulchralkultur, Vol.1* (Braunschweig: Thalacker, 2002). In the context of the GDR most insightful is R. Sörries, *Ruhe sanft: Kulturgeschichte des Friedhofs* (Kevelaer: Butzon and Bercker, 2009), 188–97.
  21. J. Redlin, *Säkulare Totenrituale: Totenehrung, Staatsbegräbnis und private Bestattung in der DDR* (Münster: Waxmann, 2009).
  22. B. Happe, ‘Anonyme Bestattung in Deutschland – Veränderungen in der zeitgenössischen Bestattungs- und Erinnerungskultur’, *Friedhof und Denkmal*, 41:2 (1996), 40–52; B. Happe, ‘Urnenengemeinschaftsanlagen: Zur Friedhofs- und Bestattungskultur in der DDR’, *Deutschlandarchiv*, 3 (2001), 436–46; B. Happe, ‘Die sozialistische Reform der Friedhofs- und Bestattungskultur in der DDR – Urnenengemeinschaftsanlagen’, in R. Sörries (ed.), *Vom Reichsauschuß zur Arbeitsgemeinschaft Friedhof und Denkmal* (Kassel: AFD, 2002), 185–213; the clearest expression of her view is to be found in: B. Happe, ‘Grabmalgestaltung in der DDR – Der erzwungene Abschied vom persönlichen Grabmal’, in AFD (ed.), *Grabkultur in Deutschland: Geschichte der Grabmäler* (Berlin: Reimer, 2009), 189–214.
  23. N. Fischer, *Vom Gottesacker zum Krematorium – Eine Sozialgeschichte der Friedhöfe in Deutschland* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1996); N. Fischer, ‘Leitlinien einer neuen Kultur im Umgang

- mit Tod und Trauer', *Friedhof und Denkmal*, 44 (1999), 3–9; N. Fischer, *Geschichte des Todes in der Neuzeit* (Erfurt: Sutton, 2002).
24. G. Hoffjan, 'Existierte eine spezifische realsozialistische Friedhofgestaltung in der DDR und was waren ihre Charakteristik?', in R. Sörries (ed.), *Vom Reichsausschuss zur AFD*, 171–84.
  25. K. Richter, 'Der Umgang mit Tod und Trauer in den Bestattungsriten der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik', in H. Becker, B. Einig and P.-O. Ulrich, *Im Angesicht des Todes – Ein interdisziplinäres Kompendium I, Pietas Liturgica 3* (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1987), 229–58 (Richter is also extremely useful as a good introduction into the secondary literature on socialist rituals); J. Hermelink, 'Die weltliche Bestattung und ihre kirchliche Konkurrenz – Überlegung zur Kasualpraxis in Ostdeutschland', *Jahrbuch für Liturgik und Hymnologie*, 39 (2000), 65–86; A. Franz, "'Alles hat am Ende sich gelohnt'? – Christliche Begräbnisliturgie zwischen kirchlicher Tradition und säkularen Riten', *Liturgisches Jahrbuch*, 51:4 (2001), 190–211.
  26. M. Black, *Death in Berlin: From Weimar to Divided Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
  27. O. Groschopp, 'Weltliche Trauerkultur in der DDR – Toten- und Bestattungsrituale in der politischen Symbolik des DDR-Systems', *Sozialwissenschaftliche Informationen (SOWI)*, 29:2 (2000), 109–10 (the author is very active in the freethinker movement promoting secular ceremonies); quite outstanding is a journalistic piece: C. Geißler, 'Unter der Erde der DDR', in K. Michel, *Todesbilder – Kursbuch 114* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1993), 79–90.
  28. See: B. Leisner, 'Zu diesem Buch', in AFD (ed.), *Grabkultur in Deutschland*, 9–10.
  29. R. Schelenz and S. Meinel, "'Sozialistische" Friedhofskultur in der DDR?', *Friedhof und Denkmal*, 41:1 (1996), 12–15.
  30. See for example: J. Curl, *The Victorian Celebration of Death* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000).
  31. H. Gumbert, Conference Report: 'Writing East German History: What Difference Does the Cultural Turn Make?', *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* (Washington D.C.), 44 (2009), 137–41; S. Moranda, 'Towards a More Holistic History? Historians and East German Everyday Life', *Social History*, 35:3 (2010), 330–38.
  32. Fischer, *Vom Gottesacker zum Krematorium*; H. Winter, *Die Architektur der Krematorien im Deutschen Reich 1878–1918* (Dettelbach: Röhl, 2001). There are exceptions such as: AFD (ed.), *Raum für Tote – Die Geschichte der Friedhöfe von den Gräberstraßen der Römerzeit bis zur anonymen Bestattung* (Braunschweig: Thalacker, 2003) but that volume gives only a limited overview, and cannot offer the depth that would be required in order to address sepulchral culture as a whole adequately.
  33. For a vivid example, see: EZA Berlin, 4/563: Bundesministerium für Gesamtdeutsche Fragen, *Pseudosakrale Staatsakte in der Sowjetzone: Namesweihen, Jugendweihe, Ebeweihe, Grabweihe*, pamphlet (1958).
  34. T. Lindenberger, 'Alltagsgeschichte und ihr möglicher Beitrag zu einer Gesellschaftsgeschichte', in R. Bessel and M. Jessen (eds), *Die Grenzen der Diktatur – Staat und Gesellschaft in der DDR* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1996), 312–21.
  35. M. Fulbrook, 'New Historikerstreit, Missed Opportunity or New Beginning?', *German History*, 12:2 (1994), 203–7.
  36. K. Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat: Partei, Staat, und Gesellschaft 1949–1990* (Munich: C. Hanser, 1998); see also the debate in: P. Corner (ed.), *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes. Fascism, Nazism, Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
  37. A. Lütcke (ed.), *Herrschaft als soziale Praxis: Historische und sozial-anthropologische Studien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1991), 9–51, especially 49–51.
  38. J. Kocka, 'Eine durchherrschte Gesellschaft', in H. Kaelble, J. Kocka and H. Zwahr, *Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994), 552.
  39. The term *durchherrschte Gesellschaft* is extremely difficult to translate, since it links certain theoretical ideas about governance (mainly those of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu) with