



While strolling through Potsdam I dived into the old city hall and found this GDR slogan on the wall of the entrance hall (“Culture is every second heartbeat of our lives”). Hans Marchwitza (1904-1965) was a local communist hero, a fighter on many of the 20th century fronts, and a proletarian writer as well, as [Wikipedia](#) explains. The German branch of this online encyclopedia was recently accused of uncritically copy-pasting entire book shelves of GDR reference literature so I wonder what is true or not of this entry).

What I liked about the sentence (apart from it being a slogan), is that it reflects, or should we say anticipate, the totalizing nature of culture in our time. There is surprisingly little controversial about this statement. What it points at is the extraordinary importance, or fear, amongst communist bureaucrats for the power of culture, be it literature, music, theatre or film. From them, there is nothing trivial about culture. Instead there is Ehrfurcht, respect for its power. This is what, of course, lacks in any of today’s politicians (most notably Australia’s prime minister Howard). Kultur ist kaltgestellt, neutralized, and this is why it can spread so fast, and on such a massive scale. Will the enigma of culture ever return? Here in Germany it could, and the survival of this communist propaganda slogan, placed so neatly on the wall, in this modernist font, is a prove of it.