The Human Rights Dictatorship

Ned Richardson-Little exposes the forgotten history of human rights in the German Democratic Republic, placing the history of the Cold War, Eastern European dissidents and the revolutions of 1989 in a new light. By demonstrating how even a communist dictatorship could imagine itself to be a champion of human rights, this book challenges popular narratives on the fall of the Berlin Wall and illustrates how notions of human rights evolved in the Cold War as they were re-imagined in East Germany by both dissidents and state officials. Ultimately, the fight for human rights in East Germany was part of a global battle in the post-war era over competing conceptions of what human rights meant. Nonetheless, the collapse of dictatorship in East Germany did not end this conflict, as citizens had to choose for themselves what kind of human rights would follow in its wake.

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Human Rights in History

Edited by
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The Human Rights Dictatorship

Socialism, Global Solidarity and Revolution in East Germany

Ned Richardson-Little

University of Erfurt
In memory of
a humanist
Prof. Kurt Sittmann
and
a warrior-scholar
Dr. Prince Kadar White
Contents

Acknowledgements page viii
List of Abbreviations xi

Introduction: The Exploitation of Man by Man Has Been Abolished! 1
1 Creating a Human Rights Dictatorship, 1945–1956 16
2 Inventing Socialist Human Rights, 1953–1966 53
6 Revolutions Won and Lost, 1989–1990 222
Conclusion: Erasures and Rediscoveries 255

Archival Sources 268
Index 269

vii
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x Acknowledgements

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Abbreviations

BEK  Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR
CDU  Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands
CSU  Christlich-Soziale Union (Bavaria)
FRG  Federal Republic of Germany
GDR  German Democratic Republic
GfM  Gesellschaft für Menschenrechte – Society for the Protection of Human Rights
ICCPR International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IFM  Initiative für Frieden und Menschenrechte (Initiative for Peace and Human Rights)
KMR  DDR-Komitee für Menschenrechte (GDR-Committee for Human Rights, successor to KSM)
KPD  Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)
KSM  Komitee zum Schutze der Menschenrechte (Committee for the Protection of Human Rights)
NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization
SDP  Sozialdemokratische Partei (Social Democratic Party, GDR)
SED  Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party)
SPD  Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party, FRG)
UDHR Universal Declaration of Human Rights
USSR Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WCC  World Council of Churches