MEMORIALIZING THE GDR

Monuments and Memory after 1989

Anna Saunders
# Contents

*List of Illustrations* x  
*Acknowledgements* xii  
*List of Abbreviations and Key Terms* xiv

## Introduction

- Memory Debates and the Built Environment since Unification 5  
- 'Working Through' the GDR Past 10  
- A Shifting Memorial Culture 15

## Chapter 1. Memory, Monuments and Memorialization

- Notions of, and Problems with, Collective Forms of Memory 27  
- Monuments, Memorials and 'Memory Markers' 36

## Chapter 2. Socialist Icons: From Heroes to Villains?

- The Role of Monuments in the GDR 57  
- Transition: October 1989 to October 1990 62  
- Eastern Berlin I: From Unification to Lenin’s Fall 65  
- Eastern Berlin II: From the Commission’s Recommendations to Thälmann’s Survival 72  
- Demolition Debates beyond Berlin: Chemnitz’s ‘Nischel’ 77  
- Modification: A Modern Makeover for Halle’s Flag Monument 85  
- Relocation: Finding a New Home for Leipzig’s Karl Marx Relief 91  
- Conclusion: The Ever-Present Narrative of 1989 95
Chapter 3.  Soviet Special Camps: Reassessing a Repressed Past 110
  Special Camps and Interrogation Centres 112
  Commemoration without Monumentalization: Representing Silenced Memories at Buchenwald 117
  Emotive Symbolism and Reconciliation at Fünfeichen 128
  Breaking the Silence: Historical Revision in Greifswald 135
  A Monument without Answers? Haftstätte Prenzlauer Allee, Berlin 140
  Conclusion: Revoking Silence 147

Chapter 4.  17 June 1953 Uprisings: Remembering a Failed Revolution 159
  Conflicting Interpretations in Berlin: Katharina Karrenberg, Wolfgang Rüppel and Beyond 165
  Remembering Hennigsdorf's Steelworkers 174
  Tank Tracks in Leipzig 178
  Tank Tracks in Dresden 181
  Conclusion: Diverse Remembrance 185

Chapter 5.  The Berlin Wall: Historical Document, Tourist Magnet or Urban Eyesore? 194
  The Early Post-Wende Years: From Commodification to Preservation 197
  Übergänge: Remembering Border Crossings and Transitions 201
  Bernauer Straße Wall Memorial (Part I): Peripheral Remembrance? 207
  Victimhood and Visibility I: Remembering Child Victims in Treptow 214
  Victimhood and Visibility II: White Crosses in Duplicate 218
  Victimhood and Visibility III: The Freedom Memorial, Checkpoint Charlie 224
  Towards Decentralized Remembrance: The Gesamtkonzept and Bernauer Straße (Part II) 231
  Conclusion: Shifting Remembrance 236

Chapter 6.  Remembering the 'Peaceful Revolution' and German Unity 251
  Building National Memory? Berlin's Freedom and Unity Monument 256
  Remembering the Leipzig Demonstrations: The Nikolaikirchhof and Beyond 268
Schwerin's Controversial Remembrance of the Round Table 277
Swords into Ploughshares: Dessau's Peace Bell 281
Transforming the Fortunes of Magdeburg? The Development of a Citizens' Monument 286
A Truly Democratic Project? Plauen's Wende Monument 291
Conclusion: The Concrete Legacy of the Peaceful Revolution 296

Conclusion. Beyond the Palimpsest 314
What Remains? 315
Dominant Narratives 317
Dialogic Remembrance and Entangled Memories 322

Bibliography 329
Index 351