



Born in the GDR: Living in the Shadow of the Wall

By Hester Vaizey

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The changes that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 were particularly dramatic for East Germans. With the German Democratic Republic effectively taken over by West Germany in the reunification process, nothing in their lives was immune from change and upheaval: from the way they voted, the newspapers they read, to the brand of butter they bought.

But what was it really like to go from living under communism one minute, to capitalism the next? What did the East Germans make of capitalism? And how do they remember the GDR today? Are their memories dominated by fear and loathing of the Stasi state, or do they look back with a measure of fondness and regret on a world of guaranteed employment and a relatively low cost of living?

This is the story of eight citizens of the former German Democratic Republic, and how these dramatic changes affected them. All of the people in the book were born in East Germany after the Berlin Wall was put up in August 1961, so they knew nothing other than living in a socialist system when the GDR fell apart. Their stories provide a fascinating insight not only into everyday life in East Germany, but about how this now-vanished state is remembered today, a quarter of a century after the fall of the Wall.

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Editorial Review

Review

She has delivered a fascinating glimpse into the lives of others Daily Mail Hester Vaizey's is the sort of scholarship I relish: detailed, plentiful new material to satisfy historians and sociologists, but respectful too of a more general readership Rebecca K Morrison, Independent Vaizey carefully guides the reader through all her interviews by providing essential historical contexts without contradicting the memories of the interviewees. Indeed, her method of balancing personal accounts with historical insights is one of the main strengths of *Born in the GDR*. German History Above all, her honesty, both regarding her methodology and her reactions to the interviewees' stories, is refreshing The Writer's Drawer A carefully-researched exploration of a disappeared society and the complexities of transition from one set of social and economic expectations to another. This is a thorough and sympathetic account of Germany's Unification generation. Anne McElvoy, The Economist, and author of *The Saddled Cow: East Germany's Life and Legacy* *Born in the GDR* is a helpful contribution to an understanding of the complexities of life then and its consequences now. Ulrike Zitzlsperger, Times Higher Education

About the Author

Hester Vaizey is a University Lecturer in Modern German History and a Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge. Her first book, *Surviving Hitler's War: Family Life in Germany 1939-1948*, was shortlisted for the Women's History Network Prize and won the Fraenkel Prize for Contemporary History.

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