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

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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