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The Magic Lantern: The Revolution Of '89 Witnessed In Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, And Prague



Synopsis

The Magic Lantern is one of those rare books that define a historic moment, written by a brilliant witness who was also a participant in epochal events. Whether covering Poland's first free parliamentary elections "in which Solidarity found itself in the position of trying to limit the scope of its victory" or sitting in at the meetings of an unlikely coalition of bohemian intellectuals and Catholic clerics orchestrating the liberation of Czechoslovakia, Garton Ash writes with enormous sympathy and power.

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Customer Reviews

Ash, through his incomparable access to the leaders of the resistance movements in Warsaw, Prague, Budapest, and Berlin, provides a very well rendered and beautifully detailed account of his observations in those cities, and he seems to have been in all the right places at all the right time. He also includes a very insightful and well informed interpretation of the long range implications of what he observed. It must be remembered, as he points out himself, that what he saw was only a tiny portion of all that went on, and the observations of many other people who were on the scene have to be put together to form the whole picture.

Few people can be as lucky as Timothy Garton Ash. I've read his book "We The People" which I believe to be the same with this book. The book is divided into chapters concerning the "revolutions" (as Ash calls them) in Poland, Hungary, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia. In the last 2 chapters,

Ash makes a very good analysis and comparison of these 4 revolutions. If you would like to get a comprehensive idea about how these revolutions in these 4 states came out, then this book is absolutely for you. The book has certain details which cannot be found in any other book.

Reading this book, you feel history come alive as never before. The writing itself is kind of journalistic, which is not my favorite style (I much prefer the literary masters), but it works. It was definitely a great time to be alive in Eastern Europe.

This is a behind the scenes look at some of the most inspiring movements of our generation. You cannot read the pages of this book and not feel the importance of the moment and the power of the ideas. This book gives you a better understand of the climate at the time of the fall of the eastern block and the fall of communism in Eastern Europe.

It's dated -- written in the spring of 1990 -- but it's great first-hand coverage of the events of 1989 in Warsaw, Budapest, E. Berlin, and Prague. The Prague narrative is the best, as you see how a group of artists and dissidents went from discussing protest actions to discovering, somewhat to their own amazement, that the government was peacefully falling into their hands.

An often eye-witness account of the democratic revolutions of 1989 in Poland, Hungary, East Germany and Czechoslovakia. The writing is a little uneven but it provides an excellent inside account of exceptional historic events. Ash left me with a very strong sense of the contingent and uncertain nature of the revolutions. Miscommunications, errors, spur-of-the-moment statements, all combined to move events forward much, much more quickly than any of the participants expected. Yet these succeeded in being peaceful revolutions, driven by a deliberate choice by their leaders to take and hold the moral high ground. There was a corresponding inner collapse by the existing authorities, who really had nothing to which they themselves were committed or could fight to defend. I found this an inspiring tonic after reading Richard Evans' grim "The Third Reich in Power". Ash has left me feeling much more optimistic about human nature!

Ash is like a fly on the wall during all of the revolutions in Eastern Europe. I have no idea how he managed to be present at crucial planning meetings and to be a witness to events, but I have enjoyed reading his book!

I've never read anything quite like this. The author was present in several eastern European countries for the fall of the iron curtain and the ad hoc formation of new governments. He gives the flavor of the crowds, the leaders, the rooms in which they met, the fear and exhilaration, as well as the practical problems, the arguments and solutions offered. It's amazing journalism about an amazing time, and especially interesting perhaps now, as Russia flexes itself again.

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