



1989 The Berlin Wall: My Part In Its Downfall

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It was an event that changed history, bringing the Cold War to a sudden, unexpected end. Peter Millar was in the middle of it, literally: caught in Checkpoint Charlie between bemused East German border guards and drunk western revellers prematurely celebrating the end of an era. For over a decade Millar had been living not just in East Berlin but also Warsaw and Moscow. In this engaging, garrulous, bibulous memoir we follow him on a journey into the heart of Cold War Europe. From the hitchhiking trip that helped him discover a secret path into a career in journalism, through the carousing bars of Fleet Street in the seventies, to the East Berlin corner pub with its eclectic cast of customers who taught him the truth about living on the wrong side of the Wall. We relive the night it all disintegrated, gain insight into the domino effect that swept through Eastern Europe in its aftermath and find out how the author felt as he opened the Stasi files and discovered which of his friends had - or had not - been spying on him.

1989 The Berlin Wall: My Part In Its Downfall Details

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Author : Peter Millar

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Martin says

I can't believe it's been over a quarter century since the Berlin Wall came down. Millar has written an excellent memoir about his life as a journalist in Eastern Europe in the decade leading up to 1989. Essential reading for a glimpse of everyday life east of the wall

Rachel Pollock says

The narrative voice is steeped in that slappable puffery to which the hyperprivileged Oxbridge grad is so often prone, with a heaping helping of the 70s self-styled pseudo-badass to boot. However, the chapters including his eyewitness account of the fall of the DDR were worth the copious eyeroll of all that proceeded them. Put on your hipwaders and persevere.

Allan Shepherd says

A fantastic book from a unique perspective about the human face of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The author manages to explain the end of the Cold War, as nations fall around him. Hidden within the pages are real human stories about families separated based on Post Code boundaries. I really recommend this book to others, the Author has a really enjoyable writing style based on his career as a journalist for Reuters, The Sunday Telegraph and The Sunday Times.

Phil Truslove says

An excellent read!

Clare Harvey says

Great insights and v. readable style.

Heather G says

Fascinating

A truly interesting look at the end of an era from the view of a journalist. Compelling doesn't begin to describe it.

Michael Macdonald says

Delightful recent history

Well written story of the rapid decline of Stalinist Communism, Millar records the strains of East Germany's dictatorship dictatorship with its impact on ordinary life. Questioning but warning that British government has its failings and lust for power.

Angela says

A bit of a fluff piece about the waning days of the Cold War in the 1980s. Has a bit of Ostalgie (nostalgia for East Germany), and lots of gonzo gonzo journalism, where the author is very much the protagonist. This is normally fine - except I didn't particularly like Peter Millar's good ol' boy Oxbridge nostalgia about a time when journalists were hard-drinking hacks, cynical and educated and macho blech. There is a moment when one journalist is described as seeking assistants in young "Oxbridge graduettes". *Graduettes?* Really?

The gonzo put a bit of a dent in my enjoyment of the book, but late Cold War stuff *is* super interesting. Esp. Berlin Wall stuff, my yen of the week/month. To his credit, Millar's description of the night the wall fell is fizzy with energy and awe and lots of fun.

Here's your legendary David Hasselhoff performance chaser.

Denise says

The Berlin Wall was built in 1961, the year my mother was born, and both my parents grew up in the GDR. While I'm too young to actually remember much about it (a few months shy of my 3rd birthday in November 1989), I too was born there, and whenever I read a book like this it reminds me of how very different my life today would be if the wall hadn't come down when it did. Working as a foreign correspondent in Berlin and Moscow throughout the 80s, Peter Millar witnessed both life in the GDR and USSR as well as the collapse of both up close. An intriguing and insightful account.

Philip Whiteland says

Walls Have Eyes

An excellent story, as would be expected from a journalist with Mr. Millar's experience. The story of how the Berlin Wall came to be, what it was like for those living in its shadow and how it came to fall, is enough in itself, but we also get snapshots of the fall of the other Eastern Bloc states as well as an insight into the world of journalism and newspapers in the 1980s. A terrific read, strongly recommended.

David Canford says

Having visited Berlin recently and experienced the intriguing place it is I wanted to read about what it was like before the wall came down - when two very different systems lived side by side but didn't interact. This book provides a fascinating account of what it was like and the Alice in Wonderland logic of the communist regime. An excellent account of a pivotal moment in our recent history; the miracle of freedom triumphing over oppression.

Rachel says

I heard him read from this book recently, and he is an entertaining speaker and writer. This covered his years as a reporter for Reuters and later the Sunday Telegraph and Times. He was based in East Berlin, Warsaw and Moscow during the 80's and indeed made it back to Berlin on the evening the wall came down. An intriguing and very readable account of a tumultuous year and journalists treading a line between fact and fiction.

Vivek says

I read it just before I visited Berlin for the first time in my life. It provided a wonderful and personal account of life behind the Iron curtain while at the same time highlighting the import political events during the cold war period that had an effect on the Berlin walls collapse. Would recommend it to anyone planning to visit Berlin.

Jim says

A rather light-hearted account of a journalist's life behind the Iron Curtain before the Wall came down. You feel that there could be a hefty, scholarly history about the Cold War written by this author, but unfortunately - or fortunately - he went down the pub instead of writing it and wrote this instead. Journalists wear their scholastic abilities lightly (until the day they become a news anchor when they seem desperate to inform everyone of what a serious investigative journalist they are) and Millar doesn't allow them much of a say in this book. In my opinion, that's what made it a good read. If I want serious history I'll read Simon Sebag Montefiore - or at least I'm sure I will, one day. This book, as the title suggests, is much more of a Brysonesque account of history as it happened to someone who was there to witness it in all its messy happenstance.

Christine Parkinson says

I did enjoy this book. It gave a good insight into what life was like in Germany living with the Berlin wall and also when the wall came down. I did find that it had quite a lot of political references which are necessary due to the nature of the story but which I found a bit much for my personal taste. This is not a slight on the book and the 3 stars is not as much a reflection on the book but my personal enjoyment.

