



Dissolution

Charles S. Maier

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Against the backdrop of one of the great transformations of our century, the sudden and unexpected fall of communism as a ruling system, Charles Maier recounts the history and demise of East Germany. *Dissolution* is his poignant, analytically provocative account of the decline and fall of the late German Democratic Republic.

This book explains the powerful causes for the disintegration of German communism as it constructs the complex history of the GDR. Maier looks at the turning points in East Germany's forty-year history and at the mix of coercion and consent by which the regime functioned. He analyzes the GDR as it evolved from the purges of the 1950s to the peace movements and emerging youth culture of the 1980s, and then turns his attention to charges of Stasi collaboration that surfaced after 1989. In the context of describing the larger collapse of communism, Maier analyzes German elements that had counterparts throughout the Soviet bloc, including its systemic and eventually terminal economic crisis, corruption and privilege in the SED, the influence of the Stasi and the plight of intellectuals and writers, and the slow loss of confidence on the part of the ruling elite. He then discusses the mass protests and proliferation of dissident groups in 1989, the collapse of the ruling party, and the troubled aftermath of unification.

Dissolution is the first book that spans the communist collapse and the ensuing process of unification, and that draws on newly available archival documents from the last phases of the GDR, including Stasi reports, transcripts of Politburo and Central Committee debates, and papers from the Economic Planning Commission, the Council of Ministers, and the office files of key party officials. This book is further bolstered by Maier's extensive knowledge of European history and the Cold War, his personal observations and conversations with East Germans during the country's dramatic transition, and memoirs and other eyewitness accounts published during the four-decade history of the GDR.

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