



A Hole in the Heart of the World: Being Jewish in Eastern Europe

Jonathan Kaufman

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Spanning more than half a century, from the years preceding the Holocaust through the Nazi defeat, the rise of Communism, and the fall of the Berlin Wall on to the present day, here are the remarkable stories of five families whose very survival tells us much about the fragile culture of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. A West German cantor and concentration camp survivor crosses the Berlin Wall to minister to Jews in East Berlin. A prominent Berlin family clings to its Communist ideals even after the end of the Cold War. In Hungary a rabbi turns dissident when Communist-controlled Jewish leaders dismiss him. Young citizens of Prague, Warsaw, and Budapest find renewed faith as they uncover a secret heritage buried in the rubble of war. A Polish Catholic woman, a friend to many Jews, discovers a liberating truth about her heritage. Weaving together these stories of old and young, disenchanted and enthusiastic, this luminous cultural group portrait takes us deep into the still-dark soul of Eastern Europe, where we emerge-profoundly moved, and cautiously optimistic about the religious rebirth that is taking place there.

- Author is the recipient of the National Jewish Book Award and the Present Tense/American Jewish Committee Award

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