

# A Father and Son in East Germany in the Winter of 1978: A Journey of Discovery and Remembrance

In the winter of 1978, my father and I embarked on a journey to East Germany, a country that had been closed off to us for decades. My father, a former East German citizen who had fled to the West in the 1950s, was eager to revisit his homeland and reconnect with his family and friends. For me, this was an opportunity to explore my own family history and to better understand the country that my father had left behind.

We arrived in Berlin on a cold, gray day. The city was divided in two by the Berlin Wall, a concrete barrier that symbolized the political and ideological divide between East and West. We crossed into East Berlin through Checkpoint Charlie, the most famous crossing point between the two halves of the city. As we drove through the streets, I was struck by the drabness and uniformity of the buildings. There were few cars on the road, and the people we saw seemed to be going about their business with a sense of resignation.



## "A German Mind": Father and son, East Germany in winter 1978 by Theodor Morten

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Screen Reader : Supported  
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We made our way to my father's old neighborhood, where he had grown up before the war. The streets were narrow and lined with aging apartment buildings. My father pointed out the building where he had lived, and we went inside. The apartment was small and cramped, but it was filled with memories for my father. He showed me the room where he had slept as a child, and the window where he had watched the Allied bombers fly overhead during the war.

We spent the next few days exploring East Berlin. We visited the Brandenburg Gate, the Reichstag, and the East Side Gallery, a section of the Berlin Wall that had been covered in graffiti after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. We also met with some of my father's old friends and family members. They were all happy to see him, and they shared their stories of life in East Germany. I was struck by their resilience and their optimism. Despite the hardships they had endured, they were proud of their country and hopeful for the future.

One of the most moving experiences of our trip was a visit to the Stasi Museum, a former East German secret police headquarters. The museum dokumentiert the Stasi's vast network of surveillance and repression. We learned about the Stasi's methods of intimidation and torture, and we saw the files that they had kept on ordinary citizens. It was a chilling reminder of the dangers of totalitarianism.

As our trip came to an end, I felt a sense of gratitude for the opportunity to have experienced East Germany firsthand. I had learned so much about

my family history and about the country that my father had left behind. I had also come to appreciate the resilience and optimism of the East German people. Despite the hardships they had endured, they had never given up hope for a better future.

The winter of 1978 was a time of great change in the world. The Cold War was still raging, but there were signs that the thaw was beginning. Just a few months after our trip, the Helsinki Accords were signed, which helped to reduce tensions between East and West. And in 1989, the Berlin Wall finally came down, reunifying Germany after more than four decades of division.

I am grateful that I had the opportunity to visit East Germany before the fall of the Berlin Wall. It was a unique and unforgettable experience that has given me a deeper understanding of my family history and the world in which we live.



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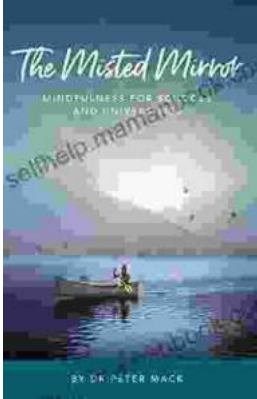
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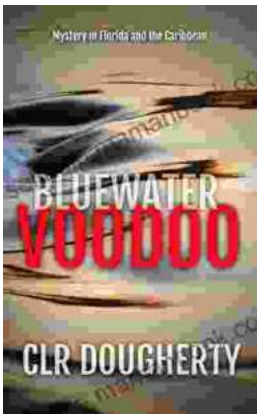
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