



A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989

Padraic Kenney

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This is the first history of the revolutions that toppled communism in Europe to look behind the scenes at the grassroots movements that made those revolutions happen. It looks for answers not in the salons of power brokers and famed intellectuals, not in decrepit economies--but in the whirlwind of activity that stirred so crucially, unstoppably, on the street. Melding his experience in Solidarity-era Poland with the sensibility of a historian, Padraic Kenney takes us into the hearts and minds of those revolutionaries across much of Central Europe who have since faded namelessly back into everyday life. This is a riveting story of musicians, artists, and guerrilla theater collectives subverting traditions and state power; a story of youthful social movements emerging in the 1980s in Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and parts of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.

Kenney argues that these movements were active well before glasnost. Some protested military or environmental policy. Others sought to revive national traditions or to help those at the margins of society. Many crossed forbidden borders to meet their counterparts in neighboring countries. They all conquered fear and apathy to bring people out into the streets. The result was a revolution unlike any other before: nonviolent, exuberant, even light-hearted, but also with a relentless political focus--a revolution that leapt from country to country in the exciting events of 1988 and 1989.

A Carnival of Revolution resounds with the atmosphere of those turbulent years: the daring of new movements, the unpredictability of street demonstrations, and the hopes and regrets of the young participants. A vivid photo-essay complements engaging prose to fully capture the drama. Based on over two hundred interviews in twelve countries, and drawing on samizdat and other writings in six languages, this is among the most insightful and compelling accounts ever published of the historical milestone that ushered in our age.

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