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## Iron Curtain Rising: A Personal Journey Through the Changing Landscape of Eastern Europe

*Peter Laufer*

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**Peter Laufer : Iron Curtain Rising: A Personal Journey Through the Changing Landscape of Eastern Europe** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Iron Curtain Rising: A Personal Journey Through the Changing Landscape of Eastern Europe:

From Library JournalLaufer presents a timely look at post-revolutionary Central Europe, told from the perspective of ordinary people as they face both heartening and intimidating prospects of new-found liberties and responsibilities. In stripping away some of the veneer that has long obscured this part of Europe, he exposes both the good and the bad: the joy of toppling unresponsive leaders and the visceral anti-Semitism and national antipathy that find safe haven in now more open societies. Laufer also demonstrates the diversity of the region, overturning the facile notion that these countries are a monolithic "Eastern bloc." At times his prose grows weary as in his banal conclusion to an otherwise insightful discussion of Yugoslav ethnic relations. The book, however, is well worth reading, since its merits outweigh Laufer's sometimes strained prose. For general collections.- Joseph P. Persons, Lexecon Inc., ChicagoCopyright 1991

Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus sVeteran international correspondent Laufer, who covered the Eastern bloc revolution for ABC and CBS, here offers images, anecdotes, and conversations with ordinary citizens that give a fuller flavor of how the prospect of freedom affects individuals. A San Francisco-based journalist who spent much of the last three years covering Eastern Europe, Laufer was present in Berlin when the Wall came down and later loaded up a camper and toured all of the Communist countries in Eastern Europe (except Albania). At pains to help the Western reader see and feel the differences among these countries, he nonetheless finds many common elements: the grayness and dilapidation of once-noble capitals, the tiny cars that take two years' wages to buy, the absence of goods in the stores. The overall obsession with obtaining Western goods is a theme that Laufer reiterates time and again: "Until Eastern Europeans get their chance at Barbies and Slurpies, Big Macs and Nintendo, and all the other junk the West offers, who can expect them to spurn it?" His images touch on the political: Berlin punk rockers with purple hair spikes, the extreme of anarchism, who still won't cross the street against a red light. Laufer describes a series of lovable hustlers who find ways to exploit currency gaps between East and West, such as two Polish auto mechanics who work in West Berlin and live in Poland like kings. Throughout, those he interviews ponder whether real change will follow Communism's collapse, or whether only the faces and slogans of leaders will change. Well-crafted travel guide and an informative complement to Anthony Daniels's *Utopias Elsewhere* (p. 834). (Sixteen pages of photos--not seen). -- Copyright ©1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.