

Stasiland: Stories from Behind the Berlin Wall

By Anna Funder

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"*Stasiland* demonstrates that great, originalreporting is still possible. . . . A heartbreaking, beautifully written book. Aclassic." —Claire Tomalin, *Guardian* "Books ofthe Year"

AnnaFunder delivers a prize-winning and powerfully rendered account of theresistance against East Germany's communist dictatorship in these harrowing,personal tales of life behind the Iron Curtain—and, especially, of life underthe iron fist of the Stasi, East Germany's brutal state security force. In thetradition of Frederick Taylor's *The Berlin Wall* andPhilip Gourevitch's *WeWish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families*, Funder's *Stasiland* isa masterpiece of investigative reporting, written with novelistic vividness andthe compelling intensity of a universal, real-life story.

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Stasiland: Stories from Behind the Berlin Wall By Anna Funder Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #43259 in Books
- Brand: Harper Perennial
- Published on: 2011-09-20
- Released on: 2011-09-20
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .68" w x 5.31" l, .50 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 288 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
"Its job was to know everything about everyone, using any means it chose. It knew who your visitors were, it knew whom you telephoned, and it knew if your wife slept around." This was the fearsome Stasi, the Ministry for State Security of the late and unlamented German Democratic Republic. Funder, an Australian writer, international lawyer and TV and radio producer, visiting Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall, finds herself captivated by stories of people who resisted the Stasi-moving stories that she collects in her first book, which was shortlisted for two literary awards in Australia. For instance, Miriam Weber, a slight woman with a "surprisingly big nicotine-stained voice," was placed in solitary confinement at the age of 16 for printing and distributing protest leaflets; she was caught again during a dramatic nighttime attempt to go over the Wall. Filtered through Funder's own keen perspective, these dramatic tales highlight the courage that ordinary people can display in torturous circumstances.
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From Booklist
During its 40-year history, the German Democratic Republic--East Germany--was, with Soviet assistance, the perfect police state. The organ of surveillance within the GDR (as well as foreign intelligence activities) was the Stasi, which, better than any other modern secret police, had organized a large army of citizen informers. Australian writer Funder thoroughly documents that culture of domestic spying and its effects on a cross-section of East German society. To call the stories that she relates as Orwellian is rather an understatement; the fact that they are true alone goes beyond Orwell: the mysterious death of a husband while in detention, the sudden "nonexistence" of a rock star, a mother's separation from her critically ill infant. What the reader learns from these stories is that evil swings like a pendulum, from the banal to the surreal, but no matter where it is in the spectrum, it always leaves pain behind. *Frank Caso*
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Review
"By turns funny, heartbreaking, and stirring . . . [Funder] tells the story of the collapse of a way of life with wit, style, and sympathy."

"An appealing blend of investigative and reflective reporting, with the narrative drive of powerful human-interest stories. . . . There is no denying Funder's journalistic talents."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

William Petterson:

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Donna Nichols:

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