



The View from Stalin's Head

Aaron Hamburger

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The ten stories in **The View from Stalin's Head** unfold in the post–Cold War Prague of the 1990s—a magnet not only for artists and writers but also for American tourists and college grad deadbeats, a city with a glorious yet sometimes shameful history, its citizens both resentful of and nostalgic for their Communist past. Against this backdrop, Aaron Hamburger conjures an arresting array of characters: a self-appointed rabbi who runs a synagogue for non-Jews; an artist, once branded as a criminal by the Communist regime, who hires a teenage boy to boss him around; a fiery would-be socialist trying to rouse the oppressed masses while feeling the tug of her comfortable Stateside upbringing. European and American, Jewish and gentile, straight and gay, the people in these stories are forced to confront themselves when the ethnic, religious, political, and sexual labels they used to rely on prove surprisingly less stable than they'd imagined.

As Christopher Isherwood did in his **Berlin Stories**, Aaron Hamburger offers a humane and subtly etched portrait of a time and place, of people wrestling with questions of love, faith, and identity. **The View from Stalin's Head** is a remarkable debut, and the beginning of a remarkable career.

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