



The Fall of Berlin 1945

Antony Beevor

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The Red Army had much to avenge when it finally reached the frontiers of the Reich in January 1945. Political instructors rammed home the message of Wehrmacht and SS brutality. The result was the most terrifying example of fire and sword ever known, with tanks crushing refugee columns under their tracks, mass rape, pillage and destruction. Hundreds of thousands of women and children froze to death or were massacred because Nazi Party chiefs, refusing to face defeat, had forbidden the evacuation of civilians. Over seven million fled westwards from the terror of the Red Army.

Antony Beevor reconstructs the experiences of those millions caught up in the nightmare of the Third Reich's final collapse, telling a terrible story of pride, stupidity, fanaticism, revenge and savagery, but also one of astonishing endurance, self-sacrifice and survival against all odds.

The Fall of Berlin 1945 Details

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From Reader Review The Fall of Berlin 1945 for online ebook

Manray9 says

Beevor's account of the final collapse of Nazi Germany is not great historical writing. The narrative reads as a catalogue of events without the binding literary thread necessary to weave a compelling historical tale. There is little development of the historical figures -- their stories are not fleshed out. You end the book knowing not much more about Zhukov, Guderian, Chiukov or Weidling than when you started. *The Fall of Berlin 1945* is weak alongside John Toland's *The Last 100 Days* despite greater access to German and former Soviet archival material.

I was uncomfortably unsympathetic to the thousands of German women so savagely molested by the undisciplined Red Army. While the German women were certainly innocent victims, I couldn't help but think of the pain wrought by their fathers, brothers, husbands and sons throughout the Soviet Union and elsewhere. German womanhood reaped what their menfolk had sown. That's not a very charitable point of view, but it's mine nevertheless. The exposure of the scale of wanton pillage perpetrated by the Red Army is probably the most valuable contribution of Beevor's book. It's a story that needs telling and should be explored further.

Constantina says

ηνα βιβλίο που θα πρέπει να διαβάσει κάθε άνθρωπος, αν θέλει να καταλάβει πραγματικά την φρόνη του πολέμου.

Emilio Mendez says

Say what you will about Hitler and the Nazis, but you can't help but feel for the ordinary German people in this poignant end to Germany in WWII. They really did fight to the bitter end, outnumbered, outgunned with no chance of victory. What would you do in this position? Antony Beevor's ability to reconstruct the helplessness of the situation, from the upper echelons of the leadership to women and children fleeing, gives a stark contrast. The most heroic acts of this battle and yet one of the saddest aspects are the youth who defended the city with bicycles and Panzerfausts, sent into battle against Russian tanks. These kids must've been 12 to 13 sent into battle against a force hardened by years of battle with no chance of victory. You're descriptively taken right into the midst of the battle, with buildings crumbled by continuous bombing, and the trail of people heading west to escape the Russian beasts who raped an estimated 1 Million German women. Even the elderly women weren't safe from the onslaught, when an elderly lady over the age of 80 was raped. And there are numerous accounts of German women who killed themselves to escape such humiliation. Just the utter scope of suffering is astounding, tragedy on such a large scale is a gloom chapter in human history. But, like all stories of human suffering, from the rubble rises a new Germany, with a people united by common misfortune and that's when you see the true spirit of the Germans and the true spirit of human life in general.

Charles McCain says

The Red Army's invasion of Berlin in January 1945 was one of the most terrifying examples of fire and sword in history. Frenzied by terrible memories of Wehrmacht and SS brutality, the Russians wreaked havoc, leaving hundreds of thousands of civilians dead and millions more fleeing westward. Drawing upon newly available material from former Soviet files, as well as from German, American, British, French, and Swedish archives, bestselling author Antony Beevor vividly recounts the experiences of the millions of civilians and soldiers caught up in the nightmare of the Third Reich's final collapse. The Fall of Berlin 1945 is a heartrending story of pride, stupidity, fanaticism, revenge, and savagery, yet it is also one of astonishing human endurance, self-sacrifice, and survival against all odds.

Baris Ozyurt says

“Berlinlilerin belleğinde bu olaylar capcanlı kaldı, çünkü bütün pencerelerin kırılmaması nedeniyle her gece çığlıklar duymak mümkündü. Ki ana Berlin hastanesinin tecavüz mağdurlarına ilişkin tahminleri, 95.000 ila 130.000 arasındaydı. Bir doktorun vardığı sonuç, Berlin’de tecavüze uğrayan 100.000 kadından 10.000 kadarının çouunlukla intihar ekinde olmak üzere, ya adıklarına bağı olarak öldüüydü. Doğu Prusya, Pomeranya ve Silezya’daki 1,4 milyon tecavüz mağduru arasındaki ölüm oranı, tahminlere göre çok daha yüksekti. Toplam en az 2 milyon Alman kadının tecavüze uğradığı sanılmaktadır ve anlaşıldığı kadarıyla birkaç kez tecavüz edilenler çouunluu olmasa bile, epeyce büyük bir azınlık olmaktadır. Ursula von Kardoff’un arkadaşı olan Sovyet casusu Schulze-Boysen, ‘pepe yirmi üç askerin’ tecavüzüne uğradı. “(s.419)

Elliott Bignell says

I had tears in my eyes as I began compiling this review, shortly before finishing the book. The suffering which it relentlessly and rather coolly lays out seems on the one hand as if it ought to be unimaginable. On the other hand, it sounds no different to accounts of the 30 Years War, except with the addition of industrial-scale killing machinery. Germany has seen this before, and at least in the mid-20th Century had still not learned from the experience.

Beevor follows up "Stalingrad" with "Berlin". So did the Russians. One Red Army member in Stalingrad angrily shouted at a prisoner that Berlin would one day look like this. And so it came to pass. The concentrations of artillery used on the Eastern Front and in the offensive against Berlin itself are staggering - upwards of an artillery piece per four metres of front. Beevor's style conveys repressed excitement and horror at the story he narrates, matter-of-fact and dry and yet rivetting. I flew through the book in half the time this many pages would normally require.

The story of the Red Army in its unstoppable march to Berlin is punctuated by the the pounding not only of guns, but of rape. Rape on an unimaginable scale. From teenage girls to women in their 80s, the surprisingly undisciplined soldiers of a politically prudish state used the bodies of women as proxies for revenge as soon as they ran out of Wehrmacht and SS to kill. Russian women soldiers watched and laughed. Liberated Jews, communists, civilians - none were spared. As ever before, a victorious army scorched the Earth it passed over with rape and pillage, comprehensively asset-stripping the civilian population to send trophies home and taking women as further spoils. 2 million women may have been raped during the conquest and one report from Berlin estimates that of 100,000 rape victims, 10,000 died. Mainly by suicide. The survivors

from the Eastern parts of Germany were then dragged off to forced labour in the USSR, only half of whom returned alive. Suicide, desperate attempts to flee to the comparative safety of the Western occupation, disease and unimaginable suffering were the results of this storm of brutality. And German women knew this was coming. Even though they often had no conception of what had been done in Russia, the rumours flew ahead of the advancing Russian formations.

What truly defies belief is the sheer self-destructive futility with which the Nazi state hung on to the last building. Much of this can be attributed to Hitler's character, which seems to have degenerated into a pathological self-identification with the German nation - there was no point in saving Germany because he was Germany, and his death the end of the German Volk which he hurled onto the conflagration just to see it burn with him. How an entire nation could have been co-opted into this insane tenacity is not so easy to explain away, on the other hand, but the murderous brutality of the *Felgendarmerie* and SS goes a long way. Tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians alike were pointlessly executed for failing to show sufficient devotion to a lost war, or just on the vague suspicion. Prepare to confront some inner darkness while reading this account.

One big surprise was finding that Hitler's body had actually been found, and kept in the USSR until 1970, when it was secretly burned and ground up to be flushed away into the sewers, perhaps appropriately. The rumours of Hitler sneaking off to Latin America were the result of deliberate policy by Stalin. Poor Zhukov, as near as this story comes to producing a hero, was kept in the dark for 20 years and expected to explain away the disappearance to the allies purely to humiliate the man. I always knew that Stalin, Hitler and Beria were archetypal brutes, but I didn't expect to see just how much they resembled spiteful children.

Ultimately, the fascist demagogues that expected every German to fight to the last drop of blood either tried to sneak off in civilian clothes, committed suicide or both. Only Bormann met the guns of the Russians and that was by accident while seeking to escape from the Berlin Kessel. This is humanity at its most tawdry, but there are glints of light here and there. The Red Army soldier appears to have been an extraordinary barrel of contradictions, prepared to rape and loot, yet sentimental about children, ready to share his last piece of bread and laying down quietly to die "as if it were also part of his work". This generation are a true enigma. The standard of the Red Army was raised over the Reichstag before the upper floor had been cleared of suicidally fanatical SS, reminding me of the Muslims raising Saladin's standard on the battlement of Jerusalem - and that humankind has perhaps not come so far in all that time.

This is rivetting and harrowing modern history, told by a master.
Comment

Emily says

I think my politics are already pretty transparent so let's dive in with what occupies my mind at the moment. It is frustrating that you cannot compare Trump to Hitler without being dismissed as making an argument that isn't the one you're making. It isn't the simple transitive, Hitler bad, Trump bad, therefore Trump like Hitler. Instead, it's the whole barrel of specific rotten qualities: the thin-skinned self-aggrandizement, the insistence on expertise in impressive-sounding subjects about which he actually knows nothing (especially military matters--at least Hitler *served!*), the fetishization of the military, a weird arrogance about himself as a savvy judge of character, the chaotic management style, a "one-way concept of loyalty" (331) and desire to punish rejected former favorites, the continuously ill-timed alternation between waffling and then blundering decisively in some totally wrong direction, and not being able to discern the difference between actual power and shows of power.

I could go on. Anyway, the reason I read this book was that I bought it at a library book sale a while back and eventually got around to it. But it's a vivid tour through a point I've been thinking about, namely that the collapse of Nazism went very, very badly for expressly the people it originally sought to promote. That is to say, if you can't be talked out of Nazism on moral or rational grounds, you might at least take into account how catastrophically they *lost*.

This is the first book I've read by this author but I thought his writing had great texture in addition to being serious in his research (his sources are in German, Russian, English, and French). He tracks military objectives at a level of granularity that I found very readable and concisely portrays the landscape (bridges, forests, rubble) and its challenges. He highlights the experiences of soldiers and leaders on all sides as well as German civilians, but for the most part he doesn't ask you to keep track of the personal stories of a huge cast of characters.

You could say that the very end of WWII was an awfully hot start to what eventually became the Cold War, a period when the Allies and the Soviet Union contended over the smoldering remains of Europe before settling into what became their positions for the next few decades. Beevor shows how the Russians and Americans passive-aggressively concealed their objectives and plans for advancing on Berlin from each other, while Germans desperately attempted to find their way into American hands. Some reviewers have said Beevor portrays the Russians negatively but I'm not sure I agree--he certainly portrays some of them negatively, but others not. As for the Germans, he doesn't give in to the idea that they are victims, but he does show the terrible bind that civilians were in, being shot at while queuing at a pump or watching their young sons pointlessly sent to the front on bicycles.

Beevor focuses on the problem of mass rape and identifies several distinct phases in how it was rationalized. First, an "extreme onslaught" of nominally revenge-motivated gang rape, an excuse undercut by the victimization of freed Russian and Jewish prisoners. Next a period of "unaggravated rape" justified as "satisfying a sexual need after all their time at the front" (326). Finally, implied coercion to avoid starvation and a "strange form of cohabitation" (414). He describes the gallows humor and survival strategies of German women in their own words.

Overall, I found this book complete, readable, and relevant. I'll look for his book on Stalingrad in the future.

Bettie? says

Soviet soldiers hoist the red flag over the Reichstag in May 1945

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/world...>

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisf...>

The gramazon description is a naff affair, I shall find proper information on a better site:

Berlin: The Downfall 1945 (aka The Fall of Berlin 1945 in the US) is a narrative history by Antony Beevor of the Battle of Berlin during World War II. It was published by Viking Press in 2002, then later by Penguin Books in 2003. The book achieved both critical and commercial success. It has been a number-one best seller in seven countries apart from Britain, and in the top five in another nine countries. Together with Beevor's Stalingrad, first published in 1998, they have sold nearly three million copies.

The book revisits the events of the Battle of Berlin in 1945. The book narrates how the Red Army defeated the German Army and brought an end to Hitler's Third Reich, as well as an end to the war in Europe. The book

was accompanied by a BBC Timewatch programme on his research into the subject. Wiki sourced

"I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest." Churchill

Michael Scott says

In *The Fall of Berlin 1945*, Antony Beevor tries to depict, as graphically as possible, the atrocious actions of the Russian troops (and the clumsy non-action by their American and British allies) in the eventful taking of Berlin, the symbolic civic center of Nazi Germany.

Overall, I did not like this book: while it is informative and has some good pieces of analytical material, it has a subjective approach and a questionable goal, and uses historical fact only as buttress. (Ann Tusa and John Tusa discuss in more detail the legality of these actions in *The Nuremberg Trials*). The cinematics also don't work in this prose.

On the positive side, the book is carefully researched, albeit Beevor never references the facts mentioned here and there is a strong negative tone towards the Russians. The material on the background of the (short) siege of Berlin is well-written and informative; among others, it introduces the reader to the material support from the Allies (including the opinion that the Russians would have scarcely been able to attack Berlin, had it not have been for the American Land-Lease trucks, materials, ammunition, etc.). The assault on Berlin is prefaced by descriptions of the precedent battles, which have stranded much of the defense (including some key units, due to the directions of Speer) out of reach of Berlin. The actual battle is described in short slices, sometimes difficult to follow but overall well-made (given the medium). The part on the deaths or attempted escapes of the top Nazi officials is very good, drawing from rich material that has surfaced as late as the mid-1990s (e.g., the death of Bormann). Similarly, the part on the fate of the victorious Russian generals is interesting.

Everywhere there are gory details--nasty but needed for trying to understand this war experience--: we learn about the entering of Russians on the German territory; about the youthful (and heart-breaking) German fighters in the streets of Berlin; about the Panzerjagers (Panzer hunters) on bikes; about queuing (and being killed while in line) for the water pump; about the general destruction; about the rape of Berlin; about the re-education (and other pieces of the horrible fate) of the Russian prisoners of war; about the loss of any illusion of having human rights, under the iron fist of the Russians; etc. This part, however, is heavily based on the war-time and on the later reporting of Vassily Grossman (*A Writer at War* is on my to-read list), imo without enough or proper citation.

This book abounds in good low-detail analysis, which seems to be Beevor's main strength. There's good material on (mostly Russian) life on the front; on the reason for which Berliners could not just give up (Hitler Youth and SS, and the Russians themselves, shot even at people under the white flag); on re-establishing life basics in a destroyed city; etc. There is an interesting story about German Selbstopferinsatz ("self-sacrificial mission") -- a precursor of the Japanese kamikaze ("divine wind").

There is some fine analysis about seemingly minute events, but with conceivably much broader implications: the internecine fights among the Russian generals, managed to profit by Stalin but ultimately overwritten by NKVD (Russian version of Gestapo); the political impact of the public announcement, by Roosevelt, of the decision to withdraw US troops from Europe, within 2 years from the end of the war (what a boon for the aggressive Russian behavior, and what multi-decade terror this will bring!); the first Jewish service after reconquering Berlin ("in the synagogue of the Jewish hospital [...] on Friday 11 May"); the actual date when the war ended (hint: the Russians wanted it to coincide with May 1, then, not succeeding with this, to delay the news for nefarious purposes).

The main issue I have with this book is the coarseness of the theories. This is one of those books that oscillates between historical accuracy and plain fiction, going through temporary stages of subjective analysis. The author misses no chance to call on Russians for committing atrocities; however, perhaps they should be put in international context (although quid pro quo is no excuse, as decided later, during The Nuremberg Trials). Beevor seems mistaken in his analysis of the extraction of German research facilities, including the nuclear research laboratory -- Beevor strongly states that the Russians have had a poor yield out of these extractions (from nail to researcher); instead, it seems to me that Russia got at least a buff to their own research and managed to strip important knowledge from the heart of Europe, not mentioning the control of the important uranium fields of Czechoslovakia.

Another issue is the presence of fantastic stories, not supported with documentary evidence and thus plain unbelievable (even if, possibly or even likely, true): about the NKVD bugging all the rooms at Yalta (where Sir Winston Churchill claimed to have felt truly safe, sic!); about Nazi generals, in charge of defending Berlin, who were learning about Russian advances by calling random phone numbers in different areas (if a Russian voice answered, or there was repeatedly no answer, then the Russians must have conquered that part of the city already); the reverse calls, which the Red Army used as pranks or as a method to intimidate the population; the story about the honor of riding a white horse as the battle victor, which seemingly Stalin left to Zhukov (later to be ostracized) only because he himself has fallen from said horse, a day before; etc.

Yet another issue is the storification of cinematic events, which is not done justice in this prose -- the medium is perhaps not suitable for this type of presentation, as envisioned by Beevor for this book. The prose stumbles into numbers and facts, which are needed for perspective but greatly detract from fluency and atmosphere; the actual battle is fragmented instead of continuous, with effectively breaks any perspective and thus seems to depict an uncoordinated battle in the rubble; etc.

To conclude: a good book, but the mix of history and historical fiction, and the use of cinematics in prose, make this less interesting for this reviewer.

Paul says

In two words: utterly compelling. Antony Beevor's widely praised account of the ultimate battle for the heart of the Nazi Reich, and the pure horror of it all, is a book worthy of high praise indeed. The scene is ably set in the opening chapters with the setting of the various battle orders, the intricacies of the political machinations in fearsome effect, and the descriptions of lives interrupted on the home fronts; Beevor expertly brings the reader with him into the new year of 1945 as the final battle for Europe's fate is about to play out. As the front moves ever nearer to the Reich's own frontiers the Soviet political officers and the commissars tell their charges that the Germans had -

"...sown the wind, and now they are harvesting the whirlwind."

The overwhelming sense is one of 'total war'. Nevertheless, his approach is one that manages to keep the facts clear and uncluttered, and the potentially complicated maneuverings of multiple military units are brought across to the reader without confusion. The book also succeeds in that it gives the reader a good impression of the human aspects of the conflict.

The research for this book must have been a labour of love of sorts, as the amount of detail imparted from such a wide variety of first-class primary sources is very impressive. From the archives of the former Soviet Union and the two Germanies, as well as those of British, US, French, Swedish and countless other origins, the author manages to convey with complete authenticity the experiences of those involved at every conceivable level of the 20th century's defining event.

The use of source material - a combination of diaries, letters to or from the front, memoirs written at a distance of years, interviews during PoW interrogations - is highly effective at getting across the sheer size and impact of the whole conflict in Europe. We hear the voices of individual 'normal' people (peasants, conscripts, the urban poor and the middle classes alike) as frequently as those of the generals, politicians, or the privileged few. Writers and journalists such as Vassily Grossman are often reporting from the front (or sometimes more interestingly from just behind the front). At once you are in the icy trenches or the firing positions with the Soviets' 1st Guards Tank Army, the next you are in the operations room of an opposing German Panzer division, or a retreating SS regiment.

The reader has the dubious privilege of being privy to the Machiavellian orchestrations of Stalin and Beria, as they play off the competing rivalries of Generals Zhukov and Koniyevev against each other for both egotistical and self-serving strategic reasons; as well of course as the persistent mutual mistrusts of the Red Army's front line units with those of the party's NKVD political detachments. I had not previously been quite so aware either of quite how much contempt Stalin had for his leading generals, and how despicably he wouldn't hesitate to treat them when he considered it politically expedient to. Obviously he shares this odious trait (along with countless others) with his opposite number in Berlin.

Similarly, the chaos and mayhem afoot in the various German organisations: of the Reich, the Nazi Party, the SS, and the different branches of the armed forces becomes clear. The disorder and sense of an empire collapsing all around, while Hitler fiddles in his 'Führerbunker' is at once both a fascinating and grimly captivating thing to behold. I found myself wondering quite what Uncle Dolfi (as the Goebbels children called their leader) thought to himself as he sat in his quarters, resting between blood vessel bursting fits of temper at the daily strategic conferences, staring at his favourite portrait of Frederick the Great...

Less frequently we are kept reminded that this is indeed a world at war, and the picture will momentarily broaden to include aspects of the various alliances and the varying degrees of cooperation or sometimes non-cooperation. The ever-present paranoia on the part of Stalin towards Roosevelt and particularly Churchill becomes an increasingly noticeable element in the story of the race to Berlin's conquest. Nevertheless, the story of the western allies' advance across the Rhine and into the heart of Germany is referenced when relevant to the narrative. The roots of the looming Cold War face-off between the western allies and the Soviets are clearly visible here. The grisly downfall unfolds in more or less chronological order as the chapters rotate from one aspect of the conflict to the next.

The now well documented horrors of the Nazi Holocaust are not a central theme in this book, as it is more a case of the different camps' liberations being acknowledged in the narrative as they occur during the course of the Germans' hasty and destructive withdrawal from the advancing armies. The book is certainly not for the fainthearted though as there are necessarily countless and almost relentless accounts of the many horrors conducted by all sides in this war - in particular the many atrocities towards the civilian populations by the Red Army. (The German forces had of course "sown their wind" as they Blitzkrieged their way across the continent between 1939 and 1942, to say nothing of their monstrous racial atrocities.) Beevor tackles the subject of rape by Soviet soldiers head on. He notes that the victims were not restricted to German women,

but that many Soviet or Polish citizens, including former concentration and prison camp inmates (some Jewish survivors among them too), were also brutally attacked. He actually defines four distinct stages of this most awful of crimes: The first when the initial wave of advancing soldiers occupies a civilian area; the second when the vanguard moves on and the following wave of combat units arrives (often the most indiscriminate and horrific of the phases); the third and fourth stages as with the war's end, the horrors of survival for some women in post-Nazi Germany include committing themselves to the 'protection' of one particular Red Army soldier or other. Certainly not easy subject matter at all, and not without academic controversy either, but I think that Beevor covers the subject as sensitively as could be reasonably expected.

I listened to the audiobook edition, read superbly by British actor Sean Barrett. His voice is somewhere between Olivier (think BBC's 1970s "The World at War") and Burton's noble authority. Never a distraction, and often enhancing somehow the authenticity of the whole production. I loved the way he says the Russian and German generals' names, especially "Rokossovsky"! Also the subtle accenting he put on occasionally when quoting the slogans of advancing/retreating troops for example. I realised early on that I would need to get out a decent map of Germany to help me picture the movement of the various events as the Germans capitulated, though a quick check online tells me that the print edition has reasonably good maps of the key stages covered.

Maybe my 'review' should have ended after the first sentence, I'm not sure. But for anyone with an interest in the history of modern Europe, or in the dehumanisation that accompanies warfare - and the everyman's and everywoman's experience of that process, this book is a must.

Marc says

During World War II, some of the most savage fighting took place between the Germans and the Russians on the Eastern Front. Not only was it a war of ideology between National Socialism and Communism, it was often a war of annihilation as well. This book is a fascinating read about the last days of the Third Reich, with lots of focus on the German and Soviet high commands, as well as the trials and tribulations of the German civilians caught up in the maelstrom of war. If you're looking for a book which details all the units and armies in the fighting, this isn't the book for you. Beevor's main focus seems to be on the experiences of those who were there as civilians, members of the various High Commands, and ordinary soldiers. Descriptions of the savage fighting make up part of the book, but aren't the primary focus. I'd recommend this book to anyone interested in the end of war in Europe in World War II. A truly fascinating read.

Jill Hutchinson says

A truly amazing book that looks at the last few months of the Third Reich and the horrors visited on the population of Berlin by the Red Army. That Army was frenzied by their experiences at the hands of the Nazis when Germany invaded Russia and they wreaked unimaginable suffering in their revenge....tanks crushing civilians, mass rape, pillage and total destruction. The author does a masterful job of reconstructing the experiences of those millions caught up in the Third Reich's final collapse. I give it the highest recommendation. It is also a wonderful companion book to *The End: The Defiance & Destruction of Hitler's Germany 1944-45* by Ian Kershaw

Gary Haynes says

A seminal treatise on the end of Nazi tyranny, coupled with a scathing commentary on Stalinist cruelty. What comes across in this wonderful nonfiction work, which reads like a thriller novel, is Beevor's extraordinary grasp of his subject matter, his meticulous research, and refusal to stoop to generalities. The population of Berlin suffered for their sins, especially the woman, and Beevor does not pull any punches. This is a testament to the fact that we are one step away from brutality - one step away from being everything we judge to be abhorrent. A modern masterpiece, for sure. Five stars.

Tyler says

It sits at the top of the human drama, and every so often I have to go back and read about World War II. This book looked like a good chance to revisit old territory.

I was attracted by the book's promise of new accounts and insights to this battle. It turned out that a lot of what people have remarked (tanks and refugee columns, etc.) was stuff already known about: no new perfidious behaviour or atrocities to speak of.

Still, it's not bad. Who, indeed, could write a boring book about the Battle of Berlin? This one contains three sections of photos, many of them pictures I've never seen before.

While the novelty this book adds to the subject isn't breathtaking, it made a couple of points I hadn't seen before. One, the German need to blame others for their victimization was highlighted. The writer also goes into some detail about their justification -- Rommel's, "If the ends don't justify the means, then what does?" This turns out to have been the universal line of reasoning among Germans -- that the measure of morality is whether it succeeds or not.

The book also remarks interestingly on Germany's women, who, when it was all over, had to get the country going with no help whatever from men. It wasn't just the prisoners and the dead, but also the psychological attitude of the surviving German males, that deserted German women once the fighting stopped. It's as if Germany's men were saying, "Okay, we've brought it this far; we're splitting now. You take it from here, babe!"

The writing emphasizes the military aspect of the fall of the German capital too much, in my opinion, with not as much of the human interest side I was expecting. Nevertheless, the subject remains compelling reading even two generations later.

Gerry says

What could I possibly say that I hadn't already alluded to within my previous updates. I read "Stalingrad" in the snow outside on purpose in January of 2009, I read Beevor's "D-Day" in April of 2010 and believe that Stephen Ambrose still holds my attention best on that topic, "Paris After the Liberation" I read in November of 2011 and here on 14 January, 2013 I completed "The Fall of Berlin 1945". I believe that "Stalingrad" was brilliant, but this work on "The Fall of Berlin 1945" was even more brilliant than the work I thought could not be topped.

We all know how the Second World War ends in both the ETO and PTO. However, what we often miss in the modern era are the real life difficulties that everyday people had to confront as their Fascist Government that could have ended the war earlier chose not to do so. In so keeping the battle lines had to be continuously re-drawn - the worst of course were for the many civilians of women, children, and the Volksturm comprised of older men who most had fought during the First World War.

This book is certainly not for the faint of heart or for good people that could become emotional when reading of the many atrocities to innocent people. I find the Germans of that particular time, those who managed to survive who questioned why their cities were bombed as they were, why the loss of life had to continue, and those that believed Germany should never have faced such an ending to the war are the same people of that time frame who failed to realize that it was them that coined the term "Blitzkrieg" and it was them who managed to do the same and worse forms of perpetration upon the Polish and the Russians.

Today as we know the Germany nation and that of Japan are among the most hard working and peace loving the world over - they are a far cry from their previous existence.

If you read "Stalingrad" and liked it - then you will find this book as I did even better.

Xfi says

Muy bien documentada, y dentro de lo que cabe para este tipo de obras, amena en su desarrollo. Se centra en los últimos meses de la guerra, sobre todo el avance del ejército soviético y en la descomposición del estado alemán.

Intenta ser neutral aunque es difícil dada la magnitud de las salvajadas cometidas por todos los bandos, aunque unos más que otros.

Lo que más me impacto es la parte final, de la inmediata postguerra, poco conocida, de la venganza soportada por el pueblo alemán.

Czarny Pies says

Antony Beevor is one of the greatest historians of the second half of the twentieth century. The Nobel Literature Committee has not awarded the prize to an historian since 1953. The time to award another is long overdue; Beevor would be a very logical choice.

Beevor trained at Sandhurst and served for five years in the British army. Despite being admirably trained to write the type of technical history that military academies use to train their students in battle field tactics, Beevor has always concentrated on the human side of war. He explains the cultural differences of the two armies and what the experience was like for the general population to live on a front.

Beevor is in top form with Berlin: The Downfall. At the same time that you are elated to see the Russians putting an end to an evil regime, you are appalled at the suffering of the German population under the Russian occupiers.

Some Russians have been angered by this book. They feel that it shows their soldiers in too negative a light. I think above all Beevor admires the Russians because it was their desire to win that defeated the Nazis. Beevor does not blame the Russians for anything; the fact is that war is simply not pretty.

Joe says

Antony Beevor's "The Fall of Berlin 1945" is an excellent account of the final battles of the Eastern Front, specifically focusing on the Soviet push into Germany in early 1945 and the subsequent battle of Berlin that April.

This work does not just focus on the operational and Geo-political aspects of the Third Reich's downfall, it also shines light on the human drama that unfolded in the midst of the horror. Woven into the book are various personal accounts of the brutal fighting between Soviet and German Soldiers, accounts of German civilians trying to survive the chaos, and the accounts of various Hitler Youth and Foreign units of the SS caught up in the fighting. The perspective's of Hitler, Stalin, and their generals are also given. We are shown a worn down, yet merciless Hitler who seeks to fight to the end, and an unrelenting Stalin, pushing his forces onward to take Berlin.

Overall, I felt this was a good read, it took quite a bit of reading, and I had to refer to the maps at the front of the book many times for a view of a particular unit or area, but it was well written and informative.

Neil Fox says

After a fascinating guided walking tour entitled "the last days of the Third Reich" during a recent weekend in Berlin, I felt compelled to re-read Anthony Beevor's "Berlin, the Downfall 1945" which, together with his other masterpiece Stalingrad, are among the finest military histories from World War 2. Taken together and complemented by a viewing of the Bruno Ganz movie "Downfall", these 2 books will provide the student of WW2 history with a great perspective on the unravelling of the Third Reich.

Beevor stands out from other military historians in that he has the cinematic eye of the novelist in addition to his obvious talent as an accomplished military historian. He recounts not only from the top-down military strategy and tactics level, but also from the bottom-up real-life experience accounts of ordinary participants caught up in the great and terrible events, the individual soldiers and civilians.

Another trademark of Beevor's writing is his balanced viewpoint. The wanton destruction and indiscipline of the vengeful Red Army troops and their widespread rape of German women and girls as they swept into East Prussia and approached Berlin is carefully qualified by reference to the equally brutal treatment visited by the Wehrmacht and the SS on the civilian populations of Russia, Ukraine, Poland and Belarus during the Nazi invasion 3 years earlier. What is sown is reaped. Or is it? For Beevor, things are not so straightforwardly explained by the justification of retribution. The Red army also raped, murdered and doled out shocking treatment to Soviet Citizens and POW's liberated by their invasion of the Reich. Likewise, while the obscene catalogue of Nazi war crimes are well documented, the lesser-known war crimes of the Soviets are brought to the fore, such as the unnecessary sinking of the Wilhelm Gustlav in the Baltic Sea, crammed with civilian refugees fleeing the encirclement of East Prussia with the loss of > 7,000 lives, still the worst Maritime disaster in history. Our tour guide in Berlin was very cynical at the point of the tour where we visited the Soviet war memorial to the "heroic" crushing of Fascism and liberation of the German people by the Red army; now I see precisely why. 2 million German women and girls were raped during this campaign of "liberation", something that would put the marauding hoards from the 30 years' war to shame.

On the human side of the story, Beevor tells many individual tales of defiance, bravery, resistance, kindness and cruelty. He brilliantly builds up the suspense, the harrowing sense of impending catastrophe, the sheer

terror at what is about to befall Berlin as the noose draws tighter. One can almost smell the fear of everyone from senior military commanders down to the women terrified at the fate that awaits them, while at the same time the Nazi leadership at best remain in denial of what is about to happen or live in hope of a miracle to save them, at worst adopting the shocking attitude, like Hitler and Goebbels, that the German people deserve to be annihilated because they have proved weak.

As well as expertly sketching out the military order of battle flawlessly in minute detail, Beevor also explores the political strategies, maneuvering and jostling for position among the Western Powers and their Russian Allies. Who seized the deeper long term meaning of events in the heat of the final battle With Nazi Germany and who did not; for the events in the final push for Berlin were crucial to the re-drawing of the European map that would persist for the next 50 years or so and the accompanying Cold War that emerged.

Above all, the scale of Hitler and the Nazis' demented view of the World is mind-boggling. Their sheer evil and the futility of their continued determination to sacrifice every drop of German blood and take the German Nation down to eternal damnation with them can only be articulately described by Beevor but not explained. This was after all the most criminal regime the World has ever known. Beevor though does not hide his utter disdain for Stalin and the brutal Communist regime he presided over, and this shines through in his work. But facts are facts. Although many argue that Stalin was in many ways worse than Hitler (He certainly killed more of his own countrymen than the Nazis ever did) the difference though was that his was a political rather than a racial genocide, and that his crimes were largely hidden from the view of the outside World. Contrast the fates of Zhukov, the Soviet military hero of the Berlin campaign, with Eisenhower, the superme Allied commander. Eisenhower went on to become President of the United States, while Zhukov was persecuted and languished under house arrest until his death, a victim of Stalin's paranoia and jealousy. Stalin and Hitler both held similar degrees of contempt and suspicion for their military hierarchy.

To stand in the Government district of Berlin by the Bundestag today is to stand on the the spot where these terrible events that witnessed the downfall of a regime and a Nation took place 70 years ago. Berlin rose from the ashes and conquered its past by confronting it; the Berlin of today is a prosperous, multicultural liberal beacon of tolerance, democracy and modernity that would have Hitler spinning in his grave if he could see it, standing as it does for the polar opposite values of Nazism. But the ghost of the past is ever present as a warning from history. And Beevor's book is the unsurpassed telling of the final days when the worst of Germany's past met its downfall.

Kate Forsyth says

The story of the Fall of Berlin is one of terror and betrayal, destruction and bloodshed, rape and revenge, and is not one for the faint-hearted. Antony Beevor has examined every aspect of the events leading up to the cataclysmic destruction of Berlin in April 1945. The book is incredibly well-researched, and beautifully written, but is best for those who have already extensively studied the history of Germany in the Second World War, or those with a particular acute interest in warfare and battles - every manoeuvre, every push and retreat, is given space on this book's pages. Perfect for me, since I needed a day-by-day breakdown of the city's fall while writing my novel THE BEAST'S GARDEN!
