



## The Fall of Berlin 1945

By Antony Beevor

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Acclaimed for his vivid re-creations of some of the twentieth century's most significant battles, Antony Beevor is one of the best known and respected military historians writing today. He now offers readers a gripping, street-level portrait of the harrowing days of January 1945 in Berlin when the vengeful Red Army and beleaguered Nazi forces clashed for a final time. The result was the most gruesome display of brutality in the war, with tanks crushing refugee columns, mass rapes, pillage, and destruction. Hundreds of thousands of German civilians froze to death or were massacred because Nazi officials had forbidden their evacuation. Hitler, half crazed in his bunker, issued wild orders while Stalin was prepared to risk any number of his men to seize the city before the other Allies could get there.

Making full use of newly disclosed material from former Soviet files as well as from German, American, British, French, and Swedish archives, Beevor has reconstructed the different experiences of those millions caught up in the death throes of the Third Reich. *The Fall of Berlin 1945* depicts not only the brutality and desperation of a city under siege but also rare moments of extreme humanity and heroism. This account also contains new revelations about the motives behind Stalin's hurried assault. Sure to appeal to all readers interested in military history and the Second World War, *The Fall of Berlin 1945* promises to be the definitive treatment of the subject for years to come.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

By December 1944, many of the 3 million citizens of Berlin had stopped giving the Nazi salute, and jokes circulated that the most practical Christmas gift of the season was a coffin. And for good reason, military historian Antony Beevor writes in this richly detailed reconstruction of events in the final days of Adolf Hitler's Berlin. Following savage years of campaigns in Russia, the Nazi regime had not only failed to crush Bolshevism, it had brought the Soviet army to the very gates of the capital. That army, ill-fed and hungry for vengeance, unloosed its fury on Berlin just a month later in a long siege that would cost hundreds of thousands of lives on both sides. But as Beevor recounts, the siege was also marked by remarkable acts of courage and even compassion. Drawing on unexplored Soviet and German archives and dozens of eyewitness accounts, Beevor brings us a harrowing portrait of the battle and its terrible aftermath, which would color world history for years to follow. --*Gregory McNamee*

#### From Publishers Weekly

Covering the months from January to May in 1945, as Soviet and other Allied troops advanced to Berlin, freelance British historian Beevor (Stalingrad) opts for direct narrative with overheard quotes from the main players, making the reader an eavesdropper to Hitler and Stalin's obiter dicta. Brisk and judgmental, the narrative is studded with short sentences and summary judgments: about Nazi minister Hermann Goring, we are told that his "vanity was as ludicrous as his irresponsibility" and he looked more like "a cheerful market woman" than a Marshal of the Reich." During the rubble-strewn city's Christmas of 1944, "the quip of that festive season was: 'be practical: give a coffin.' " The book is based on material from former Soviet files as well as from German, American, British, French and Swedish archives, but the somewhat limited bibliography is disappointing, and many of the usual sources are quoted, such as Hitler's personal secretary, who took dictation in the bunker to the end. Her expectation that Hitler would suddenly produce "a profound explanation" of the war's "great purpose" says as much about German self-delusion of the time as about Hitler, but here and elsewhere, Beevor simply quotes her flatly and fails to connect the dots. However, given the scope of this book the 1945 advance on Berlin is thought to be the largest battle in history, with two and a half million Soviet troops attacking one million Germans the summary approach is inevitable.

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#### From Booklist

By 1945 much of Berlin had been reduced to rubble by British and American air raids. Three million Berliners lived in fear as the Russian Army approached the city. The Russians entered Berlin in late April. Beevor describes how SS execution squads and Hitler Youth broke into wherever white flags had appeared and shot any men they found, and how, on April 30, Hitler and Eva Braun committed suicide. The author gives a detailed account of Russian troop movements through the German countryside, looting and pillaging as they approached Berlin. He chronicles the political maneuvering between Russia and its Western Allies. (He insists that Eisenhower's decision to stop advancing at the Elbe River was almost certainly the right one but for all the wrong reasons.) Beevor also reveals Stalin's motives for his swift assault on the city. He relies on material from American, German, British, French, and Swedish archives and documents from former Soviet files, making the book an invaluable and meticulous account. *George Cohen*

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