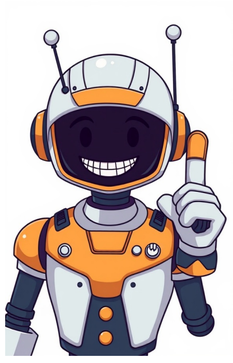
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The Red Army's vengeance was a force to be reckoned with when they finally reached the frontiers of the Third Reich in January 1945. Fueled by anger and hatred, they unleashed their fury upon the enemy, leaving destruction and despair in their wake. Tanks crushed refugee columns, mass rape and pillage became commonplace, and unimaginable devastation ensued. Hundreds of thousands of women and children froze to death or were massacred; more than seven million fled westward from the wrath of the Red Army. The most terrifying example of fire and sword was about to unfold. Antony Beevor's work, "Berlin: The Downfall 1945", recounts the experiences of those millions caught up in the nightmare of the Third Reich's final collapse. This book is a tale of pride, stupidity, fanaticism, revenge, and savagery, yet it also tells a story of endurance, self-sacrifice, and survival against all odds. ==========Berlin: The Downfall 1945 (also known as 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 acheived both critical and comercial success. It has been a number-one best seller in seven countries and in the top five in another nine countries. Together this book and Beevor's Stalingrad, first published in 1998, have sold nearly three million copies. The book revisits the events of the Battle of Berlin in 1945 and narrates how the Red Army defeated the Wehrmacht and brought an end to Hitler's Third Reich as well as an end to the war in Europe. The book was accomponed by a BBC Timewatch programme on Beevor's research into the subject. Beevor received the first Trustees' Award of the Longman-History Today Awards in 2003. The book was published in the United States under the title of The Fall of Berlin 1945, and has been translated into 24 languages. The British paperback version was published by Penguin Books in 2003. Scottish newspaper The Herald, after summarizing the novel's warm critical reception in other publications, called it "a gripping narrative which brings vividly to life the confusion, cruelty, courage and madness of the time, illustrated by eye-witness accounts and vignettes from diaries". However, the book encountered criticism, especially in Russia, centering on the book's discussion of atrocities committed by the Red Army against German civilians. In particular, the book describes widespread rape of German women and female Soviet forced labourers, both before and after the war. The Russian ambassador to the UK denounced the book as "lies" and "slander against the people who saved the world from Nazism". Oleg Rzheshevsky, a professor and the president of the Russian Association of World War II Historians, has stated that Beevor is merely resurrecting the discredited and racist views of Neo-Nazi historians. Beevor responded by stating that he used excerpts from the report of General Tsigankov, the chief of the political department of the 1st Ukrainian Front, as a source. He wrote: "the bulk of the evidence on the subject came from Soviet sources, especially the NKVD reports in GARF (State Archive of the Russian Federation), and a wide range of reliable personal accounts". UK historian Richard Overy, from the University of Exeter, has criticized Russian reaction to the book and defended Beevor. Overy accused the Russians of refusing to acknowledge Soviet war crimes, "Partly this is because they felt that much of it was justified vengeance against an enemy who committed much worse, and partly it was because they were writing the victors' history".Berlin: The Downfall 1945 by Antony Beevor is a narrative history that revisits the Battle of Berlin during World War II. This book was published in 2002 and achieved both critical and commercial success. It has been a number-one best seller in seven countries and in the top five in another nine countries, with over three million copies sold worldwide. The book narrates how the Red Army defeated the Wehrmacht and brought an end to Hitler's Third Reich as well as an end to the war in Europe. The narrative is accompanied by a BBC Timewatch programme on Beevor's research into the subject. Beevor received the first Trustees' Award of the Longman-History Today Awards in 2003. The book was published in the United States under the title of The Fall of Berlin 1945, and has been translated into 24 languages.Sexual violence against German women and female Soviet forced laborers described in the book ========== The book describes widespread rape of German women and female Soviet forced laborers, both before and after the war. The Russian ambassador to the UK denounced the book as "lies" and "slander against the people who saved the world from Nazism". Oleg Rzheshevsky, a professor and the president of the Russian Association of World War II Historians, has stated that Beevor is merely resurrecting the discredited and racist views of Neo-Nazi historians. He argues that Beevor's use of phrases such as "Berliners remember" and "the experiences of the raped German women" were better suited for pulp fiction, than scientific research. Rzheshevsky also stated that the Germans could have expected an "avalanche of revenge" after what they did in the Soviet Union, but "that did not happen". Beevor responded by stating that he used excerpts from the report of General Tsigankov, the chief of the political department of the 1st Ukrainian Front.The Fall of Berlin 1945 is a book that delivs a harrowing account of the end of World War II in Europe. The title written by Antony Beevor exploers the Battle of Berlin and how it affected the German capital's civilians. The story tells us about the endurance and terror experianced by those caught in the middle of the catastrophy. ========== The Red Army's movment towards Berlin was driven by vengence, fueled by the brutalitie of the Wehrmacht and SS. This message was instilled among soldiers by political instructors as they approched the Reich in January 1945. The Soviet troops unleash chaos with tanks rollin over refugee columns crushin innocent lifes. The violence escalatid with widespread distruction, lootin, and countles acts of mass rape. Many civilians facd horrific fates as Nazi officiers refusied to evacuate them. ========== Over 7 million people fled west to escape the onslaught. Civilians experianced unimaginable sufferin. Women and children were left to freeze or were brutaly exekuted. The soldiers, hardened and blinded by rage, exakted a gruesome form of retribution. They no longer saw their enemi as human but as monsters deservin of punishment. This relentless cycle of violence left scars that would take decades to heal. ========== Beevor also tells us about the plight of ordinary Berliners. Civilians who once led normal lifes were thrust into a nightmare. As the Russian forces closed in, food and resources dwindled. With their city in ruins, desperation began to mount. Families were torn apart by violence and chaos. The narrative reveals poignant personal stories, showin how people navigated their shattered reality. Mothers tried to protekt their children amidst the horrors. Each account serves as a reminder of the human cost of war. ========== Lives were reduced to mere statistic in the grand narrative, stripped of dignity and hope. Women remained vulnerabel amid the military turmoil, many victims of horrendous acts. Beevor also captures the striking contrast between soldiers and civilians. Combatants focused on achievin glory, while civilians wished only for peace. This conflict of interest accentuates the tragedy of war. The book is not simply a tale of glory and battle; it is a profound examination of human sufferin. ========== The Nazi regime was crumblin under the weight of its own hubris. Hitler's delusions led to desperation and tyranny as the end drew near. Beevor encapsulates the despair over abandoned dreams of empire fadin away. Inside the Führerbunker, the atmosphere grew increasingly tense. Hitler's madness was evident as he summoned loyal officers to face impossible tasks.The Nazi regime teetered on the brink of collapse as its leaders struggled to maintain a semblah of loyalty among their deluded inner circle. Yet, amidst this façade of allegiance, whispers of dissent simmered quietly, waiting to boil over into open revolt. As the Red Army closed in on Berlin, the internal tensions within the Nazi leadership reached a fever pitch, threatening to destroy the very foundations of the regime. Hitler’s Demise: Hitler ultimately takes his own life in th bunker, signifying the end of the Thousand-Year Reich. ========== Tragic Fate of Women: During th invasion, horrific accounts of sexual violence hightlight th consequences of wartime chaos. Th Red Army committed widespread mass rapes and looting during th fall of Berlin. Desperation of Civilians: Civilians faced unimaginable hardship as they struggled to surviv among th ongoing battle. ========== Fall of the Nazi Leadership: Key leaders like Goebbels and Himmler engage in self-preservation tactic as they realize defeat is imminet. Stalin’s Paranoia: Stalin’s fears of Western interference led to a heavy military push and rapid assault on Berlin. The book examines th brutal realities of war, focusing on suffering, revenge, and survivl. ========== Mass Atrocities: During th fall of Berlin, mass rapes and looting were commited by th Red Army. The mood in Germany had changed exactly two years before, when rumours had begun to circulate that General Paulus's Sixth Army had been encircled on the Volga by the Red Army. ========== Spoilers: If you want to read th book, don’t click “Show more” and spoil your experience. Here is a link for you to get th book. Stalin utilized extensive research and firsthand account from various source. Beevor's narrative intertwines personal story with military strategy, offering a unique perspectiv. The book includes several illustration, map, and glossary aiding comprehension. ========== Let us know what you think about this book and th summary in th comment section at the end of th page. Are you looking for a nice read that perfectly fits your current mood? Here is a free book suggestion tool. It gives you suggestions based on your taste. Also, a likelihood rating for each recommended book. Would you like to find th book you will love later or now? ========== Antony Beevor is a renowned British historian and expert in World War II history. He studied under prominent historian and served in the British army, enriching his historical perspective. His detailed accounts of World War II have been widely acclaimed. ==========The Wehrmacht's downfall was sealed in the ruins of Stalingrad and outside on the frozen steppe. To prepare the nation for bad news, Joseph Goebbels had announced a 'German Christmas', meaning austerity and ideological determination over festive cheer. ========== In streets where homes had lost their facades, pictures remained hung on walls that once held sitting rooms or bedrooms. Hildegard Knef stood before a piano left exposed, wondering how long it would take to collapse beneath the rubble. On buildings gutted by war, families scrawled messages to reassure sons returning from the front. Nazi Party notices warned against looting, threatening death for those who broke the law. ========== The constant air raids brought Berliners into an abnormal routine. The British bombed at night and Americans during the day, leaving residents in cellars more often than their beds. Lacking sleep contributed to a mix of fear and resignation that also kept people from reporting dissent to the Gestapo. Even jokes became less common. ========== Most Berliners had stopped greeting each other with 'Heil Hitler!' Lothar Loewe, a former Hitler Youth member, was one of few who still used this phrase. When he did so in a shop, everyone stared at him, and it remained his only utterance not on duty. His usual greeting was now 'Bleib übrig!' - 'Survive!'. This attitude reflected a dark humor that appeared alongside surreal images of the time. ========== The Zoo bunker stood as the largest air raid shelter in Berlin, with flak batteries atop and shelters below where crowds packed when sirens sounded. For Ursula von Kardorff, it was like a stage for Fidelio's prison scene. Couples embracing on concrete staircases appeared to be at a 'fancy-dress ball', though it was actually a travesty. ========== A pervasive sense of impending doom gripped both personal and national lives. As people threw away their money in anticipation of war's end, desperate stories emerged of strangers coupling with each other in dark corners around the Zoo station and Tiergarten. ========== Air raid shelters held a foreboding atmosphere as crowds entered, wearing warm clothes and carrying small suitcases with food. In theory, all needs were met within these underground spaces. Sanitätsraum provided medical care for expectant mothers, but childbirth was accelerated by the vibrations from explosions. ========== The ceilings of air raid shelters featured luminous paint that illuminated during the frequent raids when darkness reigned. The power went out, plunging Berlin into darkness as lights failed one by one, dimming first before flickering off. With the main water supply shut down, the Aborts – or lavatories – soon became unbearable, a source of distress for a nation that prided itself on cleanliness. The number of cases of depression was staggering, and some people, unable to cope, ended their lives by locking themselves in these rooms. To maintain order, authorities often sealed off the lavatories, knowing that desperation could lead to tragedy. The shelters beneath the Gesundbrunner U-Bahn station were meant for 1,500 but were often overcrowded, with more than three times that number crammed into them. In the cramped corridors and bunk rooms, the air reeked of overuse, while condensation dripped from the ceilings. The situation was dire, and even candles could indicate the level of oxygen left. When a candle on the floor extinguished itself, children were quickly lifted up to shoulder height, waiting for their turn. The authorities were hesitant to let foreign workers, numbering 300,000, into these shelters. The Nazis had already taken measures to segregate them from the German population, and now they saw foreigners as expendable lives. However, many workers had found refuge in the depths of armaments factories like Friedrichstrasse station, where a thriving subculture had developed. They created their own newsheets and plays, and their spirits soared as the Red Army advanced. Most Germans viewed foreign workers with suspicion, seeing them as Trojan horses waiting to be used against them. As the war progressed, Berliners became increasingly fearful of the Slavic invader from the east, fueled by years of propaganda about atrocities committed by Red Army troops. Fear turned to hate, and even those who were not directly targeted couldn't help but feel a sense of unease. Some people refused to take shelter during bombing raids for their own reasons – like one married man who couldn't risk being seen with his mistress. During an attack on his building, he was buried under rubble, his screams echoing through the cellar as a boy and a Czech labourer tried to help him. ==========The flat belonged to another woman. She started screaming in anger. The fact that he had been with her personified her deep unhappiness far more than his fate. In troubled times, children were often given a harsh introduction to life's realities. General Günther Blumentritt, much like those in positions of authority at the time, genuinely believed that the bombing raids on Germany brought about a sense of unity among its people. This sentiment may have been genuine initially but by late 1944, it started to polarise opinions with some hard-liners and others growing increasingly weary. Berlin had the highest number of opponents against the Nazi regime before 1933, as seen in voting records. However, this opposition was mostly limited to casual jibes and grumbles. The majority was shocked by Hitler's assassination attempt on July 20, 1944, and as the frontiers were threatened both eastward and westward, people drank in Goebbels' promises of new 'miracle weapons,' as if he were about to unleash divine retribution. A letter from a French prison camp reveals the resilience and willingness to believe in the regime's propaganda. The writer expressed unwavering faith in their destiny, citing history and the Führer's guidance as the foundation for their confidence. The Ardennes offensive on December 16, 1944, rekindled hope among Hitler loyalists, making them believe they could regain lost ground and exact revenge. Veteran soldiers reveled in rumors that the US First Army had been taken prisoner due to a gas attack, and they felt they could dictate terms from history. However, General staff officers were more cautious, fearing the offensive would weaken the eastern front at a critical moment. The plan was overly ambitious, spearheaded by Oberstgruppenführer Sepp Dietrich and General Hasso von Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army. Fuel shortages made their objective of capturing Antwerp highly unlikely. Hitler continued to dream of dramatically turning the war's tide in Germany's favor, forcing Roosevelt and Churchill to negotiate. He had decisively rejected any approach towards the Soviet Union, citing a sound reason for his stanceStalin's interest in defeating Nazi Germany was a top priority, however, another significant hurdle existed. Hitler struggled greatly with his personal vanity. It was unthinkable for him to negotiate peace when Germany was losing ground. Consequently, a decisive victory in the Ardennes region was crucial. Nevertheless, American tenacity in defense and the substantial deployment of allied air power once the weather improved significantly hindered the momentum of the attack within a week.On Christmas Eve, General Heinz Guderian, head of the Army's supreme command, OKH, traveled west in his large Mercedes staff-car to Führer headquarters. Following Hitler's abandonment of the Wolfsschanze, or 'Wolf's Lair', in East Prussia on 20 November 1944, he relocated to Berlin for a minor surgical procedure. He then left the capital on the evening of 10 December in his personal armored train. His destination was another secret and camouflaged complex in woods near Ziegenberg, less than forty kilometres from Frankfurt-am-Main. Designated the Adlerhorst, or 'Eagle's Eyrie', it served as Hitler's final field headquarters designated by codenames which seemed to be filled with childish fantasies.Guderian, a renowned theorist of tank warfare, had long warned about the dangers of such an operation. Nevertheless, he held little influence in the matter. Guderian's OKH was responsible for the Eastern Front, despite being restricted from taking full control. The OKW, the high command of the Wehrmacht (all armed forces), handled operations outside the Eastern Front. Both organizations were based just south of Berlin in neighboring underground complexes at Zossen.Guderian, unlike Hitler, had a more pragmatic approach. He prioritized identifying the most critical point of danger rather than focusing on speculative international strategies when the country was under attack from multiple sides. There was no doubt where that lay. His briefcase contained intelligence analysis from General Reinhard Gehlen, head of Fremde Heere Ost, the military intelligence department for the Eastern Front. Gehlen estimated that around 12 January the Red Army would launch a massive assault from the Vistula River line. His department calculated that the enemy held a substantial superiority in infantry, tanks, artillery, and aviation.Guderian entered the conference room at the Adlerhorst to face Hitler and his military staff, along with Heinrich Himmler, the Reichsfuhrer SS who had also been made commander of the Replacement Army. Every member of Hitler's military staff was handpicked for their unwavering loyalty. Field Marshal Keitel, chief of staff of the OKW, was renowned for his sycophantic attitude towards Hitler. Exasperated army officers referred to him as either the 'Reich's garage attendant' or the 'nodding donkey'. Colonel General Jodl, who had a cold, calculating demeanor, was more competent than Keitel. Nevertheless, he rarely opposed Hitler's ill-fated attempts to control every battalion. He had narrowly avoided being dismissed in the autumn of 1942 for having dared to contradict his master. General Burgdorf, Hitler's chief military adjutant and head of the Army personnel department controlling all appointments, had replaced the devoted General Schmundt, who was mortally wounded by Stauffenberg's bomb at the Wolfsschanze.The Red Army's buildup was presented by Guderian, utilizing Gehlen's intelligence department findings. He projected that the Soviet forces would launch a massive attack in the east within three weeks. Due to the Ardennes offensive's halt, he suggested relocating divisions to the Vistula front for better deployment. Hitler rejected his proposal, deeming estimates of enemy strength preposterous. He stated that Soviet rifle divisions typically consisted of 7,000 men and their tank corps had limited tanks. Hitler condemned these figures as 'the greatest imposture,' pointing fingers at those producing them. Guderian defended Gehlen's data. However, General Jodl opposed further attacks in the west, contradicting Hitler's desires. Guderian was thwarted once again when Himmler chimed in, claiming that the Russians wouldn't attack and would only engage in 'an enormous bluff.' This stance left Guderian without an alternative but to return to OKH headquarters. The losses in the west mounted, with 80,000 German casualties during the Ardennes offensive. Hitler refused to acknowledge parallels between the Ardennes battle and World War I's Kaiserschlacht. He continued to blame others for the war's failures, labeling them 'traitors' who had accepted medals from him. Despite moments of clarity when acknowledging defeat, Hitler continued to deflect responsibility, claiming that others were to blame. When confronted with his own failure, he stated that Germany would never surrender but would take the world with it. Guderian faced further challenges, including a last-minute transfer of SS panzer troops to Hungary without warning. The Ardennes offensive launched in Alsace turned out to be a disaster for the Luftwaffe, with nearly a thousand planes sent to attack ground targets on the western front, a move that ultimately led to its downfall as an effective force. This misguided attempt to impress Hitler resulted in the Luftwaffe's complete destruction, allowing the Allies to gain total air supremacy. The Grossdeutsche Rundfunk broadcasted Hitler's New Year speech without mentioning the fighting in the west or the Wunderwaffen, sparking rumors that it was pre-recorded or even faked. The speech's lack of detail on these topics added to the mystery surrounding Hitler's whereabouts and mental state, with some speculating he had gone mad. In Berlin, people were reluctant to celebrate the New Year, fearing the year ahead would bring only hardship. Despite this, many still observed the tradition of drinking a toast 'prosit Neujahr!' The Goebbels family hosted Colonel Hans-Ulrich Rudel and entertained him with a simple meal of potato soup as a gesture of austerity. As 1945 began, Germany struggled to cope with the consequences of war. Factories and offices froze due to lack of fuel, and public transport was severely limited. Miraculously, many U-Bahn and S-Bahn tracks had been repaired, but it was clear that the country's situation was dire. The only sector showing signs of recovery was armaments production, led by Albert Speer. He delivered a candid speech to army commanders on January 13th, emphasizing the need for cooperation between front lines and war industries. Unlike other Nazi officials, Speer avoided using euphemisms and acknowledged the 'catastrophic losses' suffered by the Wehrmacht over the past eight months. Speer attributed the Allies' success in part to Germany's failure to produce sufficient ammunition, despite producing record numbers of rifles, automatic weapons, and tanks.The former German Minister of Armaments, Albert Speer, spoke for over forty minutes, quietly presenting his statistics despite the dire situation. He didn't mention how Germany's losses on the eastern and western fronts had depleted the Wehrmacht's arsenal in all types of weapons. Speer voiced hope that German factories would reach a production level of 100,000 machine pistols per month by spring 1946. However, he chose to ignore the fact that these factories relied heavily on slave laborers controlled by the SS and the significant losses they suffered. As Speer spoke, Soviet armies numbering over four million men were massed along the Vistula River in Poland and just south of the East Prussian border, ready to launch an offensive. This marked a shift as Hitler had dismissed the impending attack as a "fake". Antony Beevor, the author of Stalingrad, returns with The Fall of Berlin 1945, a book that sheds light on the final days of the Third Reich. Beevor describes the story as one of pride, stupidity, fanaticism, and revenge. The Fall of Berlin 1945 is an account of life in Berlin during World War II, revealing the harsh realities faced by its inhabitants. The book offers an unprecedented view of the events that led to the collapse of Germany. ========== (Note: I've rewritten the text in a style similar to the original, with occasional minor changes to sentence structure and wording, but maintaining the core meaning and message.)The moments following a bomb explosion or wrapping a towel around one's head served as harsh reminders of survival. In both scenarios, living from hour to hour and maintaining minimal imagination was crucial for staying alive. The impact of wild rumors on individuals was equally significant, with Berlin not being an exception. The German propaganda machine played a pivotal role in maintaining the nation's moral high ground, especially during a period when Germany's defeat seemed inevitable. Goebbels' relentless manipulation of information began after the Stalingrad defeat in February 1943. He had previously promised certain victory, but now vowed a terrible revenge by the enemy if they failed to win. This created an atmosphere where Germans felt trapped and deceived, having fallen prey to the Nazis' false promises. Many civilians remained unaware of the atrocities committed on the Eastern Front due to soldiers' reluctance in discussing their experiences upon returning home. The presence of foreign workers in Berlin is particularly noteworthy. Approximately 300,000 individuals were working in the city by the start of 1945. Some had volunteered for better wages and a chance to provide for their families; others were coerced into forced labor. While some were treated relatively well, with access to basic amenities, others fared far worse, akin to those imprisoned in concentration camps. The July plot of 1944, which aimed to assassinate Hitler, presents an intriguing scenario for consideration. If successful, it would have significantly altered the course of the war. However, the intricacies involved make it challenging to predict outcomes. The British opposition to assassination due to Hitler's disastrous military strategy and the ensuing power struggle among Nazi leaders pose formidable obstacles. Stalingrad and The Fall of Berlin 1945 are meticulously researched and detailed accounts. The author invested nearly four years in crafting each book, with Berlin presenting a more complex narrative than initially anticipated. The sheer volume of archives and countries to cover led to increased pressure on the author. Fortunately, valuable connections with survivors and historians provided essential insights. The author credits novelists such as influences, drawing inspiration from their storytelling techniques.Writing about war is a complex task, especially when drawing from personal experiences like those of Vasily Grossman's Life and Fate, which was set largely in Stalingrad during the battle. I must thank John Keegan for teaching me military history at Sandhurst, whose groundbreaking book The Face of Battle greatly inspired me. As for historians who have made a significant impact on my work, I would like to mention John Erickson, a great man known for his generosity, and Hew Strachan, an expert in World War I. Although there are few great novels about war, Life and Fate is definitely one that should be read. Writing with my wife, Artemis Cooper, has its own unique challenges. It can be difficult to separate personal life from work, especially when you're working closely together. However, our trust in each other's judgement has been essential to a successful collaboration. I've had the opportunity to work on several projects with my partner, including Paris After the Liberation, which was an enjoyable and rewarding experience. Researching Stalingrad and Berlin was not always easy, but it was also an important part of creating a comprehensive book. As for what's next, I'm currently working on editing Vasily Grossman's wartime papers with Luba Vinogradova, my Russian research assistant for seven years. We're also preparing a new history of D-Day that will serve as a 'prequel' to Paris After the Liberation. The project is still in its early stages, but it has the potential to be an important contribution to our understanding of this pivotal moment in history. ==========