

MASS RAPES AND SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE IN ANTONY BEEVOR'S *THE FALL OF BERLIN 1945*

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Abstract: *Antony Beevor's The Fall of Berlin 1945 has become the leading work of modern popular history. It accounts how ordinary people cope in extraordinary circumstances. With his usual diligence, Beevor has explored German and Russian sources to produce a compelling and terrifying narrative of the city's fall by the Red Army in 1945. Though Antony Beevor is a lucid chronicler of military tactics, strategy and maneuvers, he has a sympathetic eye for the ordinary people who became war's innocent victims. The narrative describes the last days of Hitler's Third Reich with an amazing style.*

This paper tries to examine the problem of sexual violence in its various forms that have happened both during and after wartime, as well as the stigmas imposed on victims of such crimes. This study is motivated by several questions. Firstly, why was rape employed as a form of retaliation for crimes committed by the Germans? Secondly, can voices that have been silenced actually be made to speak? Who bears the responsibility for the challenging aftermath of the conflict? How the horrors of war to be portrayed, acknowledged, and commemorated?

Key Words: *Sexual violence, Mass Rape, Red Army, War, Survival.*

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Introduction:

Antony Beevor, the military historian has reconstructed the different experiences of those millions caught up in the mad nightmare of the Third Reich's final collapse. His *The Fall of Berlin 1945* highlights the cruelty and savagery that many women experienced both during and after World War II.

'This brilliant storyteller. . . makes us feel the chaos and the fear as if every drop of blood was our own: that is his gift. It is much more than just a humane account; it is compellingly readable, deeply researched and beautifully written' said Simon Sebag Montefiore, *The Spectator*.

Berlin: The Downfall 1945 is a remarkably enlightening and captivating historical masterpiece penned by the brilliant and renowned author, Antony Beevor. With meticulous attention to detail, Beevor paints a vivid and comprehensive portrait of the tumultuous and momentous events that unfolded during one of the most critical junctures in human history - the fall of Berlin amidst the sweeping chaos of World War II. This exceptional literary work serves as not just a narrative account but also as a profound analytical tool, delving into the multifaceted layers of the historical context that surrounded this monumental event. Beevor's deep understanding and painstaking research shed light on the strategies employed by both sides, the key players involved, and the intricate web of complexities that shaped the course of the battle for Berlin. Antony Beevor's work on the Fall of Berlin 1945 holds significant importance in the field of historical research. His meticulous research, utilization of primary sources, and detailed narrative provide a comprehensive understanding of the events leading to and during the fall of Berlin. Beevor's work not only sheds light on the military strategies and tactics employed by both sides, but also delves into the impact on

civilians and infrastructure.

Rape as a Weapon of War:

While researching on *The Fall of Berlin 1945*, Antony Beevor found documents about sexual violence in the state archive of the Russian Federation. They were sent by the NKVD, the secret police, to their boss, Lavrentiy Beria, in late 1944. "These were passed on to Stalin," says Beevor. "You can actually see from the ticks whether they've been read or not - and they report on the mass rapes in East Prussia and the way that German women would try to kill their children, and kill themselves, to avoid such a fate."

Events Leading to the Fall of Berlin:

Antony Beevor examines the sequence of military operations, political decisions, and strategic maneuvers that ultimately culminated in the final assault on the German capital. It explores the shifting alliances, the collapse of the Nazi regime, and the progressive Soviet advance towards Berlin. The background of the fall of Berlin in 1945 is rooted in the larger context of World War II and the Eastern Front. As the war progressed, Soviet forces advanced towards Berlin, leading to the final battle for the city. The deteriorating German military situation, the strategic importance of Berlin as the capital of Nazi Germany, and the ideological motivations of both the German and Soviet leadership all contributed to the intense fighting and eventual downfall of the city. Antony Beevor explores the key players and their roles in the battle for Berlin. It delves into the perspectives of military commanders such as Georgy Zhukov, Konstantin Rokossovsky, and Vasily Chuikov, as well as political figures like Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels,

The three most important central concepts in *The Fall of Berlin 1945* are: First, the fall of Berlin in 1945, a horrifying and terrible period in history was characterized by the extreme violence and suffering inflicted upon both soldiers and civilians. Second, many battles and atrocities during the final days of World War II in Berlin serve as a stark reminder of both the depths of human cruelty and the terrible effects of war. Lastly, by providing an in-depth and painstakingly researched account of the events leading up to Berlin's fall and its aftermath, the book sheds light on a crucial period in World War II.

Berlin: The Downfall 1945 depicts a terrible story of pride, stupidity,

fanaticism, revenge and savagery. It also describes the astonishing human endurance, self-sacrifice and survival against all odds. The narrative exposed the conditions that could lead to women being forced into prostitution in occupied areas. In addition to being raped, women were also made to give up their bodies in order to survive and obtain food, safety, and protection. These women would not have found themselves in these circumstances or wished to be in these positions in the first place. The violence of World War II and the frequent changes in occupying forces led to a tense relationship between women attempting to rescue their homes and the soldiers.

The two main themes that have dominated the public discourse surrounding this book are the "normalization" of German civilian suffering and the disclosure of mass rapes committed in Germany by the Soviet army that liberated the country. The perception of sexual violence as an inevitable byproduct of total war is common during times of conflict. Total war is a type of military conflict in which all parties are prepared to give up everything—including lives and resources—in order to win. As a result, when the Red Army of the Soviet Union advanced into Germany, many of the soldiers sought revenge and mistreated the Germans.

During World War II, sexual violence took many different forms in addition to rape. Along with the mass rape, women were also victimized to sexual violence as a result of complex situations and circumstances. To safeguard themselves or their loved ones, a great number of women suffered sexual abuse. It is important to realize that sexual assault and power over women were not exclusive to one or two military factions, but rather happened on almost all of them. For instance, the Germans committed extreme brutality, including rape and plunder, when they invaded the Soviet Union.

Forced Rape: A Sexual Violation of Human Rights:

The issue of Soviet soldier rape plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of Germans as either victims or victimizers. The traditional and symbolic roles of women as mothers, moral advisors, and members of the political bodies may also be touched by these rapes. Historically, the rape of women during war is either largely hidden or only becomes apparent when discussing issues of aggressiveness on the part of the victor or the innocence of the loser during wartime diplomacy. In fact, military histories tend to be quite silent when it comes to the problem of rape,

even in cases where forced prostitution. Mass rape have been institutionalized and supported by the military during World War II.

The mass rape evidence generated a victim ideology so strong that 'women's violated bodies took on an enormous emotional value, and women's suffering came to symbolize the victimization of all Germans'. The Red Army has been linked to horrifying rapes and sporadic acts of violence.

Mass rape constituted a serious issue, women were also victims of sexual violence as a result of their complex social and personal environments. or instance, a lot of women suffered sexual abuse in order to protect themselves or their loved ones. It is important to realize that this kind of sexual abuse and control over women was not exclusive to one or two armed forces, but rather existed on nearly every front. For instance, the Germans behaved extremely brutally and committed rape and pillage upon entering the Soviet Union.

In his book *The Fall of Berlin 1945*, Antony Beevor states that 'writers on the subject have often defined rape as an act of violence that has little to do with sex'. But he goes on to say that many soldiers who had been fighting at the front thought they were fulfilling a sexual need that had been denied to them. Furthermore, gang rape and other comparable acts served as a form of social camaraderie and recreational activity for the soldiers, in addition to the fact that rape and other sexual violence against women were committed as a way to satisfy their libidinous urges.

Sexual violence and rape in war are often used as a means of demoralizing and humiliating a nation and its people. The reasons for this vary depending on the country and military, but there is always one common theme. The victim is considered to have been caught in the crossfire of combat and the pain and suffering they endure are considered accidental casualties.

Sexual Violence as a Survival and Protection Strategy:

The significant forms of sexual violence against women in wartime include forced prostitution, sexual slavery, and coerced sexual relations. Many women tolerated this for a variety of reasons. For example, some women endured sexual assault to protect themselves and their loved ones, while others did so to survive another day by providing food for themselves and others. For numerous women, enduring the war and its aftermath constituted a daily struggle. Is it possible for to

reach tomorrow? Food scarcity was a big problem, and women tried to solve it by any means necessary so they could feed their families and loved ones. Numerous soldiers in the occupying armies attempted to use food as a bribe to persuade women to have sex with them because they were aware of the desperation that was engulfing the war-torn nations of Europe.

Many women came to accept sexual violence as a means of protection and survival, especially after the Red Army occupation of war-torn Berlin. Many women frequently sought out and drew the attention of a high-ranking officer, putting a taboo on themselves in the process. Dr Patil Prabhavati Arvind and et.al. opine

‘War places sexuality at scales of emotions such as openness, helplessness, anxiety and the worldwide requirement to be loved and concerned for, in the meeting of ‘lips’, the eroticism of greed are overwhelmed by the reassurances of affection’. (Patil, Prabhavati and et.al. 2019)

Woman struggles with herself that makes it evident that the kind of sexual abuse she is experiencing lacks a formal definition because of her partial consent. She is aware that this is not a forced rape. But since being a prostitute goes against everything she believes in; she also doesn't think she can really be called that. This confusion stemmed from the blurring of boundaries between women being placed in disadvantageous positions and prostitution as a profession.

Conclusions: Antony Beevor's *Berlin: The Downfall 1945* (2002) records the widespread rape of German women by the Soviet army. It challenges heroics and the meanings of heroism, the stories of survival or subversion, women as military collateral and marginalized black soldiers revolutionizing their homelands. It is subversions of women as military collateral which make war extraordinary. It seems that men's ultimate act of rage and retaliation against the enemy they are fighting is to victimize women and children during wartime. Their act of killing has become a legitimate means of expressing their victimization, transcending morality. Antony Beevor makes extensive use of unpublished interviews, diaries and first-hand accounts to explain the horrific violence perpetrated by enemy forces against civilians. *Berlin: The Downfall 1945* was linked to violence against women.

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