

- **Anonyma.** *Eine Frau in Berlin: Tagebuchaufzeichnungen vom 20. April bis 22. Juni 1945.* Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn Verlag, 2003. 300 S. EUR 19.00 (broschiert), ISBN 978-3-8218-4737-5.



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The Spoils of War: A Woman in Berlin in the Spring of 1945

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She began writing her diary on April 20, 1945, when she found three empty notebooks in the apartment directly under the roof of the building that had become her new home after she lost her own to a bomb attack. In the following sixty-two days, the anonymous diarist describes the everyday life of Berliners just before and during the opening days of the Red Army occupation. Without a hint of self-pity, she chronicles the city's descent into a society of *Hoehlenbewohner* (cave dwellers) who will do anything—including prostituting themselves to Russian soldiers—for their next meal (p. 13). Her diary ends with the return of her fiance, who condemns the way she and the other women in the house compromised traditional moral standards in order to survive.

The author, who obviously belonged to an upper-middle class family, was in her early thirties when these events took place. She had received an excellent education, traveled extensively before the war, working as a journalist in Moscow, Paris, and London. As a result,

she spoke several foreign languages fluently, possessing enough skill in Russian to conduct a simple conversation.

A few years after the war she showed her diary to a friend who convinced her to publish it. The book was translated into English and first appeared in New York in 1954. A German edition followed in 1959. Largely ignored by the reading public in both countries, the book soon vanished from store shelves. The memories of the pain caused by Nazi Germany were still too fresh even for Americans to consider what German civilians had gone through.

Half a century later, the book's time has finally come. The Federal Republic of Germany emerged from the Cold War as a unified country ready to debate the once taboo topic of the cost incurred by German society during World War II as part of its continuing efforts of coming to terms with the past—and without arousing suspicion in other countries of trying to justify Nazi atrocities. The