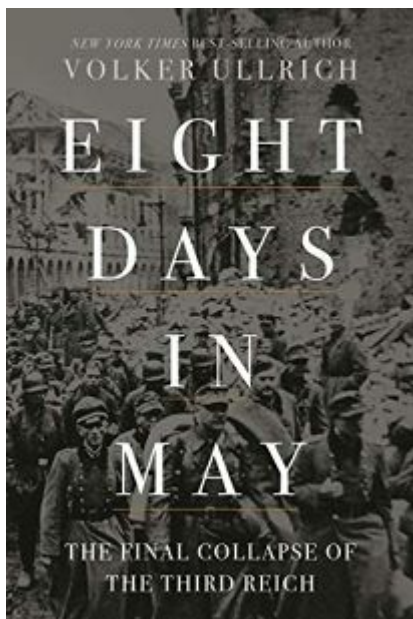




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★ Eight Days in May: The Final Collapse of the Third Reich

Volker Ullrich, trans. from the German by Jefferson Chase. Liveright, \$28.95 (336p) ISBN 978-1-63149-827-5

This vivid account by historian Ullrich (*Hitler: Downfall*) renders the death throes of the Third Reich in riveting detail. Beginning with Hitler's suicide on Apr. 30, 1945, and the appointment of Adm. Karl Dönitz as his successor, Ullrich describes Nazi leaders' desperate, delusional attempts to "driv[e] a wedge" between the Soviet Union and its Western Allies by negotiating separate peace agreements. Political and military collapse is intertwined with grim vignettes of a country in chaos, as suicides rates surged and starving Berliners ate horse meat to survive. Drawing on diaries, military records, and memoirs, Ullrich describes how Hitler's underlings suddenly became "autonomously thinking and acting people again," and details future East German leader Walter Ulbricht's arrival from Moscow and future West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer's appointment as mayor of Cologne. Meanwhile, horror stories emerging from the concentration camps reinforced the sensation that, in the words of one political prisoner, "the thick curtain drawn across [Germany] in the past twelve years had finally come down, openly revealing all the terrible things that had gone on behind it." This immersive and often disturbing chronicle brilliantly evokes a surreal moment in history that gave "the impression of apocalypse on the one hand and of a new beginning on the other." Illus. (Sept.)

DETAILS