

BERLIN 1945

SURVIVING THE COLLAPSE

FRIEDRICH HÜLSTER

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY KLAUS TRUEMPER



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Foreword

During April and May 1945, the final months of World War II in Europe, the Russian army overran the desperate remnants of the German defense forces of Berlin.¹ It is estimated that 125,000 civilians perished during the extensive battle.²

In terse and unvarnished language, author Friedrich Hülster tells how he, his wife Eva, and two other couples survived this cataclysmic event.

How did they manage to do this?

The three couples believed that the Russian officers and soldiers weren't the monsters depicted by Nazi propaganda, but were humans like everybody else. Out of that belief emerged a strategy for survival.

The approach might not have worked. By sheer luck it did. The German commander for the district of Berlin where they lived gave up without a fight, and the Russian troops didn't commit as many vengeful atrocities as in other parts of Berlin.

Nevertheless, at several moments, all seemed to be lost.

The first chapter jumps abruptly into the story, without any introduction to guide the reader. Here are background facts.

The three couples are the author Friedrich and his wife Eva, Herr and Frau³ Steimel, his first name Karl; and Herr and Frau Schmacks. The author always refers to his wife as Ev. The Steimels and Schmacks

have children, but we never learn how many. Friedrich and Eva have no children.

Prior events have brought them together at the Steimels's house in the Berlin suburb of Zehlendorf.⁴ Friedrich Hülster has a PhD in physics and works in a research lab of the Telefunken company, an electronics giant until World War II. Eva has worked in the office of a local company as technical draftsman, but lately has become assistant-for-everything.

The photo below shows Friedrich and Eva Hülster in 1946.⁵



A personal note from the editor and translator: I am a nephew of Friedrich Hülster who inherited his philosophical writings and diaries. This was no random event. Over decades, he and I had interacted on questions of philosophy and how one should live in this world.

K.T.