



Death in the Baltic: The World War II Sinking of the Wilhelm Gustloff

Cathryn J. Prince

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The worst maritime disaster ever occurred during World War II, when more than 9,000 German civilians drowned. It went unreported.

January 1945: The outcome of World War II has been determined. The Third Reich is in free fall as the Russians close in from the east. Berlin plans an eleventh-hour exodus for the German civilians trapped in the Red Army's way. More than 10,000 women, children, sick, and elderly pack aboard the *Wilhelm Gustloff*, a former cruise ship. Soon after the ship leaves port and the passengers sigh in relief, three Soviet torpedoes strike it, inflicting catastrophic damage and throwing passengers into the frozen waters of the Baltic.

More than 9,400 perished in the night—six times the number lost on the Titanic. Yet as the Cold War started no one wanted to acknowledge the sinking. Drawing on interviews with survivors, as well as the letters and diaries of those who perished, award-winning author Cathryn Prince reconstructs this forgotten moment in history. She weaves these personal narratives into a broader story, finally giving this WWII tragedy its rightful remembrance.

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