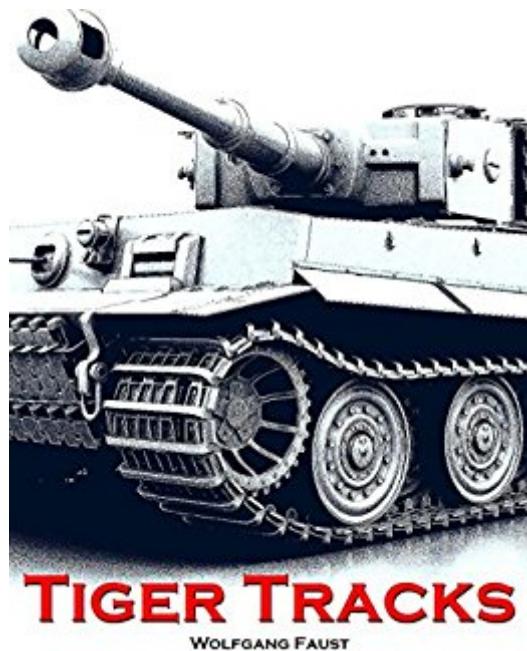


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Tiger Tracks - The Classic Panzer Memoir



Synopsis

Wolfgang Faust was the driver of a Tiger I tank with the Wehrmacht Heavy Panzer Battalions, seeing extensive combat action on the Eastern Front in 1943-45. This memoir was his brutal and deeply personal account of the Russian Front's appalling carnage. Depicting a running tank engagement lasting 72 hours, Faust describes how his Tiger unit fought pitched battles in the snows of western Russia against the full might of the Red Army: the T34s, Stalin tanks, Sturmovik bombers and the feared Katyusha rocket brigades. His astonishing testimony reveals the merciless decisions that panzer crews made in action, the devastating power of their weaponry, and the many ways that men met their deaths in the snow and ice of the Ostfront. First published in the late 1940s, this memoir's savage realism shocked the post-war German public. Some readers were outraged at the book's final scenes, while others wrote that, "Now, at last, I know what our men did in the East." Today it stands as one of the great semi-autobiographical accounts of warfare in World War 2: a crescendo of horror, grim survival and a fatalistic acceptance of the panzer man's destiny. Among the most impressive narratives of the Eastern Front that I have read. The pages are alive with characters - their machines, their struggles, their decisions and their pain. Readers will finish the book haunted and truly moved, the mark of a great story." - Chris Ziedler, the English translator of "SS Panzer SS Voices." Originally published in the German Federal Republic as "Panzerdammerung" ("Panzer Twilight.") The only other surviving memoir by this author is 'The Last Panther' - an astonishing account of panzer warfare in the final hours of the Third Reich - available now on .

Book Information

File Size: 1275 KB

Print Length: 132 pages

Publisher: Bayern Classic Publications (March 4, 2015)

Publication Date: March 4, 2015

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00UASW4GK

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #3,068 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #3 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Military & Wars > World War II #7 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Military & Spies #9 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Military > World War II

Customer Reviews

I started reading this book with high hopes. Tiger Tracks purports to be a memoir written by a veteran of the Panzer force, but it became quickly apparent that it's really a very gory and lurid piece of fiction being fobbed off as fact on those who don't know any better. "Wolfgang Faust" is conveniently a pseudonym, so the true author's military service records could never be checked. He is the lone survivor of the Kampfgruppe he starts the book with, so the veracity (or its lack) cannot be cross-checked. The author has a basic understanding of tanks and their mechanics, but an understanding that could have been gleaned from such sources as the Panzerfibel without requiring any hands-on experience. There is a great deal of writhing in flames in this book. Everyone hit in the head is decapitated, hollow-point bullets literally blow men apart (they don't). All the violence is very Hollywood, and over-the-top. There are a number of historically inaccuracies or outright impossibilities. There are an even greater number of decisions and actions undertaken by persons depicted in the book, which from a military point of view are ludicrous and suicidal (I should mention here for the sake of credibility, that I am a former member of a mechanized infantry unit). Examples:- an experienced Tiger tank commander takes custody of a female Soviet prisoner and chains her up inside the tank. NO. There's absolutely no room inside an armored fighting vehicle for extra personnel. Even those who belong there are cramped and crowded. The danger this prisoner would interfere during a battle makes this action tactically absurd.- Panzergrenadiers remain inside their halftracks during a stationary defensive battle while under assault by aircraft and enemy armor.

. . . and not a very good one. Obviously this is not really a memoir, or anything of the sort. The clincher as to its entirely fictional nature is that "Wolfgang Faust" describes two major tank battles between Tiger tanks and the Joseph Stalin tanks, but the Joseph Stalin tank he describes--an inverted soup-dish turret and a wedge-shaped cast iron front block on the hull, is the IS-3 and it was not manufactured until May, 1945 when the war was over. So both of these battles were entirely confabulated, probably based upon the author having seen IS-3s in Germany between 1945 and

1948 when this novel was written. But the problem isn't so much that this is a novel, but that it is a bad novel. The whole plot is strategically absurd. The opening scenes are of a coordinated assault by Stukas, Tigers and armored infantry. The attack is successful, but within the same day, the Germans are forced to retreat not only to their jump off point, a couple of miles to the rear, but all the way back to a river that is 60 miles to the rear. All along their two-day retreat to the river, they are attacked by Russians who have gotten behind them. All I can say is, if the Germans were still attacking when their rear was threatened and insecure for a distance of 60 miles, it's little wonder they lost the war. But that's how they lost Von Paulus' Sixth Army at Stalingrad, so maybe it was, in fact, normal German strategy on the Eastern Front to insanely expose themselves and invite encirclement. What rings even more false than the strategic situation is the author's penchant for claiming to have seen things he couldn't possibly have seen from any plausible location on the battlefield, much less buttoned up in the driver's seat of a Tiger tank, looking through a narrow slit.

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