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# The Last Panther - Slaughter Of The Reich - The Halbe Kessel 1945

## THE LAST PANTHER



**WOLFGANG  
FAUST**



## Synopsis

While the Battle of Berlin in 1945 is widely known, the horrific story of the Halbe Kessel remains largely untold. In April 1945, victorious Soviet forces encircled 80,000 men of the German 9th Army in the Halbe area, South of Berlin, together with many thousands of German women and children. The German troops, desperate to avoid Soviet capture, battled furiously to break out towards the West, where they could surrender to the comparative safety of the Americans. For the German civilians trapped in the Kessel, the quest to escape took on frantic dimensions, as the terror of Red Army brutality spread. The small town of Halbe became the eye of the hurricane for the breakout, as King Tigers of the SS Panzer Corps led the spearhead to the West, supported by Panthers of the battle-hardened 21st Panzer Division. Panzer by panzer, unit by unit, the breakout forces were cut down until only a handful of Panthers, other armour, battered infantry units and columns of shattered refugees made a final escape through the rings of fire to the American lines. This first-hand account by the commander of one of those Panther tanks relates with devastating clarity the conditions inside the Kessel, the ferocity of the breakout attempt through Halbe, and the subsequent running battles between overwhelming Soviet forces and the exhausted Reich troops, who were using their last reserves of fuel, ammunition, strength and hope. Eloquent German-perspective accounts of World War 2 are surprisingly rare, and the recent reissue of Wolfgang Faust's 1948 memoir *Tiger Tracks* has fascinated readers around the world with its insight into the Eastern Front. In *The Last Panther*, Faust used his unique knowledge of tank warfare to describe the final collapse of the Third Reich and the murderous combat between the German and Russian armies. He gives us a shocking testament to the cataclysmic final hours of the Reich, and the horrors of this last eruption of violence among the idyllic forests and meadows of Germany.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Hard-hitting, graphic, and fast moving...those adjectives sum up Faust's highly descriptive account of his experiences during the Halbe pocket breakout. This operation involved the frantic attempt of German troops and civilians to escape the clutches of the Soviets as the noose tightened around them near Berlin in 1945. Faust's role as a Panther commander is described in graphic detail and builds upon his previous experiences as a driver of a Tiger tank on the Eastern Front earlier in the war. (Read "Tiger Tracks") Faust's accounts puts the reader right into the turret of a deadly Panther tank as it confronts overwhelming Soviet infantry, armor, and air power hell-bent on capturing and annihilating all German forces within their grasp as the war ended east of the Elbe river. The ruthlessness of the combat by both sides is not for the faint hearted, so reader discretion is highly recommended.

This is a brutal memorial of the very last days of the Third Reich, as experienced by a grizzled tank commander. Though it is unclear if this is a genuine historical account by a real person, and not a novelist, the writing is good and ghastly, and coherent with documented situations at the end of the war. The simple plotline is a drive through soviet controlled territory by the tank crews, desperately trying to reach allied lines to surrender to the Americans, while german civilians flee and die (mostly die) without any hope of protection by the military remnants. What this book does best is depicting the horrors one after the other, without giving you any pause to think if this is a real or manufactured story. Very good, and consistent, recommended for anyone wishing to know what the one last ride in a panzer was like, and what motivated the men that did so. Recommended

In the last days of WWII the victorious Red Army had entered Berlin and the Reich was in ruins. This book tells the story of the German 9th Army encircled by the Russians in the Halbe area, South of Berlin, together with thousands of German women and children. Desperate to avoid capture by the vicious Russians the Germans (led by a handful of tanks) "battled furiously to break out towards the West, where they could surrender to the comparative safety of the Americans." This is a very straight forward account of that action by one of the German tank commanders (his tank was the "Panther" of the title). Regardless of its literary merit this is a fascinating description of that action in all its horror and sacrifice. This would be of great interest to WWII buffs but of limited value to anyone looking for an adventure novel/war story.

It is a fast moving and very graphic first hand WW2 story about a Tank commander on his way - away from the Russians - to the American lines. While it is fast moving and graphic, he also uses the same phrases over and over. I don't know how many times his tank got hit but it did nothing to his tank, but when other tanks got hit they immediately exploded etc. It was an interesting read, but after reading many other first hand WW2 stories I find this one too detailed and overly graphic to be 100% believable. Still a good book, but either it's the translation or the content. Something did not want me to give it 5 Stars...

The break out around Berlin is a known action. This puts a personal stamp on things. I haven't read much about the King Tigers in action. You can tell Faust is writing from "hind sight" and there are some inconsistencies in the time line. However, the panic and fear as the war ended and Soviets closed in is all there.

I've read many accounts of Russian brutality on the German people but never from the eyes of those desperate to escape it while separately trying to reach and surrender to the Americans. Faust is fighting an unbelievable last ditch series of battles to protect soldiers, and get as many civilians as he can to the Americans. You find yourself rooting for them shortly on. The accounts of what he experienced and witnessed hold nothing back. The treatment of SS soldiers by the Russians is understandable but the treatment of German women is horrifying. This is another must read from Faust.

I don't quite know what to say. I was drawn into the story and completed the book. However, several times I felt as though the author was "pulling my leg" by embellishing stories. I read a few other

reviews saying the author is in fact a fraud who may or may not have shared the experiences he writes about. Normally I would not entertain such ideas, however, this story does beg the question. How does a commander inside a hot, cramped tank, have this deity like vision of all the action around him, which he describes.

Excellent read....Brutality of war is depicted with frankness....Explanation of the tank crews positions & responsibilities along with the operation and problems related to the,vehicles themselves explained extremely well ... Action packed (and very gory) from start to finish...I read this book in a few hours...couldn't put it down...I purchased Tiger Tracks by the same author and it too is excellent....

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