



Wheels of Terror

Sven Hassel

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The best-selling military writer returns to his comrades in 27th penal battalion, offering another gritty, realistic view of the ordinary soldier in wartime. Now stationed at the Russian Front, and equipped with armored vehicles, Sven Hassel's band of warriors from the German army gird for the next battles. Caught between the insane orders of the Nazi high command and the overwhelming numbers of Russian soldiers, they prepare to fight on nonetheless--and will do anything to survive the inferno. A remorseless ride through a man-made hell.

Wheels of Terror Details

Date : Published April 1st 2007 by Cassell (first published 1958)

ISBN : 9780304366330

Author : Sven Hassel

Format : Paperback 304 pages

Genre : War, Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Military Fiction, World War II



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From Reader Review Wheels of Terror for online ebook

Billy H says

I have been sticking with the same sort of war and fighting genre, and this book has been one of the better ones I have read. Hassel's descriptions of his experiences create a strong view of the horrors of the war, and how it felt for him to be put through it all.

Another strong point, and something I rarely feel, was I started to like the characters. You feel happy or sad when his regiment does. It may seem weird, but I was actually supporting the German Soldiers over the Russians.

I really enjoyed this book, and I would definitely read the other books Hassel has written

Otto Thebierdude says

Another rollicking tale of Porta, Tiny, The old Man etc
I must of read these books 4/5 times since I was a lad at school
Time to re-read I think
A strange thing is they are hard to find now all my copys are old and tattered and can only find replacements on second hand stalls?

Diane says

I really enjoyed reading this; it rang true to accounts I have heard from veterans about their experiences in war especially in tank battles. Fast paced...

Helmisade says

I can't quite decide if I should label this one fiction or non-fiction... The author clearly says that he is describing personal experiences, but I do believe he has taken some artistic liberties. As a compromise I'm labeling it as historical, but not non-fictional.

The story is a bit of a blur since I read the first two books in the series in a row (and am using this same review for both), but I guess it suffices to say that war is hell indeed and there's no shiny heroics to be found in these books.

Bodicainking says

Glorious schlock.

Ana says

I'm just hooked to Hassel's books. I like the explicit language and the way human character is put to tryouts in his books.

Just amazing!

Rick Brindle says

This is Sven Hassel's second book, and takes more of a fictional slant over his first one. The characters are slightly more comic-book, but his vivid description of the horrors of war, and the brutality of life on the eastern front are hard to equal. Beginning with the story of air raids over Hamburg, before moving to Hassel's usual location, fighting the Soviet masses, this novel still has the ability to shock decades after it was written.

Mr. Matt says

Sven, The Old Un, Porta, and the rest of the gang are back.... on the Eastern Front. And, like them, I did not enjoy the experience.

This book follows the author's first book, Legion of the Damned. It is a much darker story. If not deliberate, I think it is unavoidable. The author's experience as a soldier in the Wehrmacht left him as both a front row observer and an active (albeit unwilling and reluctant) participant on what he knew to be an evil cause.

The story begins in a German city that suffers a horrific fire bombing (Dresden?). The gang is ordered into the city on a rescue and recovery mission. What they witness was absolutely terrible: children burned alive, families suffocated in bomb shelters, the partially melted corpses of indiscriminate humanity. At one point one of the crew shoots and kills burning civilians simply to put them out of their misery. How cleaning up the wreckage of human and witnessing these awful things did not break these men is beyond me. It was hard reading, and I was glad when the story moved on.

From Germany, the guys return to the Eastern Front where, as everyone knows, the fight is not going well. The tide of war has turned against Nazi Germany. There is only a relentless retreat punctuated by furious fighting. In this part of the story, we do get bursts of humor, but even that is tempered. The crew occasionally are lucky enough to find themselves on a quiet sector of the front - maybe even an area where Fritz is on good relations with Ivan. Both sides have an agreement to not shoot at each other. When officers come around, they warn each other and shoot high. This is another tragedy. Neither side (well, the grunts) really wants to fight. The Germans know their regime is evil. The Soviets know their side is bad too. They just want the war to be over and go home.

Unfortunately, neither side gets to go home. Roving bands of SS and over zealous officers kill deserters and leave their bodies hanging as a warning to other potential run-aways. The Soviet political commissars do the same. So the war drags on. And by the winter of 1944-45, it gets truly terrible for Sven and company. The German lines are collapsing. Everyone is streaming to the West and order is breaking down. The only thing that saves them is that the Russians are advancing faster than their supply lines.

Maybe it was just me, but I found this was a hard book to read. The stark reality of war was horrific to read about. As a result, this book lacked the 'fun' of the first. Having said that, I think this book should be mandatory for everyone that ever wants to join the military or go to war. Like Sherman said, war is hell.

Two stars out of five.

Herbert says

Tweede boek van hem en ik ben inderdaad fan ruw rauw kortweg een oorlogsverhaal zoals het moet spannend van het begin tot het einde. Soms doet het je huiveren maar toch ook steeds weer boeiend naar het vervolg. Op naar het volgende verhaal als ik deze nog ergens kan vinden natuurlijk.

Dragos Iosif says

Could not finish it. There is no real plot, characters are bland and there is no reason for me to continue reading this.

The first book could be excused for doing this because it contained everything the narrator's been through during WW2 and maybe he was just trying to provide his point of view, without making it a historic document. Maybe he meant to say his experience wasn't an exception, but rather the rule.

This time there is no excuse for the omission of dates or for the lack of continuity. This whole story seems made up. Sure, this is considered a work of fiction so I should not seek the truth here. But the things these characters go through sound like the most outrageous, unbelievable lies ever - and not in a sort of Munchhausen way. They have all the possible war and army related experiences. They are in training, guard a military unit, form an execution squad, drive tanks, drive cars, form an infantry unit, work in a repair shop, are sent to a military prison, are part of a disciplinary battalion, form rescue parties for civilians, bury the remains of incinerated people, and are - as the story needs them to be - either the most skilled soldiers around or just cannon fodder.

Anna says

Sven Hassel in his books showed the World War II as it was for soldiers and civilians that were fighting and living on the areas of combat. Brutality, vulgarisms and presenting situation in the way it was without coulouring it up. Great inside story of an ordinary soldier who served in penal unit.

Miss Makaveli says

This book is bone chillingly real, from a man who was there. I don't understand why it isn't rated way high. The characters are very personable with distinct traits, making each individual even more memorable. The story is gruesome, but real and from a unique point of view. I thought it. Was a great read.

Hobbeldehoy says

This is the best of the Sven Hassel war novels based around a German penal unit on the Eastern front.

The novel's theme is as much horror as it is war or you could say the horrors of war. The content is graphic, scenes of violence that stay with you and the associated tragedy of the times. Although entertaining its not for the faint hearted and you're left pondering the madness of war and how as individuals we are mere pawns of higher powers in ivory towers.

Given the more enlightened public perspective where government corruption and war is concerned it's hard to see how armies could be raised in the same way again because pacifism is more prevalent in contemporary society and few, except radicalised ethnic groups, have an appetite for war. That's where this book does a service for humanity in general, it tells people how it really is and why the war cry should be rejected.

This book is a good read. In many ways pulp fiction but the message will reach a lot of people. Wheels of Terror doesn't glorify war. it's an anti war book.

SeRRo says

Sven Hassel is good at writing these war stories. They are intense and realistic, brutal and absurd. Hassel shows that not all orders have been obeyed and not all ranks have been respected in wars. Soldiers, people, have done at times what was right or simply done things to survive. It's the horrors of war that leave the deepest wounds that can't be healed. And it's dilemmas in war that turn moral principles upside down.

I have realised a bit too late that they are a series and I can say that the Legion of the Damned is the deepest of them, while the others just share war stories making use of more or less the same characters.

John says

It's all in here for the Sven Hassel fans... Tiny, Porta, The Legionnaire, The Old 'Un and Sven himself... all of the usual gang from the 27th Penal Battalion as they fight their way through Russia. This book is brutal and harsh and as good as you will get for WW2 military fiction.

J W Murison says

This was the first full length novel I ever bought and read. I had no idea at the time, the impact this book would have on me. Now forty years later, and a novelist myself, I admit this author probably had more to do with me becoming an author myself, than any other. Wheels of Terror will leave you rolling around the floor

in laughter one minute, and the next diving for cover. This author will introduce you to the full horror of war, in a manner that no other novelist could ever hope to achieve. J W Murison

Patrick Moloney says

Wheels of Terror should be compulsory reading for all young adults. By reading this you will see the horrors of war up close and personal. In the pages of this masterpiece you will find things that make you laugh, cry, despair and be horrified. An unimaginable roller coaster ride through hell on earth that is modern warfare. Young men taken from an ordinary world and thrown into an extra ordinary environment. These are people such as we pass daily on the highways and byways of our everyday life. But they have been chewed up and spat out by the modern military machine and turned into monsters. Monsters who will kill, maim and rape without compunction. Yet these are the same men who can show great empathy and compassion when least expected. If the laid bare facts of war and soldiering terrify you, then read this and be terrified and just maybe you may someday understand what is needed to prevent such situations. The men of the 27th Penal Panzer regiment are liars, murderers and thief's. They are highly trained soldiers and killing machines, but above all else they are human beings who have been greatly wronged. An absolute masterpiece that looks deep inside the human psychic.

David Miller says

The first book in this series (Legion of the Damned) has a more focused plot and by all accounts is more autobiographical. This is the second book, and is more episodic and picaresque, like the 3rd book (Comrades of War) which I reviewed a few years back.

"Picaresque" of course in the sense of 'short bursts of horrific nightmare fodder followed by longer bursts of absurdity', much like the war itself.

One thing these books have accomplished: I feel very blessed and thankful for being born in the USA during the 1960s; and not in Russia, Poland, or Germany in the 1920s or 1930s.

Patrick Neylan says

Some of Solzhenitzyn's obituarists said he was a witness rather than a talented author. That's certainly true of Sven Hassel. He writes simply and brutally, in a style that too often tips over into melodramatic shlock-horror. I like Hassel, but the accusations of "Panzerporn" are not unreasonable (the cover art is a good guide). A more sensitive translator would have helped, but the poor quality of the prose forbids five stars.

Yet Hassel is one of the few who can present the horror of war from the point of view of men who are neither good nor evil, swept up by the war machine and for whom there is no hope, no dignity and above all no redemption because they were on the wrong side. In his fictionalised memoir of his seven years in the Wehrmacht (1938-45) he rails against the Nazis, but he never apologises and never judges himself.

Wheels of Terror is told in a series of largely unconnected episodes. Most powerful for its chilling banality is the firing squad chapter, where Sven and his comrades share a truck with the old soldier and young female

telephonist who know they are on their last journey.

It's easy - comforting even - to imagine every member of Hitler's war machine as a monster. It's easy to be good when you're on the right side, but Hassel invites you to join his legion of the damned and asks, "What would you do?"

Rubi says

Am inceput cartea cu zambetul pe buze, am mai citit cartile autorului, dar imi aminteam doar momentele comice. A avut autorul grija de zambetul meu.

Recomand.
