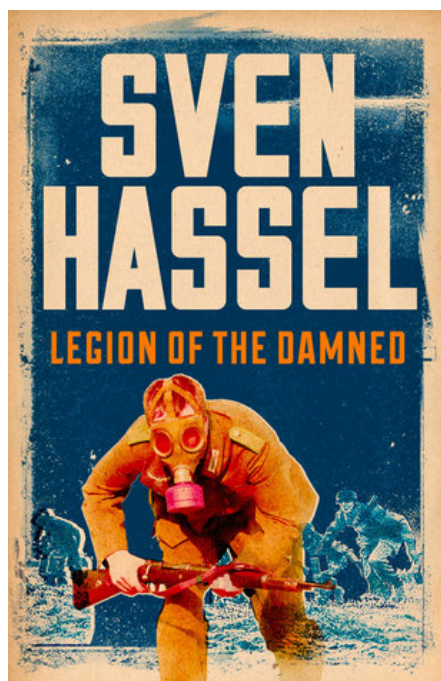




Legion of the Damned

Sven Hassel

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Legion of the Damned

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Legion of the Damned Sven Hassel

Sven Hassel's iconic war novel about the Russian Front.

'An extraordinary book, which has captured the attention of all of Europe' - *New York Times*

'*Legion of the Damned* is an incredible picture of totalitarianism, of stupefying injustice... He is graphic, at times brilliantly so, but never brutal or bitter. He is, too, a first rate storyteller' - *Washington Post*

Convicted of deserting the German army, Sven Hassel is sent to a penal regiment on the Russian Front. He and his comrades are regarded as expendable, cannon fodder in the battle against the implacable Red Army. Outnumbered and outgunned, they fight their way across the frozen steppe...

This iconic anti-war novel is a testament to the atrocities suffered by the lone soldier in the fight for survival.

Sven Hassel's unflinching narrative is based on his own experiences in the German Army. He began writing his first novel, *Legion of the Damned* in a prisoner of war camp at the end of World War Two.

Legion of the Damned Details

Date : Published August 14th 2003 by Weidenfeld & Nicolson (first published 1953)

ISBN : 9780304366316

Author : Sven Hassel

Format : Paperback 256 pages

Genre : War, Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Military Fiction

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From Reader Review Legion of the Damned for online ebook

Olethros says

-En realidad tampoco estuvo en casi ninguno de los escenarios que nos presenta, pero qué más da.-

Género. Novela.

Lo que nos cuenta. El Gefreiter Sven Hassel es condenado a quince años de trabajos forzados por deserción en una vista celebrada el último año de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Primero sufrirá la dureza del Campo Disciplinario de Lengries , después tendrá que desactivar bombas durante su estancia en el Campo de Fagen, volverá a Lengries para trabajos forzados en sus minas y canteras y, finalmente, es destinado a servir una compañía disciplinaria desde la que, tras un duro periodo de instrucción, es trasladado formar parte de un escuadrón en el que, a pesar de la dureza de la guerra, las cosas no son cómo Sven está acostumbrado a que sean y que será desplegado en el Frente Oriental.

¿Quiere saber más de este libro, sin spoilers? Visite:

<http://librosdeolethros.blogspot.com/...>

Ian Mapp says

Mrs Mapp, on clocking me reading this, exclaimed "What are you doing reading Sven Hassel? You're not 14 years old".

She was nearly right. I was 13 when I read this.

For a generation of people brought up in the 70s and 80s, Sven Hassel books were de-rigour. Up there with James Herbert. I decided on a trip down memory lane, some 35 years later, to see how they stacked up.

Amazing. When I cannot remember a book read last year, the characters just lept off the page. Porta was always my favourite and so it remains - so much more humour than I remember and some great set piece stories of him getting into gambling and womanising scrapes.

There's whole passages of the book that I remember too.

Once you are past the incessantly grim start of the book, where the narrator is in a penal jail, we move into an episodic tale of the whole war. Future books concentrate on particular events but by the end of this, we have followed Sven through WWII and we know what happens to the main characters in the end.

Strong anti-war message and a nice balance between the violence and insanity of war and the little acts of camaraderie and fun that can only happen between people living in extraordinary times.

Justified in my adolescent selection. I may even try and track down the next in the series.

Adrian says

"¿Qué puede hacer un regimiento disciplinario contra sesenta o setenta millones de cotorras que no ven nada, porque no quieren verlo?" frase que resume el libro que describe las locuras vividas por unos soldados alemanes que no creen en el ideario de la raza superior y que acaban convirtiéndose en una familia que trata de sobrevivir y donde de seis mil en 1941 tan solo sobreviven "3".

Los protagonistas de ficción se prometen escribir un libro para contar a las generaciones futuras las locuras de la guerra que los noticiarios y la prensa no muestran... y se podría decir que este libro muestra con un toque de humor ácido.

Alexandra says

There is much controversy on the Internet as to whether Sven Hassel's autobiographical books are true or fiction, whether he was what he claims to be - and whether he exists at all or is a fictional identity created by someone else!

Well, it is obvious that the books cannot be taken at 100% face value. However, taking into account that this, the first book was written 12 years before any of the others, and that it appears to cover his entire wartime experience, my impression is to say that it is genuinely autobiographical (something that emphatically cannot be said for all later books!)

The obvious inaccuracies may arise from a desire to protect the identities of those with which he served - it is notable that he only gives biographical details about the deceased. Whether other alterations have been made for more self-serving reasons is open to question...

However, the book cover does the contents a disservice. The author never claims to have served in the SS: he deserted from a regular tank regiment, then, after a spell in a concentration camp, served in a penal battalion. He is no Nazi apologist: his tone towards that ideology is uniformly hostile.

Whether true or not, this is not a tale of daring exploits; it is about the brutality of war and the suffering it causes.

Martin Warner says

I read everything by Sven Hassel when I was a teenager and, at the time, thought he was great...now, I am not so sure.

The Legion of the Damned gives an overview of his time as a soldier in the Second World War and goes right through from start to finish. The problem that then kicks in is that, with me having read all his other stuff, he manages to omit a large number of comrades who feature endlessly in his other books.

This leads me to believe that he was making a lot of it up and that his time spent fighting the Russkies may not have quite been as it appears in his books.

He's dead! He can't sue me!!!

Rick Brindle says

Sven Hassell's first book has a much more autobiographical feel to it. It pulls no punches, telling of life in the Wehrmacht's Penal regiments. At times brutal, at times sensitive, even funny. When there are masses of war stories about the winning side, this is an excellent book for redressing that balance.

Chetty says

A shocker novel about the atrocities of war very well illustrated by Hassel especially on Germany's Russian campaign. This read gave me much desire to read other of his writings.

Cornapecha says

Breve y entretenido, es un duro alegato contra la guerra y la brutalidad que provoca. Partiendo de un relato más o menos autobiográfico el autor nos va narrando sus terribles experiencias en la II Guerra Mundial, tanto detrás de las líneas como en el frente de batalla en Rusia. Todo el horror, toda la pesadilla que se llevó por delante las vidas de millones de personas, militares y civiles, se nos expone aquí con el conocimiento que da haberlo vivido de primera mano.

Y sin embargo no se hace pesado ni aburrido porque Hassel sabe hacer entretenido su narración y al cabo, entre tanto drama también se construye un relato entretenido con emoción, con amistad e incluso con momentos de humor, provocados sobre todo por las absurdas situaciones que se producen en la guerra.

Recomendable.

Ana says

I have read this book about 4 times, at large time intervals, and it still has the same powerful impression on me. I admire the story itself because of its cruelty to the reader, who is spared of nothing.. I think it's an amazing window through which we can see one small, really really small part of the suffering that went back way back during the World Wars..

Mr. Matt says

War is hell. Sherman said it, but it might just as well have been said by a German tank soldier on the Eastern Front in the Second World War. Partially auto-biographical, and partly historical fiction, Legion of the Damned is the story of one such soldier, Sven.

Sven isn't an eager soldier. He hates the Nazis. He deserts and winds up in a prison camp, but by 1941, the Wehrmacht's need for soldiers is so acute that he is released into a prison unit. And then that unit is sent to

join the invasion of the USSR. Through Sven's eyes we see the horrors of modern, mechanized warfare first hand. We also see the profound wrong-ness of the Nazi regime.

The book is entertaining and, at times, very exciting. One of my very favorite sections was the description of the great tank battle at Kursk from the perspective of Sven within his Tiger tank. (As I read I could feel him almost peeing his pants in sheer terror!)

The real magic of the book, however, is not in the depiction of the fighting or in the often amusing stories of Sven and his comrades behind the lines. The real magic is in the slow, everyday, callous loss of humanity among Sven and his comrades.

The most moving part for me is when Sven and his tank finally kill a particularly hard to kill Russian soldier. Their tank spooks this soldier out of his foxhole. Sven opens up with the machine gun but misses. Then The Old Un and Stege join in. They even break out the flame thrower. They try and try and try, but no one can get poor Ivan. No one can kill him. It becomes a point of pride. Finally they trap him in a house and set it ablaze, killing the Russian. At that moment, Sven realizes what had happened:

"A point of honor. How could I? How could I kill a man just for the sake of my pride? But that is what I did, and I regret it. War with its everlasting murdering and noise and flames and destruction had stealthily poisoned me."

By this point of the war (I think late 1943) Sven is a shell of the man that he used to be. The strain and stress are taking a brutal toll. He and his comrades were, in fact, the walking dead. They had lost that spark that makes them vital and human and were just automatons. And by 1944 it was only worse.

I think that is the story that Sven wanted to tell with his books. And, as a German, he was uniquely positioned to tell that story. War is hell. It is dehumanizing. There is nothing glamorous or romantic about it. It is dirty and miserable and terrible. War is hell, and we should all remember it. What better legacy for a former Wehrmacht Unteroffizier to leave behind?

4 stars out of 5. Great message and at times very exciting to read. It was the perfect book to read on a travel day.

Chris Young says

The first chapters of this book, when Sven is in the concentration camp, are relentless and harrowing, and are reportedly based on the writer's own experiences.

These beginning chapters get a full 5 stars from me, and a recommendation to absolutely everyone. So much time has passed now since World War II that we kind of forget just how much of an affront to humanity that these concentration camps were (and still are).

Sven and his fellow prisoners put through their paces, kept constantly on the move with very little time to sleep. Many, many people die. This section of the book leaves you breathless.

And then, he is "released" to serve in the army. From here, it seems like a completely different writer has taken over, the tone becomes light. It's like watching "Kelly's Heroes" as Sven and his new comrades get up to all kinds of capers.

Like Kubrick's "Full Metal Jacket", "Legion of the Damned" is a story of two halves; the first half being mind-bendingly bleak and the second half being something of a banal let-down, with some exceptions. So the book as a whole gets 3 stars. The brilliant beginning gets 5.

Old-Barbarossa says

First read this about 25 years ago when I went through a period of reading a bunch of Sven Hassel books. Now they've reissued them I thought I'd read it again.

There seems to be a bit of confusion over how much of his books are autobiographical and how much "based on events" or just plain made up. From what I can gather this is the most autobiographical of the lot though and the first one he wrote.

An antiwar book that shows how he was brutalised and in turn found moments of humanity in the horror. Episodic and in some instances frustratingly brief. The horror and futility is balanced by a dark humour, and like most of this type of book a love for his comrades.

Simon says

I'd always avoided these books because the covers put me off, they always seem a bit 'Yay the SS!' Hence my surprise when the book was actually extremely condemnatory of the SS and the whole German regime at the time.

So quite why the book designers decided to put Sven HaSSel emblazoned in bold on the cover I do not know. The guy clearly hated the SS, in fact he recounts with relish the number of times on the Eastern Front that the German army and Russians would stop shooting at each other for a while in order to shoot up SS units that had just arrived on the line, before continuing to shoot at each other.

As a novel it didn't quite work, too much jumping around, and the narrative structure itself is weak. But as a snapshot into history I liked it very much. I wonder how auto-biographical it was.

Mitchell says

Sven Hassell wrote a series of mostly fictionalized WWII novels which we would describe as "pulp fiction", from the point of view of cynical, fatalistic German soldiers trapped in the machinery of Hitler's war machine.. This was supposedly his most autobiographical book.. Regardless of the veracity of his writings - which have been hotly contested - (entire series has sales in excess of 50 million), it can't be denied they are ultimately anti-war books.. I find them a guilty good read..

Luna says

After 100 pages read from this book I've already said to myself that I DO not like this book, because it's to boring even though it's about WW2, which is my obsession. But at some point, the main character, Sven, said that people think that war is something wow, something romantic and they always expect great stories from it. But the only thing that a war do is to destroy people and their humanity and minds. It simply let them empty. When I read that I realised that I was thinking the same way and I started to look at the book in a different way. At the end, when I closed it, I was sad and I was about to cry. Soon enough I found out that I was happy when the characters were happy, I was sad when they were having a hard time or when someone

died. Barbara's death shocked me the most, even though she wasn't that important. In my opinion, If a book can make me feel this way than it's a good book. What I liked the most was the way in which the author described the minds of those soldiers, their fears and their action. All in all, I loved the way he described the war and the unconsciousness of some people who thought they could win no matter what! It was a good book, and even if it's not real, or it's all lies or whatever all those people say about "Legion of the damned" I still love it!

carl theaker says

A guilty pleasure - my dad had these books on this shelf for years and I'd peek at them, for some reason they seemed forbidden.

They are a fun read, a kind of WW2 pulp fiction, all from the perspective of a German penal unit. Wild, realistic most the time, and oddly poignant for such a tale.

Matt Hamilton says

This surprised me a little. Having seen the lurid covers, I was expecting a Hassel book to be cartoon tales of battle and Jerry derring do. Was pleasantly surprised to find a thoughtful, more measured approach lurking beneath the whole artifice. I was reminded in many ways of Spike Milligan's war volumes, with the whole idea of war dissected and viewed as hopeless, mundane and forlorn. There was action and battle, but only as background, the vast majority of the novel deals with the sadness and madness of war. Sections reminded me of an updated All Quiet On The Western Front, the German as an unwilling sad part of a huge grinding machine of war. I enjoyed the read and while no classic, a pleasant and interesting work.

Calin Biris says

O carte ce prezinta via?a de co?mar al unui soldat neam? trecut prin lag?re, dezert?ri, explozii, prietenii ?i iubiri puternice. A fost interesant s? v?d r?zboiul ?i prin ochii unui soldat neam?, nu doar din perspectiva prizonierilor evrei. Dac? ?i?i plac c?r?ile de r?zboi, merit? citit?.

Raegan Butcher says

I am aware of the controversy that swirls around the author but if even half of this stuff is true (and maybe only half is) it is still mighty disturbing. Despite brief interludes of fleeting happiness, the book is a relentless cascade of brutality: "Such atrocities had a stupefying effect on one. For a long time I went about in a state of

queer, dull resignation and was on the point of being infected by my companions' belief that we were all doomed and that nothing mattered at all, since all men were evil and sinister without exception."

Bogdan says

It is a must read novel for as many people as possible, especially for the ones that did not participated in any war. Its purpose is to spoil the heroic vision regarding wars and to show that there is nothing good in such an action. Perhaps the human kind would avoid in the future such events if as many as possible people would read similar books. In this context it makes no sense to discuss anything about style or literary value. The book must have 5 star rating.

My copy of this book is in Romanian.
