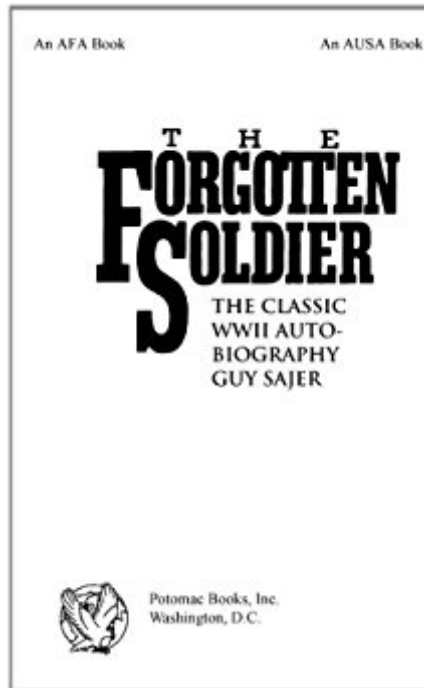


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The Forgotten Soldier: The Classic WWII Autobiography



Synopsis

This book recounts the horror of World War II on the eastern front, as seen through the eyes of a teenaged German soldier. At first an exciting adventure, young Guy Sajer's war becomes, as the German invasion falters in the icy vastness of the Ukraine, a simple, desperate struggle for survival against cold, hunger, and above all the terrifying Soviet artillery. As a member of the elite Gross Deutschland Division, he fought in all the great battles from Kursk to Kharkov. His German footsoldier's perspective makes *The Forgotten Soldier* a unique war memoir, the book that the *Christian Science Monitor* said may well be the book about World War II which has been so long awaited. Now it has been handsomely republished as a hardcover containing fifty rare German combat photos of life and death at the eastern front. The photos of troops battling through snow, mud, burned villages, and rubble-strewn cities depict the hardships and destructiveness of war. Many are originally from the private collections of German soldiers and have never been published before. This volume is a deluxe edition of a true classic.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The Forgotten Soldier" is all the explanation you need on the horrors of war in general, and World

War Two on the Eastern Front in particular. It is the story of Guy Sajer, a young Alsatian who volunteers for service in the Wehrmacht as a member of a supply unit. He ends the war having served as an infantryman with one of the Wehrmacht's (not the Waffen-SS's) elite Panzer divisions in some of the most ferocious battles of the war. I read this book when I was a teenager and wasn't able to leave behind its most vivid images: the men of his squad under intense artillery fire outside Belgorod, the living misery of existence in Memel, the seemingly endless and deadly Russian winters, his falling in love with a young Berliner. Years after reading it the first time with dropped jaw and tears, I picked it up again; I was amazed at its undiminished ability to jar my emotions and leave me mentally exhausted. I won't lie: this book is difficult to read simply because it encapsulates every morsel of TRUTH about one of the most horrible chapters of human history. That said, if you are a student of history or simply humanity, brace yourself for a harrowing journey into hell, and read it. To read this book is to understand humanity's duality: its magnificence and nobility in being able to rise above adverse conditions; and its depravity and ignobility in its massive capacity to inflict them. Quite possibly the greatest work of military non-fiction ever written.

This is simply one of the most memorable and important books that I've ever encountered. I first read it in 1994 and it remains as vivid in my mind today as it did on the day ten years ago that I finished it. I have heard questions regarding its historical accuracy but can only say that his account of the nature of war can be supported by other German memoirs of the Eastern Front such as "The Black March." Was the Grossdeutschland Division in all the places that he claimed? Perhaps not, but I will say that, as the Eastern Front disintegrated, it was far from unusual for scratch companies to be formed regardless of where the units derived. Either way, it's a magnificent read. His description of the Hitler Jugend before the battle of Belgorod is absolutely priceless with their banners reading "The World Belongs to Us." In chapter four, his romance with the Berlin girl Paula happens to be one of the most engaging and believable relationships I've ever run across in print. I've read it aloud to high school students and they loved it. The book should appeal to anybody who has experienced passion.

It meant a lot to me when I first read the book "The Forgotten Soldier." I was thoroughly impressed. I found right away some mistakes, but that was mostly unimportant. What really mattered was the emotions it invoked. Feelings I had suppressed for more than 25 years, it all came back and a few times I had to put the book down. I just could not continue. All the emotions, all the fears, everything. How can anyone who was not there criticize anybody who was there and lived through

it. I liked the book and will always say so. We were very proud of our "Aermelstreifen" (arm band) "Grossdeutschland," still are. A few others from my division are finally coming around to realization that Guy Sajer did not write a novel but what he felt. I served in the war with 17th Company, Panzer Grenadier Division "Grossdeutschland" as a Funker (radioman) for my sergeant, with the Infanterie-Geschütz Kompanie, 15 cm heavy infantry howitzers. It was an interesting life, to say the least. I have to say I liked it because that is where everything happened. Whenever I was up front, which was 29 days of the month, mostly all hell broke loose and when I was relieved by another fellow, nothing happened when he was there, when I came back, everything started all over again. This was all when I was a corporal. I now live in the United States, but I still keep in touch with my comrades from the "Grossdeutschland". In the Pamphlet "Army History" on page 18, a Hans Wegener hit it right on the head about Guy Sajer and I can only second everything that man said.

Helmut Ortlepp

This is one of the most memorable books I have ever read; there are images in my mind of Sajer's ordeal I may never forget. I have read some military non-fiction, but *The Forgotten Soldier* seems to transcend the genre. It's not a military book as much as a documentary of one man's survival in a setting that is unimaginable to most of us. Much has been said about the accuracy of this account, but I have read convincing work that it is largely true. Any memoir is nothing more than the author's recollection of events, so you could argue that any 100% accurate memoir is impossible. If Sajer filled in some bits and pieces to give it continuity and enforce his overall experience, I'm okay with that. It sounds cliché, but this is the kind of book that really makes you appreciate what you have, and not sweat the small stuff. Sajer battles freezing temperatures (40 below) night after night, broken down equipment, lack of supplies, poor communication, severe illness, un-sympathizing commanders, and seeing his friends blown to bits in front of, and often right on him. Kind puts your frustration at that line at Starbucks into perspective. I also appreciated the fact Sajer did not use the book to grandstand a political point of view. He doesn't soap box anti-war sentiments, or try to introduce any type of moral compass. Sajer is a simple guy, and doesn't pretend to be anything but. It's like Maslow's hierarchy of needs: he is so consumed with simply surviving, worrying about anything else seems preposterous. If you want a first-hand account of a WWII soldier without all the military strategy, history, and editorializing, this book is an excellent choice. But if you have a weak stomach, you may want to pass.

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