

Operation Yellow Star / Black Thursday

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This duo is an unusual, important, and skillfully written contribution to Holocaust literature.

Deep research, adept reporting, and personal experience make for a gripping read in Maurice Rajsfus's two-book publication, *Operation Yellow Star* and *Black Thursday*.

Both books focus on the underreported events of July 15, 1942, also known as Black Thursday, the day when over thirteen thousand Jews were rounded up in occupied Paris. *Operation Yellow Star* is a work of investigative journalism, while *Black Thursday* is the author's personal memoir of how he and his family were taken into custody on that day.

Operation Yellow Star, the result of years of legwork, interviews, and archival digging, traces the degree to which ordinary Frenchmen collaborated with the Nazis; it makes a convincing case for cooperation that was broader, deeper, and more voluntary than generally reported.

The text incorporates edicts, memos, and letters supporting this point, an avalanche of material drawn from varied independent sources. In many cases, the French outdid the Nazis in creating and enforcing strict rules of discrimination and punishment. To illustrate this, Rajsfus compares the original German directive to subsequent restrictions and mandates elaborated by the French.

In addition to indicting politicians and police, Rajsfus sites newspapers and magazines that heated hitherto mild anti-Semitism to a fever pitch. He also casts suspicion on corrupt concierges who informed on Jewish tenants and looted their apartments the minute they were removed, and shows that a good deal of blame belonged to the mechanism of bureaucracy itself—once a plan was suggested, police and others felt impelled to carry it through to the maximum degree.

Black Thursday is the personal memoir of the author, who was fourteen when his family was taken into custody. The story of his happy childhood in a small apartment with loving parents is conveyed in deft strokes, as is his shock at finding himself suddenly dispossessed of his entire life and crowded with his family and hundreds of others into small, stifling rooms without food, water, or any knowledge of what would happen next. The straightforward writing style and lack of hyperbole, anger, and self-pity make the story intensely affecting.

While each book is strong enough to stand on its own, *Operation Yellow Star* and *Black Thursday* together make an unusual, important, credibly researched, and skillfully written contribution to Holocaust literature.

SUSAN WAGGONER (July/August 2017)

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