

Today Sardines Are Not for Sale: A Street Protest in Occupied Paris

Paula Schwartz

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On Mother's Day in 1942, a corner shop in Occupied Paris became the site of a memorable protest. At a time when collaborationist, government-enforced rationing and hunger were rampant, an organized group of women stormed that shop, and Paula Schwartz's expert exploration of their protest actions, *Today Sardines Are Not for Sale*, places their protest in context—introducing the players involved and considering their legacy more than seventy years later.

The women who led the French Communist Party-organized protest took tins of sardines and distributed them to people in line while their supporters chanted support. Men tasked with protecting the women clashed with the police; some were arrested, and later executed, after two policemen were killed in the conflict.

First describing the short, impactful protest itself, the book then peels back its layers, explaining the circumstances that led to the protest and the webbed relationships that connected its activists. A standout section describes the organizers' plans in detail, explaining the mechanics of what needed to happen when and where things could go wrong. How the police pieced together the identities of the activists afterward is also explored.

The book emphasizes the importance of the event being led by women; the firsthand account of its lead organizer, Madeleine Marzin, informs its research. These and other participants are fascinating in their own rights; an account of Marzin's daring escape from custody, and underground life during the remainder of the war, holds attention.

Though the women's protest receives little attention today, it was an important symbol of resistance at a time when the Vichy reigned and the German occupation had no end in sight. *Today Sardines Are Not for Sale* draws upon one wartime protest event to tell a far bigger story.

JEFF FLEISCHER (March / April 2020)

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