



When the Guillotine Fell: The Bloody Beginning and Horrifying End to France's River of Blood, 1791--1977

Jeremy Mercer

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How long did the guillotine's blade hang over the heads of French criminals? Was it abandoned in the late 1800s? Did French citizens of the early days of the twentieth century decry its brutality? No. The blade was allowed to do its work well into our own time. In 1974, Hamida Djandoubi brutally tortured 22 year-old Elisabeth Bousquet in an apartment in Marseille, putting cigarettes out on her body and lighting her on fire, finally strangling her to death in the Provencal countryside where he left her body to rot. In 1977, he became the last person executed by guillotine in France in a multifaceted case as mesmerizing for its senseless violence as it is though-provoking for its depiction of a France both in love with and afraid of The Foreigner. In a thrilling and enlightening account of a horrendous murder paired with the history of the guillotine and the history of capital punishment, Jeremy Mercer, a writer well known for his view of the underbelly of French life, considers the case of Hamida Djandoubi in the vast flow of blood that France's guillotine has produced. In his hands, France never looked so bloody...

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