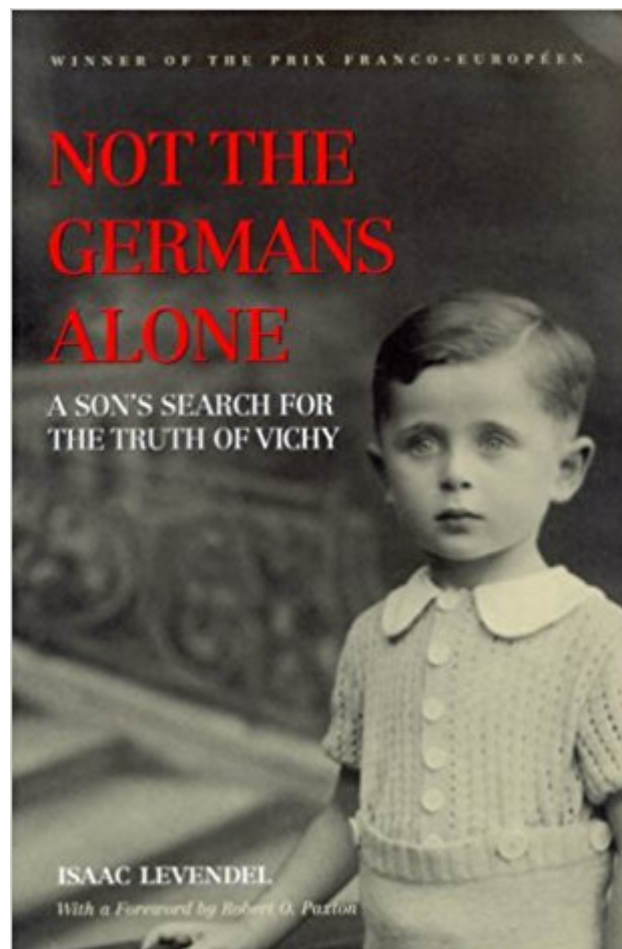




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# Not The Germans Alone: A Son's Search For The Truth Of Vichy (Memoir Holocaust Studies)



## Synopsis

Winner of the Prix Franco-Européen On the eve of D-Day, Isaac Levendel's mother left her hiding place on a farm in southern France and never returned. After 40 years of silence and torment, he returned to France in 1990 determined to find out what had happened. This is the story of how, with perseverance, luck, and official help, he gained access to secret wartime documents laying bare the details of French collaboration-and the truth about his mother's fate.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is the story of Paxton's years of research into the death of his mother, who died at the hands of the Nazis. The book reads somewhat like a detective story. I won't give away the ending. I'll just add that the book is an eye opener about life in France under Nazi rule.

Like so many other stories during WWII and the holocaust, this one is heartbreaking. It is hard to imagine those two innocent persons, a beautiful woman and her adorable little boy (as portrayed on the cover photos), being harassed and hunted down not because of any particular actions on their part, but just because "they are". I am a fifty years old French woman married to an American man and now living in the USA since thirty years. My grandfather was not only a member of the French communist party (nothing like in Russia believe me!), but he also joined the French resistance with a few of his friends at the beginning of the war. All of them were caught early on and sent to varied places. None of them came back. My granddad was sent to the camp of Royaleu in Compiègne, a

town above Paris and past the camp of Drancy. He was then sent to the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen next to Berlin, where he stayed for three years, and died of starvation and pneumonia at the liberation of the camp by the Russians. He was too weak to get better and make it home, so my grandma and mom never saw him again. My grandma continued some of his activities after he left, but alone with a little girl it became too scary and she stopped. Nothing surprises me in Isaac Levendel's book, I already know all that. My grandma explained to me many times, that people, Jews, resistants, communists, homosexuals, gypsies and others, were mostly arrested by French men, called "la Milice". She knew all along who had denounced my grandfather and she recognized one of the men who arrested him. He was the husband of the woman cashier for the local movie theater where she would go with my mom sometimes. The country was shared between the people who agreed with the Vichy government and the others. Among the ones who agreed were people who were just scared and wanted to survive the war without trouble, others were racist and could not wait to get rid of their Jewish neighbors, and some who were rather pathetic and small before the war, jumped at the chance to become "big and powerful", by giving their services to the Vichy government. Wars are always ugly and unfair no matter when or where they are. I have done a lot of research about the Holocaust and the occupation of France by the Germans, because of what happened to my grandfather. I have discovered that anti Semites were everywhere. There were Nazis in England and America as well. There were also Germans who were against Hitler and who risked or lost their lives for their beliefs. I recommend the following books to understand more about those complicated times. "Bad Faith" by Carmen Callhill, "The Holocaust chronicles", "Leap into darkness" by Leo Bretholz, "Choice in Vichy France" by John F. Sweets, "The Politics of everyday life in Vichy France" by Shannon L. Fogg, "The Choice of the Jews under Vichy" by Adam Rayski. Sincerely. Brigitte Maier.

This is a very beautiful and honest book about what happened to the Jews in France during WWII. It gives rare details about the French quiet acceptance of the deportation of Jews. It also reveals how difficult it is to get basic information from the French archives 50 years after the facts. A must read for everybody who desires to know.

How does it feel to be left alone as a seven year old. Your mother is taken by the authorities and your father is away in an interment camp and you are left in a cherry orchard in southern France. Isaac Levendel captures his feelings and shares them with us in his spell binding book, "Not The Germans Alone" published by Northwestern University Press (ISBN 0-8101-1663-4).. The amazing

reality of the roundups after the invasion of Normandy rings with the madness of the Germans and the French establishment. Levendel gives us insights into the workings of Vichy France and the large amount of collaboration. While we were led to believe that most French were in the resistance, Levendel's book makes it clear that very few Frenchmen were in the underground and very few Frenchmen helped Jews escape the Nazis. Those few that risked their lives were simple people acting honorably. What I found most interesting is the description of his emotions about his mother and the description of her actions are sometimes inconsistent. He shows her virtues and her flaws. He writes about her love, her intelligence, her caring, her stubbornness, her bad judgement in not fleeing sooner, her mistake not taking all her money with her, and then going back to get it. I got the whole picture of her and that makes the book rich and touching. Levendel describes the peasant family that adopted him. They were heroes who risked their lives to help. Some scatological material gives us an earthy feeling of these people struggling to feed themselves as they helped others and thought nothing of it. They were truly pious. I loved how Levendel writes about his experience during allied bombings, "The bombardment did not feel or sound like it does in the movies. The heavy smoke smelled like dust and fire. The explosions were much more violent than I expected. The earth trembled under my body, and I could feel the shock wave of the explosions on my neck and chest, as if the bombing were happening inside my shirt. There was nowhere to hide. My mother had reached the limits of her power and could do nothing more to help me." The tracing of the official Vichy documents to verify what really happened is itself a real mystery story.

Isaac Levendel's NOT THE GERMANS ALONE will justifiably find its well deserved place amongst the most poignant of Holocaust memoirs. Time has not erased Levendel's memories of childhood days with his mother as they hid from the Nazis and their collaborationist minions. There is much feeling here, but little sentiment. Truth is Levendel's star, and his unflinching honesty his rudder and compass. Levendel offers us no tidy conclusions; he forces us to look at our own individual moral position. The book makes its readers ask that most difficult question: "What would you do?"

This is not an easy read, but it's a story that needs to be told. I learned a lot of history, some I never was aware of before. The author told his story, presented his facts, and drew his conclusion.

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