



# Murder In Memoriam (Melville International Crime)

*Didier Daeninckx*

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On the evening of October 17, 1961 twenty-thousand Algerians marched in Paris in defiance of and in protest against a curfew imposed by Maurice Papon, chief of the Paris Metropolitan Police. The protesters were met with ferocious and uninhibited violence. Eleven-thousand were arrested; more than one thousand injured; as many as three hundred were killed, many of them thrown into the Seine, from which their bodies were later recovered.

In recreating the scene of the atrocities in *Murder in Memoriam*, his controversial alarum first published in 1984, Didier Daeninckx introduces a fictional observer of the riot, Roger Thiraud, a middle-aged history teacher in a public school, only steps from his home and his waiting, pregnant wife. In the first few minutes of the demonstration, he will be assassinated, in cold blood, by a member of the anti-terrorist secret police.

For nearly forty years after October 1961, France would deny the killings. Upon the independence of Algeria in 1962 an amnesty put its perpetrators safely beyond prosecution. The records were buried.

In 1981, Bernard Thiraud, Roger's son, is researching the archives in Toulouse, intent on completing his father's history of his birthplace, Drancy, now notorious as the site of a detention and transit camp from which Jews were deported to Auschwitz. One afternoon, after leaving the town hall, he too is murdered -- the victim of what appears to investigating officers to be a professional killing.

When inspector Cadin of the Toulouse prefecture learns of the unsolved murder of the young man's father, he suspects a connection. But why would anybody want to kill two bourgeois, politically unconnected history teachers?

Didier Daeninckx has located the link between the two murders in the history that France had yet to confront -- in its colonial racism and its complicity in genocide. Daeninckx made this connection in fiction, deliberately provoking its acknowledgment in fact. *Murder in Memoriam* anticipated by more than a decade the shocking revelations provided by the exposure, trial, and conviction of Maurice Papon -- the Parisian chief of police in 1961, and the never-named villain whose real crimes, unrevealed at the time of its first publication, haunt this account -- for crimes against humanity; for his part in the administration of the deportation of the Jews from Bordeaux to Auschwitz.

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