



# Association of Jewish Libraries REVIEWS

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## Reviews of Nonfiction Titles for Adults

**Kaminsky, Sarah. *A Forger's Life. Photographs by Adolfo Kaminsky.* Translated by Mike Mitchell. Los Angeles, CA: Doppelhouse Press, 2016. 256 pp. \$26.95 (9780997003406).**

Adolfo Kaminsky, a master forger, honed his craft in World War II while working for the French Resistance. This biography, written by his daughter, was based on a series of interviews which led to its publication in her native France. For her it was a way “to understand his choices . . . his desire to build a world of justice and freedom.”

Ably translated, the prose carries the tension of a spy novel. The book begins in 1944 with Adolfo's narrow escape from the police on the Paris Metro. It then covers the early years – his family's immigration to France, his first job at a factory, and his encounters with interesting characters. Following the Nazi invasion, he became an apprentice dyer; at the transit camp of Drancy, he befriended a professor who tutored him in math and science. Although his Argentinian nationality saved his life, Adolfo went underground, applying his acquired skills among a clandestine network of rescue organizations. Sights and smells of laboratories are vividly rendered, along with the nuances of photoengraving and careful interactions with strangers and colleagues. The latter half of the book is devoted to Adolfo's largely left-wing postwar activities – producing fake ID cards and documents to the Haganah, to Algerians during their war of independence, to African liberation movements, and to Greeks during their civil war, in 1969. There are also photos of his early handiwork, as well as artistic Paris scenes.

This is a fascinating tribute to a humanitarian and a glimpse at the nuts and bolts of covert operations. The secular and adult content makes this book more suitable for a public library or possibly one with Holocaust/World War II collections.

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