

Trudy Gold - From Dreyfus to Vichy The Crisis of Jewish Identity, Part 2

- [Wendy] So, alright, Trudy, I think I want to hand over to you and we're going to listen to Dreyfus Part 2 and yesterday was truly excellent.

- Thank you my darling.

- [Wendy] So we're looking forward to today.

- Thank you sweetheart. Alright, I will start.

- [Wendy] Very good.

- Well, thank you Wendy, could I have the first slide, if you don't mind? Yes. Thank you. So as I said to you yesterday, I thought as we are coming up to the Ontovin, it'd be very interesting actually to look at Jewish identity in France. And then I will go on to Germany because I want to look at the forces that shape Jewish identity. And before I do that, I just want to mention that I've been having some fascinating emails from students on course, including, I think I mentioned yesterday, Abraham Furtado's descendant who put me right on something. But I'd like to thank my friend Howard Simpson, who sort of alerted me to the work of Marc Bloch. I've been talking to Professor Ken Gemes, I've been talking to Patrick. And I think the kind of area that we're interested in now, identity, really has so many different ramifications. So I want to go back to France and look at, I'm not dealing with the first World War with you because it's something that we've already dealt with and I know there are so many good general histories on it.

But what I want to look at is the cataclysmic impact it made on France, just as it did on every country that was involved. And I think if we ever re-periodize, we will have to start with World War I because it's a cataclysmic event. And if you think about it, everyone went off for the glory war and what did they see? They saw bloodshed, the most appalling loss of life. And in fact, I'm going to give you the figures for France, 1,000,322 French soldiers perished, 16% of all those who were mobilised. It was the highest proportion from any country. 42% came from a rural background. So you can imagine what that did to the countryside, to the gathering of the crops, the harvest, also to the destruction of village life. Now a few more statistics, Disraeli said, "Lies, damned lies, and statistics." But sometimes statistics do give a picture. And if you are talking of young men, age 20 in 1914, you know, in the flower of youth, 25% were killed in 1914.

It gives you an indication of the scale of the tragedy. You know, at the end of the war there were 600,000 widows available for state pensions and 750,000 orphans, 3 million wounded, at least a third of them, a million suffered from permanent disability and more than 125,000 men lost their limbs. I mean, we are unfortunately witnessing another calamity at the moment, war, the bellicose state. Will we ever learn the lessons of history? And what it meant, of course, on a basic level, at the end of the war, yes, France was victorious. And yes, there was German indemnity money. But please don't forget the great pandemic that swept through Europe at the

end of the war. There was an appalling shortage of manpower and it led to an influx of foreign labour. And that of course involved the Austudin. Looking 1900, there were under 100,000 Jews living in France, at the end of the war because of what happened in Eastern Europe, which we've covered, but we would no doubt get back to in Eastern Europe after the revolution, there's total collapse. And because of the pogroms in the Ukraine, in Poland and all the chaos in Eastern Europe, hundreds of thousands of Jews went on the move.

And it's the beginnings of the Austudin, those Jews of Eastern European origin, there was already Eastern European Jews living in France. They'd gone after 1881. But now you have another influx. And of course the consistua power had been broken after the dissolution, the separation of church and state. And they set up their little steebles, those of you who know Paris, Le Marais, that whole area. And they had a far more "Jewish way" of life. In the main, they were Yiddish speaking, they were foreign, they were very different. But going back to the war itself, the social structure of France really remained quite unchanged. And also, it's not just the rural loss of life, the bourgeoisie also had its share of dead. I mean, something ridiculous. I mean it's extraordinary. 20% of the class perish opposed to 16% of the ranks. So it's cataclysmic, these kind of figures. It really destroys the fabric of a society. And even though they're on the winning side, and of course we're going to see very similar patterns in Germany, there was massive strikes, there was unrest.

And of course the Russian Revolution spot a dream of revolution from country to country. And it led to the polarisation of politics. And it also led to the rise of extreme groups on the right and extreme groups on the left. And many of the groups on the right were financed by very wealthy people, for example, François Coty of the perfumery, they funded the Action Française, which I'll talk about later. And the L'Oreal product empire, also finance right wing groups. It's fascinating to look at the fashion industry and see what happened to that in the second World War, but also how many of the old French empires were drawn to the right because communism was seen as such a terrifying disease for anybody who had anything to prove. Now I want to, because we're talking about Jewish identity, bearing in mind there was only 100,000 Jews living in France in 1900. By the time we get to the war years, there's going to be 300,000. But remember there's only the population of 36 million, they're still only a pin prick.

And of course the majority of them gravitate to the big cities. And also they have a very high prominence as do Jews in Germany, as do Jews in Britain, in what I would call the sort of portable professions, law, medicine, academia, and also in department stores, The Galeries Lafayette was controlled by Jewish families, the Citroen Car Empire. So visible employment patterns. And of course France, as I said yesterday, had two prime ministers. And I want to tell much of the story of these years through a few individuals. And I want to begin with Leon Blum. And I admit that he is one of my heroes. I just love that face of his. He was a brilliant man. His dates were 1872 to 1950. He came from a very prosperous family. His father had been born in Al Sass, remember Al Sass that kept on changing hands between France and Germany. So he's born in 1872, it is now French. His family were very wealthy. They went to live in Paris. He attended the Echo Superior for the very bright. He then went to the university. He studied law,

it's a pattern, law, journalism, politics. He became a very good literary critic. He also was a very much self-taught, having had a very good academic education. He read at home, he read, he read, he read. And the Dreyfus affair had a huge impact on him.

And it brought him into contact with a lot of very interesting people, including Jean Juarez, who I'm going to talk about in a minute. One of the great heroes of France. His assassination in 1914 is so tragic because if anyone could have had a chance of stopping the first World War, it was him. He moves to the left. So many liberal Jews in love with France moved to the left as a result of the Dreyfus affair. 'Cause the right, you know, in the end we've discussed this at length, it's which force in French society would succeed. So automatically, Jews with liberal conscience moved to the left and he becomes an important contributor to a socialist daily humanity. And he also joined the French section of the Workers International. And he became in their main theoretician. Remember this is before the revolution, there was this dream of international solidarity, you know, to take the Marxist idea each according to its need.

There was this belief in human nature that if you gave people enough to eat and their feeling of security, we could create a better world. And it's actually the assassination of Jean Juarez in 1914 that it catapults him. He's a very good speaker, he's very clever. He's a lawyer, he's an important journalist, he's an important literary figure. And he's catapulted right into the centre of socialist party leadership. And he becomes, in August, 1914, he's in the government, he's in the the Assembly. He's assistant to the Socialist Minister of Public Works. And after the first World War, he chairs the party's executive committee and is elected to the National Assembly as a member for Paris. He opposed, this is interesting. He was a socialist, but he was not a communist. There was a big debate in the, so amongst the socialist groups from country to country, whether they should participate in the Comintern. Now what is the Comintern? And I think those of you who don't know about it, it's important to understand because it also gives you a notion of why antisemitism becomes such an important force in European society. It's the Communist International, it was an international organisation based in Moscow, in St. Petersburg. Quote, "The struggle by all available means including armed force for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and creation of an international Soviet republic as a transition to the complete abolition of the state."

And as going to be seven congresses in Moscow between 1919 and 1935, of course the French socialists were represented. He refused to go. And it was founded in Moscow in March, 1919. And it was founded as a tribute to Rosa Luxemburg, the Polish Jewish revolutionary who led the revolt, the Communist Revolution in Berlin, along with Karl Liebknecht. There were 52 delegates from 34 parties, and it was run by five people in Russia. And I'm going to give you their names. And then perhaps you will begin to understand why the anti-Semitism of the left became so powerful. Leon Trotsky, Rakovsky, Zinoviev, Kabobchic and Vledimir Mesin they were all born Jews. Now the point about, and there were communists and socialist parties present from practically every country in Europe, Australia, America all sent representatives. So it's important to remember this association of the Jew with the lefts. Now, Blum never wanted a communist dictatorship. It's fascinating. In 1919, they really did believe that they could create an

international socialist revolution, which would destroy the need even for states. Don't forget what Marx had once said, "If you create the ideal state, the need even for law will wither away."

So in 1920, Blum wants peace in the socialist organisations. And he worked very hard to try and prevent a split between those who wanted to be part of the Comintern. And unfortunately he was unsuccessful and the radicals succeeded in taking humanity with them. And they founded the French Communist Party. And he, Blum is going to lead the socialist through the 20s and the 30s. He's going to be editor of the party newspaper, "Le Populaire". He also believed in France's mission. You see, this is the point. He is a Frenchman. He believes in the rights of man, he believes in that side of France, which is about the republic. And he believed that through social justice that side could succeed. This is what he said, "France's mission is to civilise, it has the right," and many of you will find this in today's language, quite offensive, "The right and duty of superior races to attract those who have not yet arrived at the same degree of culture. And to call them to the progress realised thanks to the efforts of science and industry," you see, like many of these Jews, they believed in the power of progress, the on the edge characters. Forget those people in the countryside who have this atavistic view of going back to that old life. This is the city, this is science, this is industry, this is progress. And he says, "We have too much love in our country to disavow the expansion of its thought and through French civilization."

And this is very much also the mission of course the Aut schools and also the mission of course of the Allion schools that we will civilise through education. Now, obviously he's in parliament, he's a deputy for Narbonne, he's often reelected and he is there through much of the horrible period of French history. France goes into deep recession and particularly after the Wall Street crash. And this is when you have almost a polarisation of politics. He finally becomes prime minister in 1936, through the sweeping victory of the popular front, he had a majority 386 out of 608. So the socialists had more seats than the radicals, now, but this was the problem. These are the figures, the voting figures. The left. 5.5 million voted for the left. 4.5 million voted for the right. The communists took 1.5. It's the middle parties that always lose the ground when there's recession, when there's strikes, when there's real insecurity in a country. It's interesting, the communists supported the government but refused to take any cabinet positions. In fact, he did give women minor role in the cabinet, but women are still not allowed to vote in France.

Now the election of the socialists ironically brought in a general strike. 2 million workers were involved. Oh, and I should mention that before Blum became Prime Minister, he was actually severely beaten up by a right wing group called La Cagoule. They nearly killed him. And there are characters who are saying, remember, Hitler's come to power in Germany that Blum as prime minister is even worse than Hitler. So this is the kind of opposition that a Jewish prime minister who is not in any way religious, he's got a huge social conscience. He believes himself very much to be a man of France. But he's receiving a lot of attack because in fact, he was a Jew. Now, ironically, it's Blum who manages to achieve a lot of social reform. He manages to control the strikes, he manages to put in place some extraordinary measures to help French workers. He gave them the right to strike, he initiated collective bargaining, the legalisation of 12 days paid annual holiday. France was behind Britain in this kind of thing.

You know, in paternalistic Britain in the 19th century, and I'm saying it's paternalistic, Israeli enacted an incredible amount of poor laws. And Gladstone's ministry did the same. So it was paternalistic, but much of this was in place. Whereas in France, which had undergone so many changes of government, France lags behind. A 40 hour working week, raised wages, 15% for the lowest paid, and insisted that workers shop stewards would be recognised. And he managed to implement these reforms very, very quickly. And as a result of that, the workers agreed to enter to actually end the strikes. And in two years there was stability, but the national average wage increased, but inflation, it led to runaway inflation. And industry had terrible trouble sort of dealing with a 40 hour week.

So Blum was also in trouble with politics, in the Civil war in Spain. He had great sympathy for the Republicans, but he decided that he couldn't really take action on behalf of the Republican army in Spain. He launched a programme also though he was worried about what was happening in Germany. And he did launch up a programme to speed up arms production. And that led to some of the social reforms going by the by. So he's a Jewish prime minister. His enemies are seeing him as a Jew. His dream is to stabilise prices, curb inflation. He's living in a world where you have an incredibly dangerous, volatile political situation. He decides to nationalise the arms industry because he realises that if there's going to be a war, he needs to mobilise France. And France is very, very ill prepared. He also raised the school age. You couldn't leave school before you were 14 years old, which was problematic in the countryside because of the loss of manpower as a result of the first World War. He also instituted a major public works programme. You know, it's fascinating.

The same thing is happening in Berlin. The same thing is happening in Vienna. Mainly the brain children of what Isaac Deutscher would call the non-Jewish Jews. He also raised the pensions of ex-servicemen and public sector workers. He put in place all sorts of motions that he hoped would improve the lot of average people. But when he took power, he also dissolved the far right fascist leagues. And this of course led to an incredible amount of anti-Semitic agitation. Don't forget that the protocols of the elders of Zion had been published in the West. And whether you were philo-Semitic or anti-Semitic, particularly because of the Russian revolution, and particularly because Jews were prominent in high finance, you've got this notion of Jewish power and now you have a Jewish prime minister. In 1934, there was a terrible financial scandal called the Stavisky Affair. Unfortunately, Stavisky was an Eastern European Jew. He was a conman. And basically you have another issue, all the Jews are making trouble again. The right wing, also, there was an organisation called Cagoule. They were a fascist organisation, an underground, far right organisation. And they even stage bombings to disrupt the government. Anyway, in the end, the domestic alliance, because remember he needs the support of the communist splits over Spain, and he resigns in 1937.

The French government, by the way, was one along with 25 other countries that decided on non-intervention. The French government was virtually paralysed. You have civil war, you know, you have civil war now between the right and the left. And by 1938, of course the Republicans in

Spain were losing very badly. And to add to the problems, over 500,000 refugees crossed the borders into France where they were held in transit camps. You know, I shouldn't really talk politics, but I do find the situations change. But our responses to horror tend not to change. He becomes more and more an object of hatred for the Catholics. The Monarchists, of course, loathed him. The church, of course, France is referred to as the great flower of the Catholic church. Remember the first flower, the Catholic church of course, was becoming more and more conservative. And who was papal nuncio at the time? The man who later became Pius XII. He'd signed a Concord Act with Hitler in 1933. So you have the power of the Catholic church, you have the power of the Monarchists and the power of many right wing Frenchmen who do not see, who do not see him at all as a Frenchman, but as a Jew and in the government of Daladier, there was even a discussion as to whether to deport all Eastern European Jews who'd arrived after 1919 to the island of Madagascar. That's how bad it was getting.

He did denounce appeasement with Germany. Now what happened to him? The German invasion, June, 1940, he decided not to flee. He escaped to the south of France. Of course, the French themselves ordered his arrest and he was imprisoned in the Pyrenees amongst a group known as the Vichy Eighty, who refused to grant full powers to Marshal Pétain. These are the loyal, decent Frenchmen who have the great strength to stay. He's held until 1942. He's put on trial for treason, for weakening by Vichy, for weakening French defences and shipping arms to Spain. He was allowed to defend himself in the courtroom. And remember he's a lawyer and he made a brilliant speech where he indicted the French military and pro German politicians like Pierre Laval. The trial was such an embarrassment that the Germans actually called it off. The Germans said, "Just call it off." And then what happened was Blum was then transferred to German custody. He was imprisoned in Buchenwald in the section reserved for high ranking prisoners. He was a much loved man in many ways, having said he had all these enemies. The woman, he later married, Jeanne Levylier, she actually came to the camp to live with him voluntarily. And they were married in Buchenwald. And when the allies were approaching, remember D-Day, the Germans decided to transfer him to Dachau with other notable prisoners. Later he is sent to Natzweiler. In the last weeks of the war, the Nazis ordered his execution. Luckily, the local authorities, they saw the writing on the wall, they disobeyed the orders and he was finally rescued by the Allies in May, 1945.

And he imprisoned. He still wrote, he wrote on a human scale. He tried to come to terms with the terrible tragedy. His brother, René, his beloved brother, who was founder of the Ballet Russes in Monaco, in, beg your pardon, yes, in Monte Carlo. He was actually arrested in Paris in 1942. He was sent to Auschwitz, where according to the Vrba-Wetzler report, he was tortured and executed. Leon Blum, of course, managed. He survived the war. He briefly returned to politics and was ironically briefly, prime minister again, in 1948. He went back to the France that he still loved. He was also, by the way, a very close friend of Chaim Weizmann and put his support behind the establishment of the state of Israel. He also served as an ambassador to America and he went on an important mission to America, trying to show up American aid. And he became head of the French mission to UNESCO. So he was an incredible hero, but he was a Frenchman. He was born a Jew, but he was a Frenchman. And I think these issues of identity

are just so, so important.

Can we go on, please? Can we see the next one? Now this is Juan Juarez. He's a non-Jew, but I thought I should mention him. There are many wonderful books on him because he also was a brilliant student. His dates are 1859 to 1914. He studied philosophy. He taught philosophy. He lectured at the university. He becomes a Republican deputy in 1905. He's a socialist. He then returns to university work. He founded a medical faculty at the university. He was an extraordinary character. He was a great student of history. And he did a brilliant analysis of socialist, really, Marxist analysis of class conflicts. He campaigned for better pay for strikers. He was very much on the side of the Dreyfusards. And he was a very, very important figure in French socialism in the fight for the Republican side of the argument and was with Émile Zola, one of the most important defenders of Dreyfus.

He was one of the most important groups on the block, De Gauche. Now this is the left wing group that of course, led to the disillusion of Catholic church as the Church of France, which led to the separation of powers. And he was very much an anti-war activist. He was working with a German Jew called Hugo Haase, who drafted the Weimar Constitution. And they were working together socialists to attempt to persuade the workers in Germany and the workers in France not to go into a senseless war, the first World War. And what happened was tragically he was assassinated by a right wing assassin in 1914. He was very unpopular with many of the workers because, you know, ironically, just because the socialists appealed to the working classes, a lot of the working classes and particularly the agrarian classes were very conservative with a small C. What did they want? They wanted revenge on Germany for the Franco-Prussian War. They wanted the return of Alsace-Lorraine.

And it had been in July, 1914, he attended this Congress with, in Brussels, where he met Hugo Haase. They tried so hard to stop the war, and it was actually when he was in Montmartre dining that he's shot by this assassin. So obviously in this course, we can't look too much detail at all these characters, but he's really someone that, he's a hero. Yes, there are French heroes, there are Jewish heroes, and sometimes it comes together. Now let me have a look at the next character, please. I'm going to look now at one of the leaders of the right wing in France, the intellectual leaders who was a member of The Académie Française.

You see, this is the problem I talked about The Académie Française and the Immortals. It's a fascinating story because in France, I think intellectuality has far more sway than it does in England. And certainly to be a member of the Immortals is very important. This man was a prolific author. He was a politician, he was a poet, he was a critic. These are characters who really make their mark on French society. He was brought up by his mother and grandmother, both as a monarchist and a Catholic. He lost his faith, became an agnostic mainly because he was such an anti-Semite that he didn't want to be involved in a religion that had been founded by a Jew. Later on, he is going to turn to Catholicism, but it's absolutely extraordinary that he couldn't cope with the Jewishness of Saint Paul. He was very involved in politics at the time of the Dreyfus affair. He's an important writer. He endorses Colonel Henry's forgery. Do you

remember Colonel Henry who had committed suicide when his forgery was discovered? He actually, he considered, he said that he has to defend Colonel Henry because supporting Dreyfus weakens both the army and the justice system. And he said, "Dreyfus should be sacrificed on the altar of national interest." He screamed out at what he called the Third Republic as the Jewish Republic. He advocated state anti-Semitism and he assisted with the creation of something called the Ligue de la patrie, he founded a review called Action Française, and he becomes very important in the movement. He wrote for Le Figaro.

And in 1905 he was furious about the separation of church and state. He wrote also for Drumont's "La Libre Parole", he created Camelots du Roi. It's a monarchist league. And it's, as I said, it was funded actually by the Cote family. And he funds one of these leagues. He caused for, he actually called for the murder of a Abraham Schrameck, who was a Jewish politician. He was the interior minister in the coalition government who'd ordered the, he was the man under Blum who had ordered the dismissal of the far right leagues. He was actually imprisoned for it. And during the 30s, many of the characters who followed him actually turned to fascism and when he became a member of the Académie française in 1938, he was very much, there was opposition, but still he is elected and he very much supported the Vichy government. And after Vichy, he was arrested and he said, "This is the revenge of Dreyfus." But he was released, and he died quite soon afterwards. And of course, one of the other, can we go on please, if you don't mind? Let's have a look at some of the, yeah, this is one of the front covers of his magazine, "La Vermine Du Monde". You see, this is the kind of magazine that is popular in France at the time.

I think we've got some others, haven't we? Lauren, can we go on? Oh, no, I beg your pardon. I beg your pardon. I thought I had more. I should mention that the members who joined the Action Française, La Cagoule, and many of these other organisations, there were 450,000 members by 1936. I now want to turn to another incredibly controversial figure, and let's see him please. Louis Ferdinand Celine. And I'd like to thank my friend Ken Gemes for giving me a few more insights into Celine and also to Patrick Bade. Now, Louis Ferdinand Celine, his dates are 1894 to 1961. He was considered in Le Figaro as the most important writer of the 20th century, okay? He was born, he was an only child, born to lower middle class family on the outskirts of Paris. His father worked in insurance. His mother had a tiny little boutique. He was the only child. He was sent to Germany and to England as a boy, to perfect his languages. He had many different jobs. He was always, he was had a very bellicose nature. He was always leaving jobs, losing jobs. He spent all his money, but he had a dream. He wanted to be a doctor. He joined the Army in 1912 as an act of rebellion against his parents. He had three years of service. He wasn't too happy, but then accustomed himself to it. But he did say, "It gave me a profound disgust for everything that is war like."

He then spends time at the passport office in London in 1915. He spent a lot of time in the underground world of London and in the nightclubs. He, in 1916, during the war, he goes to the French Cameroons. He was an overseer on a plantation. He became interested in giving pharmaceutical products to the natives. He did have this side of him that he would help the poor. He wanted to help with people who had severe disability. And whilst he was in the Cameroon,

he discovered a huge distaste for colonialism. And also it reinforced his passion for medicine. After the war, he was employed by the Rockefeller Foundation. He had quite a strong personality. He travelled around Brittany giving lectures on TB and on hygiene, trying to help, remember there'd been a terrible pandemic to try and help to improve the health of the population. He met the head of the medical faculty at Rennes, married his daughter Edith. And they really pushed him into a medical career. And he took a doctorate. He joined the Health Department of the League of Nations. And this is when he begins to write, he married an American. He divorced his wife, he married an American, and he really begins to become a very important writer. His first novel "Journey to the End of the Night", this was written in 1931. It was anarchist. It was anti militarists, an anti colonialist.

Now what it does it, you see the problem with Celine, he's called a very great writer. But I was talking to Patrick at length about it, because although I have French, I don't have good enough French. And he said, "The problem with Celine, he's almost untranslatable because it's his use of colloquial French." And he really wanted to cut away from all the norms of society. He also used a lot of vulgarity in his language. He was a favourite for the Prix Goncourt, but he wasn't awarded it. And it became a huge scandal, which led to the sale of 50,000 of his books. He wrote this in 1933. "I am, and I've always been an anarchist. I have never voted. I will never vote for anything or anybody. I don't believe in them. The Nazis loathe me as much as the socialists and communists." He wrote something called "Mort à Credit" in 1936. Again, it divides France. He visited Leningrad and then came back and wrote "Mea Culpa", denouncing Stalinism. And then his books become more and more racist and anti-Semitic. "Trifles for a Massacre".

He begins to advocate a military alliance with Germany to save France from Jewish domination. He becomes obsessed with the Jews. He writes three books, which are real polemics against the Jews. But he is a man that fed on hate. He didn't just denounce Jews. He was a misogynist. He hated mankind. He had a terrible, terrible view of humanity. He was, in the war, of course, in Paris in February, 1941. He had no problems with Vichy France, on the contrary. He went on denouncing Jews in his pamphlets, he actually wrote that, in 1941, "Why on earth didn't the Germans just murder all the Jews?" He wrote another anti-Semitic polemic just after the roundup of French Jewry in the Vélodrome d'Hiver. So you've got a man who, even in the war when horror is unfolding, his anti-Semitism becomes even worse. He is denounced by the BBC as a collaborationist writer.

And after D-Day, he flees with his wife to Germany, where the Nazis had created an enclave for fleeing fishy government exiles, and also for members of the Milice, the French paramilitary force that had been rounding the Jews up. He managed to get visas for occupied Denmark, because I should have mentioned he travelled a lot. And he'd actually stored money in Denmark. And he and his wife went to Denmark, where he writes another trilogy. The new government wanted him extradited. In fact, the Danes did imprison him in the main jail in Copenhagen. He was released in '47 on condition he wouldn't leave Denmark. He was finally pardoned. He returns to France in 1951, and he goes, although he'd been found guilty in absentia, a military tribunal exonerated him. And in fact, he signed a contract to republish all his

novels. He bought a villa on the outskirts of Paris. He was always an unrepentant anti-Semite. He in, for example, in one of his books, "A Fine Mess", "France is Jewish and Masonic, once and for all."

He told the German nationalist writer that what he always wanted was the extermination of the Jews. He used appalling language. He used the, as I said, he had a horror. He had a horror of humanity. On one level, he helped the poor. But I should have mentioned that he also had a, even when he was a famous writer, and he becomes one of France's most famous writers, he still had a medical practise. Even George Steiner said, "Two bodies lead into the idiom and sensibility of 20th century narrative, Celine and Proust." He, as I said, he had an incredible pessimistic view of the human condition. Even writers such as Sartre and Camus were influenced by him. As I said, Le Figaro pronounced him the greatest writer of the 20th century. Now, in the 50th anniversary of his death, he'd appeared on the list of 500 people who were the most influential in French culture. There was a huge protest. But even Serge Klarsfeld did say that he still is a great writer. And some of the great Jewish French intellectuals, this is Alain Finkielkraut. He was terrified that people would blame the Jewish lobby if his works were banned. Bernard-Henri Lévy, "Should be enough opportunity to understand how a truly great author can also be an absolute bastard." And even Klarsfeld. He said, "Celine is a great writer, but he's also a despicable human being."

And of course, this leads us into the debate that at some stage, I'm sure we will have to stage on lockdown. If you are an absolute monster, how does your work still stand up? And this is a man who is a total anti-Semite. Even Philip Ross, "Celine is my Proust. Even if his anti-Semitism made him an abject, intolerable person, to read him, I had to suspend my Jewish conscience, but I do it because anti-Semitism isn't at the heart of his books. He is a great liberator." This is because of his nihilism. He hates everybody. But let me just finish on him and his anti-Semitic rant. "More Jews than ever in the streets, more Jews than ever in the press, at the Bar, at the Sorbonne, in Medicine, at the Theatre, at the Opera, in industry, in the banks." He wrote this in 1941 when Jews were excluded from all of the above. And of course, the laws hanging and never forget that the laws on how to deal with the Jews of France were French laws. And it was French police enforcing these laws. So even then, this is the language in the war. "Jewish bluffers, they're layabouts, they're the pimps of the universe. They're the parasites of all time."

And tragically, no Jews could respond because no Jews were allowed to be journalists. And in fact, over a quarter of French Jews died in Auschwitz. Now, can we go on please? Because here we see George Mandel. I wanted to also give us a few Jewish heroes. George Mandel, he came from Alsace. His dates are 1885 to 1944. He was the son of a tailor from Alsace, the family moved into France to preserve French citizenship. Again, very, very clever, left wing, a huge humanitarian. The usual path, became a journalist. Worked on L'Aurore. He worked with Clemenceau, later president of the Republic. And of course Zola. He was a great defender. He was a great defender of Zola. And of course, Dreyfus and the paper continued right up until 1916 when Clemenceau was minister of the Interior. Mandel is brought into politics, into government as his aid. 1919, he's part of the Chamber of Deputies.

You see, this is the problem in understanding France. There are a lot of Jews in the Chamber of Deputies. There are a lot of Jews in very high ranking positions, but as I said, it is a divided France. By 1932, he's chairman of the Universal Suffrage Committee. He'd led the bill that enfranchised women, but it's rejected by the Senate. 1934, he's the Minister of Posts. He oversaw the first French television transmission in France, very much in favour of the new technologies. He was an outspoken critic of fascism, obviously. He advocated a military alliance with Russia. He was so opposed to the Munich Agreement when the then Prime Minister, Daladier and Chamberlain went off to sign that deal with Hitler. He was briefly Minister of the Interior after Germany invaded Poland. He wanted an offensive war, and he was accused of placing Jewish interest before French interests. And when Patan was asked to form a government, he was arrested.

In fact, Churchill's liaison officer hugely admired Mandel. He was a man of huge principal. And he offered a place on the plane to leave France with de Gaulle. He refused, "You fear for me." He says to the officer, "You fear for me because I am a Jew? Well, it's because I am a Jew I will not go tomorrow. It was look as though I was afraid, and I was running away." On the 21st of June, he embarked to French North Africa with 25 other deputies, including Paul Mendès France, who later of course, another Jew who became later Prime Minister. He is arrested on the orders of Laval and Churchill tried to arrange his rescue. He described him as the first resistor. And he made it quite clear that he would've preferred to have Mandel lead the French. Tragically, he was executed by the Milice. And in July, 1944, interesting, Sarkozy wrote his biography. Now I'm going to finish today's presentation on another hero of mine, Marc Bloch. Marc Bloch, his dates are 1886 to 1944. And of course, as I said to you before, I've chosen the people who either I hate or I find fascinating.

And of course, if we were studying France for months, there are so many other characters that you could talk about. Now, Bloch is terribly important because he's arguably one of the most important historians of the 20th century. It's fascinating how so many Jewish scholars went into the history of Britain. Louis Namibia, for example, a great scholar of Cambridge. His field of expertise was the 18th century English aristocracy. A lot of outsider Jews, again, the Jew is the wire looking at society in a way, if we're going to go with Isaiah Berlin, or of course with Isaac Deutscher, the outsider looking in, he created the Annales School of History. He was very interested in long-term social history. He himself specialised in mediaeval history and published widely on the mediaeval world. He was fascinated by French history. He worked at the University of Strasbourg, the University of Paris, and the University of Montpellier. He had a brilliant secular education, actually far better than his Jewish education. He'd been born in Lyon to an Alsation Jewish family. He was raised in Paris, where his father Gustave Bloch was a brilliant historian himself working at the Sorbonne.

He was a brilliant student, top of the class at the École Normale Supérieure, the best, you know, if you think about it, the best college. So he really was brilliant, totally affected by the Dreyfus affair. It convinced him that he also, it made him rethink history. He believed that facts on their

own, down facts could themselves lead to historical distortions. He was also a brave man. He fought for France in the First World War. At the end of the war, he's awarded his doctorate and he published the *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*. He wanted to widen history. He thought, you need to look at geography. You look at social history, you look at sociology. He was very much interested in Émile Durkheim's work. He always wanted the multi-discipline approach to history. When World War II broke out, he tried to secure a passage to the USA, but he was unsuccessful. And of course he had to leave Paris. The Nazis took his library, they ransacked it. He managed to work for a while under Vichy. He was such an important historian. He attended conferences all over the world. He was the premier French historian, and he was one of the few Jews allowed to keep his post under Vichy.

And it's only when the Germans invaded Vichy that he had to leave his post and he joined the resistance. He was too old to fight, but he said, "At least I could be useful as a courier and a translator." And he finished up in Lyon, where he worked under the great French hero, Jean Moulin. He took a paternal role in the group. He was very much trying to still educate even the members of the resistance. Of course, Moulin's group was betrayed. He was put in prison, and he was tortured by Klaus Barbie, the terrible butcher of Lyon, who was later brought to Justice by Serge Klarsfeld. And despite all of this, even in prison, even tortured, according to eyewitnesses, he ran classes on history for the fellow members of the resistance. Like another Jew, Leo Baeck, who was in Turasian stat. They understood that if you destroy the body, you cannot destroy the spirit. And the best way to destroy your opponent is to keep human. I think that's something Celine never understood. He never understood the decency in humanity. Yes, he was a brilliant man, but his work is so dark. Whereas when you talk about somebody like Bloch, he was a true intellectual and he really believed in the power of humanity.

I should mention, one of his bits of research really interested me. For example, he looked at social history in this way. There was once a belief that kings had the power to cure scrofula. Now at the coronation of Louis XVI in 1774, 2,400 sufferers came to the king for his touch. 50 years later at the coronation of the King Charles X, remember, this is after Napoleon Republic, then kingship again. There was only 120 and Hobsbawm, the German Jewish historian in England. He said, "This is the best belief, this is the best illustration. How the notion of the divine right of kings was failing in France." And he also dreamt of countering the artificial divisions of history into periods. He said, "We must reunite history. We must see it as part of the pattern of humanity." Now, according to a witness, of course, he, as the allies advanced, he spends, the Gestapo decide to shoot them all. And evidently he spends his last moments comforting a 16 year old who was worried that the bullets would hurt him.

And he was later, had a proper funeral. And his own words were read. He acknowledged his Jewish ancestry, but he denies his religion in favour of being foremost a Frenchman. "It's stronger to any form of religious belief as well as any supposed racial solidarity. I have felt myself to be French before anything else. I have always loved the truth." He wrote this in. He also, one of his most important works, he wrote this about his Jewishness. And I think this really touched me, and I want to finish on this comment because as I said, what I'm really trying to talk

about is identity. And he wrote this, "I was born in France. I have drunk the waters of her culture. I have made her past my own." This is in the strange defeat when he writes as to what happened to France in the Franco-Prussian War, "I breathe freely, calmly in her climate. And I have done my best with others to defend her interest." Let me repeat that. "I was born in France. I've drunk the waters of her culture and I have made her past my own. I breathe freely, calmly in her climate and have done my best with others to defend her interest." So it's so complex Jewish, this is so complex Jewish identity. He died of course before the whole horror of the show up was revealed. And it's those three years between 45 to 48 that I think begins the change in Jewish consciousness.

Because don't forget, up until a 1939, the majority of French and British Jews were not Zionists. And even today, I mean today, it's a fascination, isn't it? Can we walk both worlds? Can we walk the tightrope? What I propose to do next week is to swing to Germany now to look, then again following through on this notion of identity. Because as I said to you, I think as we come to the days of all, this is a, and particularly in lockdown, it's important to try and work out our own identities. And I think for Jews, I've had a couple of emails from some very, very interesting people, and I thank you all. This is such a privilege to have a group such as you. And I think what I want to say to those of you who are religious, I think in a way it's easier. But I mean, I'm also interested in those Jews who don't really have religion, and yet they do believe in a distinct Jewish culture. Can it be transmitted outside of the Jewish state? There are so many arguments, and let me take you back now to of course, my favourite quote of Elias Geleti, "There are no people more difficult to understand than the Jews." Thank you very much. Hi Wendy. Shall I take questions?

- [Wendy] Yes, yes, you should. Please. Thank you. Excellent. Another fantastic presentation, thank you.

Q&A and Comments:

- Thank you. Yes, Arlene Goldberg, Oscar Wilde was sympathetic to Dreyfus.

Yes, I should have mentioned Oscar Wilde. And I thank you for writing to me about him. And you know, he was also interested in writers. He said there's no such, he believed that what mattered was good or bad writing, not your morality. And yes, he was very important in all of this. And I think at some stage, I'm going to ask David Pima if he would give a lecture on Oscar Wilde and how he played in all of this.

- [Wendy] Trudy, I'm sorry, I just want you to, I'm jump in and just completely off the subject, but while we have so many people tuned in, I just want to remind them that on Thursday at 2:30 New York time, we're going to have Ambassador Dennis Ross talking about the current situation in Afghanistan. And that is just an add onto this week, Dennis was available, so I took the opportunity to go with this week.

- That's wonderful.

- [Wendy] So it's not on the programme, it's just an extra session.

- It's very important, Wendy, and it's wonderful that you've managed to put it in. Thank you.

This is Valerie. "The war affected England too. Most of my teachers were "spinsters", who had lost those who would be their husband.

Yes, when I went to my secondary school, many of the people who taught me and taught me brilliantly, you know, Latin, and I remember, we would never disobey them. They were spinsters. They'd lost their fiancés. Yes. It changed the whole world.

Arlene says, "It seems that many problems began with how the world was redivided after World War I. Who dropped those terrible boundaries. I'm afraid victorious powers who destroyed the old empires." Wait a minute. She also said, "'Lies, damned lies, and statistics' is credited to Mark Twain, it's also credited to Disraeli. I wonder who really did say it."

Yes, this is from Ray Gropper. "The War That Ended Peace" is a good illustration of the cataclysmic nature of World War I by Margaret MacMillan. Yes, it's a brilliant book.

Please spell the name of the man who was assassinated in 1914, Juarez, J-U-A-R-E-S. He's really, he's really worth listening.

"I don't understand how the assassination of Juarez and the Dreyfus affair pushed Blum to the left."

You see, look, let me explain, they say he was already left when Juarez was assassinated. You see, France polarised. The right in the main was anti Dreyfus. The Anti-Dreyfusards were the right, okay, they were the Monarchists, the Catholics. Ironically, right up until the 60s, the majority of Jews always turned to the left regardless of financial position in society. If you looked at the British Parliament in the 60s when it was its height for Jewish MPs, the bulk of them were members of the Labour Party. It was really only in the 70s with Maggie Thatcher and the change of policies that Jews began to vote Tories in England. So you could never do business with the ultra right in France. You couldn't, because the ultra right hated you if you were a Jew. It led to also a lot of soul agony for a lot of Jews. I mean, this is one of the problems in that horrible term Jewish self-hatred.

"Please repeat the five names." Joanna. I'll put them up. I remember. It's Markin. It's also Zinoviev. Look, the problem is Joanne, the majority of the leaders of the Communist Revolution were born Jews. They'd thrown away their Jewishness. But if you believe in race and blood, and don't forget, we had that brilliant lecture from Ken Gemes. If you believe in race and blood, then a Jew can never be a Frenchman or an Englishman.

This is from Audrey Travis, "Blum, we will civilise through education. We're just finding out here in Canada how devastating that idea was for an indigenous people who were forced to attend Catholic schools to civilise them. We're just finding massive numbers of graves of children who died in this schools unremembered and whose parents never found out their faith."

Yeah, a terrible, terrible, terrible story, Audrey. Yes, the human condition is pretty ghastly. That's why I wanted to finish on someone like Marc Bloch, because he does inspire me. Yes, Blum, he was a man of his time. Look, the Alliance wanted to civilise through French culture.

Oh, Jonathan Mattis. "Ironically, it was a Jewish convert, Marcel Dassault, born Bloch who designed and manufactured the Mirage jet fighter, which arguably made a huge contribution to Israel's victory in the Six-Day War." Jonathan, I love your interventions. That is brilliant.

Q: "Are there any biographies of Bloch available in English?"

A: I'm coming back. I'm opening the door for Patrick. Patrick, come in. I'm still on the line. You can help. Sorry, Patrick can help now. "Are there any biographies of Blum available in English? My cousins were founder members of Carr Blum."

Audrey says, "'Léon Blum: Prime Minister, Socialist, Zionist' by Pierre Birnbaum." Yes, of course, he was a great supporter of Chaim Weizmann. Yes. Saul is also agreeing with that.

This is from Inna. "Just for fun, my last name is Stavisky." Oh dear.

This is from Ken. "Check out the Belmondo film, Stravinsky. It's fun." Yes, he was a total conman.

Marcel Deso says, "Monty Goldman was a famous Jewish born French aeronautical genius." Joanne, thanks for the image and caption firm. "The caption should be Jean Jaurès with the inflexion." Yes.

This is from Ronnie Feldman. "Ben-Gurion consulted with Leon Blum and then decided to declare Israel's independence." I think after the show up, Blum realised there had to be a Jewish state. This is, "There's a very interesting 2019 film about Leon Blum and his lover Jeanne, and irrepressible woman." I don't know if that's ever come to England.

And this is from Romaine. "What do you think of Gandhi's supposed answer to, What about western civilization? His response, 'That would be nice.'"

Ken Gemes, "The Christian religion, the Judeo Tamurich communists are gang, the apostles, all Jews, all gangsters. The heads, the church, the head gangster, the head comicade, the people, the church, Peter. An Al Capone for your hymns, a Trotsky for your Roman Muji, the evangelist,

the gangsters code, the Catholic Church. A solace of kind controlling words." This, of course, he's talking, this is a quote of Celine, "The most splendid racket there's ever been for the destruction of the Arian race. We can never beat this." Ken, thank you very much for this quote. That is a beauty. Please send it to me. And by the way, he read Nietzsche, who roughly runs a related line about Christianity being a Jewish conspiracy.

I think we better stop. We better stop there, haven't we? Because we've got another lecture.

- [Wendy] Yes, I'm sorry. Hi. Yes, Trudy. We have another lecture in 40 minutes.

- So, okay, so it's Rabbi.

- [Wendy] Jeremy Rosen.

- Jeremy Rosen tonight. And I think he's got a very good title, hasn't he?

- [Wendy] He has.

- "Should we believe in God?" I believe.

- [Wendy] Exactly.

- Oh, can I just finish with one comment if you don't mind?

- [Wendy] You can.

- This is very interesting.

- This is Jonathan, again, I love your interventions. Jonathan, "The Archbishop of Notre Dame Cathedral, Jean-Marie Lustiger, who was born Aron Lustiger was a hidden child and lost his father and sister in the Shoah. When his mother died he said Kaddish for her." And I believe you know, a relative of his, Wendy, correct?

- [Wendy] Yes. In fact, you and I spoke to him, Henry Lustiger.

- Exactly. We really must get back to him.

- [Wendy] Yeah.

- And this is, oh, there's so many other questions. No, we have to stop there. Ken's coming up with some really interesting stuff. We have to invite you back to lecture Ken, I know you're busy. He of course is a professor of philosophy.

Wendy, thank you so much and I'll speak to you soon. Bye-Bye everyone. From grey horrible London.

- [Wendy] Very good, thanks. Bye-bye.

- Bye.