

Patrick Bade | The Reckoning in France 05.12.21

- How are we doing for time? I think you can start, Patrick, over to you. Thank you. And I'll just say warm welcome to everybody, and let me have a look here. Lots of people are, yeah, we have a warm welcome, everybody. Over to Patrick, thank you.

- Thank you, Wendy, Judi.

Visual slides are displayed throughout the lecture.

Now on the 8th of May, 1945 was the official end of the war in Europe. And it was an incredible outburst of joy in every city, or in the victorious countries, and of course, even more, I think, in the newly liberated countries. But it wasn't the end of the story. There was some very, very nasty business to deal with. And I'm starting with a quote from the autobiography of the great Italian baritone, Tito Gobbi. In fact, his autobiography was ghosted by Ida Cook, who I think Trudy has mentioned several times. She and her sister Louise were very remarkable rescuers. They cultivated the appearance of, in inverted commas, "harmless spinsters," and they went backwards and forwards between England and Germany smuggling jewels, fur coats, whatever out in order to help people get out of Germany. I knew her quite well. In fact, the only time I ever met Tito Gobbi was at her flat in Dolphin Square. And he was very genial. And anyway, this is what he says.

He says, "In no country did the cessation of hostilities bring anything like a happy ending. But in the musical worlds of Germany and Italy, the end of the war produced a particularly unpleasant feature. Artists who felt they had been unjustly neglected during previous years now moved onto the operatic scene with the determination to oust, if possible, those who had been more successful. It was easy to say or hint that the success of their rivals had been due to political rather than artistic reasons."

Well, he doesn't go into any detail about what happened to him, but I'm sure that is written from personal experience. He already really reached the top of his profession. And... it certainly was a very common pattern.

Now, this is Beniamino Gigli. He was the most famous tenor in the world. I don't think he actually needed political patronage to get to the top of the tree. He had the sweetest lyric tenor voice of the 20th century, I would say. Now, I think Gobbi, I think, had pretty good anti-fascist credentials. Gigli, certainly, allowed himself to be used by the regime, enthusiastically. He was sent on that goodwill mission to Berlin in 1937. And he was, in a way, the musical face of the regime. And he certainly sings the Fascist hymn "Giovinezza" with plenty of enthusiasm.

So I think you can actually say that, metaphorically speaking, he certainly got into bed with Mussolini. He had, according to his autobiography, there was a dodgy moment when crowds gathered outside his house menacingly. And there were people who were lynched by the

partisans. And it could have happened to him, I suppose. But as he writes laconically in his autobiography, he says, "Well, I waited to see when they would want me back again." And he didn't have to wait long. Really, it was a matter of weeks. And, you know, it is, as I said, the most gorgeous voice, no matter they wanted him back again.

So for the woman who actually did get into bed with Mussolini, This is Clara Petacci. The Italians were not so forgiving. And she came to a very, very gruesome end, as you can see on the right-hand side. And this brings me really to my first point, which is that I feel that very often, women were treated more harshly in this period, at the end of the Second War. We've given the title of this lecture "Retribution," I wanted to call it "Épuration," "Épuration," literal meaning is purification. It's the term that's used for this period in France of the reckoning with the people who've been considered to be guilty or accused of being guilty in some kind of way.

Now, in the Second World War, there are very few women who you could say were actively criminal. Obviously the concentration camp guards and directors, Maria Mandl, the greatest female criminal in history. I'm going to talk a little bit today about Leni Riefenstahl. I think she had a lot to answer for. And I will talk in a week or so about Margherita Sarfatti, an earlier mistress of Mussolini, who ironically was Jewish, who certainly did play a role in informing the philosophy of Italian Fascism. But, by and large, women were bystanders. They weren't criminals. And as I said, it's strange to me how viciously they were treated. I'm going to talk more about this later, the shaving of the heads and the public shaming of women who had consorted with Germans.

When I was researching my book, another thing, a strange feature occurred, a thought really, occurred to me that the women in the performing arts, in films and in opera, seemed to be disproportionately blamed or attacked according to their persona on stage or on screen. Here were two women who were particularly harshly treated, both Wagnerian sopranos, Germaine Lubin on the left-hand side, and Kirsten Flagstad on the right-hand side. Because they were tall blonde women, and they played Brunhilda, it was all too easy to assume that they would be Nazi sympathisers.

In the case of Kirsten Flagstad, I feel very strongly, she had no case to answer. As far as I'm concerned, she behaved absolutely impeccably. She gave up her career in America, she could have stayed safe in America. She wanted to be with her husband, so she went back to occupied Norway to be with him. She adamantly resisted all pressure to perform either in Norway or in Germany. She gave two performances during the war, and they were both in neutral Switzerland. So she gave up many of the best years of her career, absolutely refusing to endorse the German occupation of Norway in any way. So I find it totally unjust that she was treated so harshly when she went back to America. There were protests, stink bombs thrown at her concerts, and so on.

Germaine Lubin, it's a slightly different story. Oh, just to say, the first German singer to be welcomed back to the Metropolitan New York after the war was Erna Berger. And again, I don't

believe for a minute that she was a Nazi sympathiser, but she certainly had more to answer for than Flagstad, for instance. I mean, Erna Berger sang all the way through, for the Nazis, all the way through the Second World War. She sang in concerts for Hitler's birthday. She sang at official events, but she was such a sweet woman to the day she died, well, I met her very shortly before she died. She had a kind of gentleness, a sweetness. And of course, the parts that she played were always gentle, sweet parts. You could imagine Brunhilda being a Nazi. You can't imagine Gilda in "Rigoletto" being a Nazi. So she went back to America without a murmur of protest. It's very, very strange.

Here is the tragic Germaine Lubin during her trial. She underwent lengthy trials at the end of the war, and a series of judgments, absolutely vicious judgments. All her property was confiscated. She was initially sentenced to national degradation. That's a very French thing to be sentenced to, for life. I'm not quite sure what involved, but I'm sure it was unpleasant. And... what for, actually? I think for two things. One was this photograph. Now, she sang at the last two Bayreuth Festivals before the Second World War in 1938, 1939. She was the first French singer to sing major roles at Bayreuth. And at the time, it was regarded as a triumph for French vocal art. And it was front page newspapers, she was very celebrated. And this picture of Hitler looking at her admiringly was very, very widely published. But it really came back to bite her. And there were all sorts of ridiculous rumours that she'd become his mistress and so on.

The other thing that she did wrong was that she agreed, she, like Flagstad, she said, "I'm not going to Germany." I mean, Piaf went to Germany. Nobody seemed to hold that against her. Piaf sang in Germany, but Lubin all throughout the war absolutely refused to go to Germany to sing. But she did, when the Berlin Opera came to Paris in 1941, under Herbert von Karajan, she agreed to sing Isolde. And the reason for that was that her son was a prisoner of war in Germany, and she wanted him to be released. And think about it, would you do that if you had a child in a prison camp? Would you sing for the Nazis in order to get your child out of the prison camp? It's actually a really, really terrible story that she was so horrifically treated at the end of the war.

And I think there were a lot of jealousies. It was, again, what Tito Gobbi was talking about. She was quite a feisty woman. She wasn't popular with her fellow sopranos, and they all put the boot in at this time. The ultimate tragedy is that having gotten her son out of the prison camp, he was so depressed by all the... attacks on his mother that he committed suicide, her only son. And although she lived to great old age, unsurprisingly, she turned into a very bitter old woman. Also with the film stars. I think how the French film stars were treated, the female stars, really depended on the persona that they had on screen.

These are the two that I think were most harshly treated. Mireille Balin, who was dubbed the most beautiful woman in France, and Corinne... Luchaire. They each of them played roles of "bad women." And of course, Mireille Balin's most famous role is as the seductress in the film "Pépé le Moko" with Jean Gabin. Jean Gabin was Mr. France, Mr., you know, solid Frenchman. And in that film, she leads him to his doom. I think really she was persecuted for that more than

anything else. Also, perhaps for a rather louche love life, that she had some very well publicised love affairs with her co-star, the handsome crooner, Tino Rossi, who you see on the right-hand side. And ironically, with a very beautiful Tunisian Jewish boxer. He was a world champion in his class, and they were an affair for a couple of years. Of course, when the war broke out, he was eventually taken by the Nazis and he died in a death march at the end of the war.

Her final lover was an Austrian officer. And... the partisans caught them trying to escape to Italy. They murdered him in front of her. And it's said that she was gang raped by the partisans. And she did try and make a comeback. She made one more film after the war, but that was really it. And she drank herself to death.

Corrine Luchaire, it's a very interesting story. I believe that she, well, two things did for her. One was that she made her breakthrough role in a film where she plays a delinquent girl, and... it was a sensation. I mean, she was only a teenager, but she was hailed as the new Garbo. And she only made two or three films, but she's pretty impressive in them. Probably her chief problem was that she was the daughter of Jean Luchaire, who was the editor of a collaborationist newspaper, and I'll tell you a little bit more about him later. And here they are. They also tried to escape to Italy. They were arrested by American soldiers. And both of them were put on trial. She also, it's amazing how many of these women who were shamed in this way, I mean, she was sentenced to 10 years national degradation.

I think in a way they died of shame. She died very, she had tuberculosis, but you didn't really need to die of tuberculosis in 1950. And she wrote this book, which is very touching, "Ma Drôle de Vie," "My Strange Life," very honest, very touching. And what comes across is that she was not stupid, but she was a silly girl in a way. She was a party girl, unthinking about political things.

I'd like to say something about conductors 'cause they make a very interesting case. Here are the two conductors who probably had the hardest time at the end of the war, Fürtwangler and Mengleberg. I think one reason that they had such a hard time was that they, is their prominence. They were on the absolute top level, with Toscanini, of the greatest conductors in the world, and they had been for decades. And you could say, well, fair enough, if you have that kind of prominence, you have maybe more of... a duty, more of an obligation, in moral matters.

There is a difference, quite a difference, between the two. Fürtwangler, of course, was German, Mengleberg was of German ancestry but he was Dutch. So it was a different thing if you were from an occupied country. I think on the whole, despite being naive and... probably self-serving, Fürtwangler was a more principled man. There's a note in Goebbels' diary, he said, "That man Fürtwangler, is there a Jew in Germany he has not tried to help?" And he certainly did help a lot of people. And he refused in general to conduct in occupied countries. Mengleberg was sentenced initially to a lifetime ban on performing. That was reduced to six years, but he died before the six years were up.

And this brings me to the younger generation of... Austro-German conductors. We have Karl

Böhm, Oswald Kabasta, and Herbert von Karajan. You probably haven't heard of Oswald Kabasta, although he was one of the most promising young German conductors. He... committed suicide in January, 1946. All three of these conductors were banned. They were all very, very compromised. But you could say that they, at least Böhm and Karajan, were twice blessed by history. In my opinion, and in the opinion of a German friend who I think is listening, whose opinion I greatly respect, both Böhm and Karajan were really essentially second-raters. It was dead men's shoes. They were so lucky.

Suddenly, with the Nazis, the top rank of conductors, Busch, Kleiber, Klemperer, Bruno Walter, et cetera, et cetera, were gone. And the positions were up for the taking. Also, many of their contemporaries, George Szell, Leinsdorf, very, very fine, Horenstein, very, very fine conductors, who would've been rivals, they were also removed because they were Jewish. So they had these fantastic opportunities and they took full advantage of them.

And so then of course Germany lost the war, and that could have been the end of them. That might have been the last we ever heard of Böhm and Karajan. If it were not for the Cold War, starting in 1947, suddenly it was a screeching of brakes. And lots of people who'd been thought to be, you know, unacceptable, suddenly became acceptable because the... absolute hysteria about communism, particularly in America of the post-war period. They were happy to embrace Nazis if it was in the cause of fending off the Commies.

Oswald Kabasta, it's too bad that he committed suicide in 1946. If he'd waited another year, he would surely have been forgiven like the other two. Karajan was, of course, never totally forgiven in America. And boy, did he have a lot to answer for. The upper image here is his second Nazi Party membership, dating from 1935. He'd moved to a position in Aachen in Germany, and therefore you could say, well, as he did say, "I only became a Nazi Party member because I needed it for my career." But he didn't need it for his career when he joined the Nazi party in Austria, it was actually an illegal organisation in Austria in 1933. So I don't know which you think is worse, actually, to be a believing Nazi, or to become a Nazi for career reasons. In a strange way, I think the... I think the second is almost worse. So he had troubles being accepted in America. I mean, eventually he did perform in America. But as you can see, these are protests outside Carnegie Hall against the appearance of Karajan.

Böhm, oh, what an unpleasant man, actually. I don't think he was actually ever a Party member, interestingly, but there is abundant evidence of his enthusiastic endorsement of Hitler. He said lots of things, lots of things were published. Later afterwards, he said, "Oh, I couldn't have said that. I wouldn't have said that, that was too stupid." But he did. And it's in... in black and white. In his autobiography, the title, "Ich Erinnere Mich Ganz Genau," "I Remember Quite Precisely," well, he didn't remember quite precisely. Well, he forgot, very judiciously. It's actually a revolting book in which he compares the time of his denazification to the torture of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Now, there was a short period after the Second World War when the Allies... wanted... to

confront the horrors of the Shoah. And I'm sure you've all seen pictures and heard stories about, for instance, the citizens of Munich being forced to tour the horrors of Dachau. These are German soldiers being made to watch those terrible images that we all know of the heaps of bodies and the emaciated victims of the con-, you can see the reaction that these men have to being forced to see what was done in their name, if not directly by... them. A very interesting case.

So this... From 1947, from the beginning of the Cold War, I think there was a kind of collective amnesia that was actively encouraged by the American and the British governments. It was a different kind of, actually everywhere there was an amnesia. I'll be talking in a minute about the amnesia in France, which was I think of a slightly different nature. But, you know, everybody's saying, "Oh, I didn't know, I didn't know anything about that,"

Leni Riefenstahl claiming she didn't know. We know that she knew and we have the evidence. In this, the top left, you can see her with Hitler, enthusiastically with Hitler. The second image, which I find an incredibly powerful image, actually, she accompanied German troops on the initial invasion into Poland, she was filming it for propaganda purpose. And she witnessed a massacre of Jews, and she had this team of photographers, and one of them caught the expression on her face as she sees Jews being machine gunned into a pit. So she saw it, she knew it, and she knew it was wrong. And you can see that in her face.

And while dealing with Leni Riefenstahl, she's always considered to be one of the most brilliant innovators and pioneers when it comes to documentary film because of her films of the Nuremberg Rally in the 1936 Olympics. I dunno, I feel she's rather overrated. Her great masterpiece as a filmmaker was supposed to be this film "Tiefland" that she started making before the outbreak of war. And it's actually set in the Pyrenees. And it has a theme dear to the Nazis, which is the purity of life in the mountains and the corruption of light urban life. When you come down to the cities, you get to be corrupted. Of course, "the Jew" in the Nazi parlance, "the urban Jew," being the ultimate corrupt person. So the filming was interrupted and because of the war, she couldn't... continue filming in the Pyrenees, she had to film in the Alps. And of course the peasants in the villages in the Alps don't look like Spanish peasants. She wanted people with a more swarthy appearance. And she... borrowed and selected gypsy peasants from a... from a concentration camp. You can see her doing it here. And she used them to stand in for the Spanish peasants. And the moment the film was finished, they were dispatched back to Auschwitz and gassed.

Now, amnesia. In Germany, the extent of it is absolutely extraordinary in the 1950s and 60s. And I came across this book, "Das Musikalische Selbstportrait." It's 54 interviews with everybody who was anybody in German musical life in the 1950s and 60s. And reading through the book, you really get this collective amnesia. Somebody like Max Lorenz, who I talked about recently, is talking about his career, and it's like the Nazi period didn't happen. It's just not mentioned. It's really John Cleese, you know, don't talk about the war. Don't mention the war.

And even somebody like Bruno Walter, who was a refugee, when he's talking about, he says, "Oh, when I left Germany, I got given a French passport." And you think, run that past me again. When you left Germany, you got given a French passport? What about being expelled from Germany and then expelled from Austria before you go to France to get your French passport? I'm going to play you a little bit of an interview with another refugee from Nazi Germany.

This is Fritz Busch, who was not Jewish, but he was very, very outspokenly anti-Nazi. And as you know, he helped to found Glyndebourne, and then he went to Buenos Aires and New York during Second War, World War. And he did not go back to Germany for 16 years. He was originally from Cologne, and he conducted a performance of Verdi's "Ballo en Maschera" in German for the radio in Cologne. And I'm going to play you a bit of an interview where the interviewer says, you know, "We're so honoured to have you back. You're one of Germany's greatest conductors and you've been away for 16 years," not mentioning the reason that he's been away, of course. And saying, "What does it feel like to be back in Germany?" And this is in German, but I'd like, even if you don't speak German, I think you'll get what the point I'm making about this is the circumlocutions, the hesitations, the difficulty of talking about this subject on the radio between the interviewer and the conductor. And... Busch, when his answer is, and you hear all these ums and ers and hesitations, and he says, "Uh, yes, I'm very happy to be back, but of course I'm very sorry, sorry, um, er, um, er, when I see these um, er destructions that have happened." And it's the way he phrases it, like the destructions have happened, not who is responsible for these destructions, either the Allied bombers or the Germans who started the war.

(Interviewer speaking German)

(Busch speaking German)

And so on. Now, when I first lived in Germany in the... the 1970s, I remember people talking about the "nostalgie welle," the wave of nostalgia. A whole lot of old films were being revived, and the stars of the 1930s, they were all quite old by then, and they were writing their autobiographies. And you think, God, the titles they choose, Gustav Frölich, a very popular film star, "Waren das Zeieten," oh, "Those Were the Days," Zarah Leander, "Es war so Wunderbar!", "It Was So Wonderful!"

Then you've got Peter Kreuder, the dance band leader saying, "Schön war die Zeit. Musik ist mein Leben." He said it was a beautiful time, the Nazi period. And then followed by the excuse in a way, music is my leben, life, that's why you can say that. And then you've got Ilse Werner, favourite star of Goebbels who schmoozed with him, possibly slept with him, saying, "So wird's nie wieder sein...", "It will never be like that again...". Well we hope, of course, it never will be like that again.

The very distinguished German historian, Ernst Klee, who probably did more than anybody else to make the Germans face up to what they had done. And he brought up this book, which also

appeared in English, "The Good Old Days," which is the Holocaust, as seen by its perpetrators and bystanders. And they're all saying the same thing, "Oh, you know, there was always lovely weather when Hitler was around," and they talked about "Hitler weather when it was sunny, and we had such good times. Those were the days."

And, of course, Ernst Klee, he's published enough. I mean, you'd think, God, how did he do it all in one lifetime? Going into every nook and cranny of the Nazi horror of the medical experiments in Auschwitz. "Persilscheine", that's, you know, the whitewashing and the false... excusing of criminals. And this book, which I use a lot, the "Kulturlexikon zum Dritten Reich," which is a really thick book, is a depressing book, as I said, because you can look up anybody and find compromising things about them.

Now finally, we are getting to France. And this is de Gaulle arriving in Paris on the 25th of August, 1944. The Allies very generously allowed French troops under Leclerc to be the first troops to enter Paris so they could somehow pretend that Paris had been liberated by the French and not by the Americans, the Canadians, and the British. And so de Gaulle takes advantage of this and he goes to the town hall. I'm going to play you a bit of the speech that he gave from the Paris Town Hall on this occasion. I must say it makes my blood boil every time I hear it. It's so outrageous. He goes on and on about martyred suffering, Paris being... he really emphasises it. The French have liberated themselves. No mention of anybody else helping them in any way at all. It's the French who've done this.

(de Gaulle speaking French)

So that is the beginning of the great myth that the French bought for the next generation of the heroic French Resistance who did it all. He's saying there it's the people of Paris, the French people, with the help of the French army, not with the help of anybody else's armies. Later in the 1960s when France left NATO, and he made another speech in which he said he wanted every American soldier to leave French soil. And Lyndon B. Johnson, the American president at the time, said very bitterly, "Yes. And what about those American soldiers who were buried in Normandy?"

So this myth held, really, until the end of the 1960s. And in 1969, French television commissioned from Marcel Ophüls, the son of the great immigrant filmmaker, Max Ophüls, a documentary about the occupation of France. And really for the first time since the Second World War, the truth, the full, bitter truth was told. I remember seeing it at the time. Well, in fact, when the French television saw it, they were so horrified, they realised they simply couldn't show it and they tried to suppress it. It had to be shown initially in small cinemas in Paris. There were queues around the block. Younger generation, they wanted to really know, they wanted to understand. And I haven't seen it for a long time, but certain things in it really stick out in my memory. It's a very, very powerful piece and I recommend it to you.

So you have this word, "épuration," which means purification. And there is several phases. The

initial phase is sometimes called the "épuration sauvage," the savage, the wild épuration. This was when... huge numbers, thousands and thousands of people, were murdered. It was a great excuse. Anybody you had a grudge against, you could denounce or you could just simply murder them and you would get away with it. In fact, this is a famous photograph of a woman attacking a man she believed had denounced her husband.

Or these kangaroo courts that were really no kind of justice, and thousands and thousands of summary executions. This is a strange story. I may have told it before in a different context. This is Maillol, who had a second lease of life as an artist because of his love for his model Dina Vierny, you see her with him. She was a beautiful Croatian Jewish girl, and she was arrested by the Nazis and put in a camp, and Maillol had connections with Hitler's favourite sculptor. And he contacted him and said, "Oh, please, please, can you save my mistress?" And she was saved and she survived. But his son was a member of the milice, the very fanatical French collaborators, sometimes worse than the Germans themselves. And he was seized by partisans and... Maillol desperately tried to get to his son to save his life. And he either died in a car crash or he himself was lynched by partisans. We don't really know for sure.

This is Sacha Guitry. He was probably the most loved and respected actor in France. And these young partisans came to his house early in the morning and they dragged him from the house. As you can see, he's just wearing a jacket over his pyjamas in this picture. And he went through a very, very tough time. Eventually, they couldn't really find anything very solid against him. On the contrary, he had gone to enormous efforts to help many, many people during the occupation.

And then these terrible, terrible pictures of the women accused of "collaboration horizontale," the horizontal collaboration of sleeping with the Germans. What really shocks me about these pictures, it's the festive mood. It's the grinning faces. It's so awful. I feel in some ways that this stage of the épuration, in fact the whole épuration, is more of a stain on French honour than the collaboration itself. Really terrible, terrible pictures.

So Pétain had been effectively kidnapped by the Germans at the end of the war, taken to Sigmaringen. He was put on trial, having been this god-like hero figure. He was, after a very brief trial, he was... sentenced to death for treason. By this time, he was pretty senile. He probably not really very aware of what was going on. And because of his military record in the First World War, de Gaulle commuted that sentence, here he is again.

And the other trial, which was even more shameful in a way, was of the Prime Minister, Pierre Laval. His trial started on the 4th of October, 1944. And he was executed on the 15th. So the whole trial was in less than two weeks and it was a complete mockery of a trial. Even de Gaulle was uncomfortable about it. But in fact, the one person who really protested publicly and wrote to de Gaulle to protest about it was the former prime minister, Léon Blum, who is Jewish, and who had been handed over to the Nazis by Pierre Laval. So if anybody had a reason to want Laval dead, it was Blum. But Blum felt that this was a stain on French honour, and he was very much against this execution. And it was horrible actually, because he took a cyanide pill, and

they pumped his stomach and propped him up. And they wanted him to be conscious when he was executed. And that's what you see on the right-hand side.

So the politicians were first, and they were followed by the writers and... 'cause it was a huge programme, and actually went over years. I mean, they were still doing these trials into the early 1950s. And the general pattern was that if you'd got tried early, you either got executed or you got a very, very savage sentence. And gradually, gradually, and again, I suppose the Cold War had something to do with it after 1947, the sentences were less savage or they were revised if, as long as the person wasn't dead, the sentences could be reduced.

But the journalists were top of the hit list, and most of those were sentenced and executed early on. And this is Jean Luchaire. I think he was another person who was just an opportunist. I don't believe that he was a believing Nazi or a believing- I mean, he used anti-Semitism. It was a useful thing. But in fact, now you've got a little inset there, very beautiful young woman you may recognise as... Simone Signoret. When she was young I think she was one of the most ravishing of all French actresses. She was his secretary during much of the war. Her real name was Charlotte Kaminker. She was Polish Jewish in origin. He knew that, he knew who she was. He knew that her father was in London and was working for the free French radio for BBC. But he protected her through the war. These strange, strange contradictions.

This is the writer, intellectual, but also journalist, editor of a collaborationist newspaper. This is Robert Brasillach. Good writer, fine, very fine writer. I have read books by him, which were not tainted by his anti-Semitism or his right-wing views. He went into hiding at the end of the war. There was an arrest warrant for him. He apparently said, "Jews have been living in cupboards for four years. Why not imitate them?" He said, cynically. But he came out of hiding because the French police seized and arrested his mother, so he came out of hiding and he was tried and he was sentenced to death and shot. And that was actually quite controversial among French intellectuals. Some were for it, some were against. Interestingly, Simone de Beauvoir was all in favour of him being shot.

This is somebody who was extremely lucky not to be shot. This is Céline. He is a total mystery to me. I have conversations, I've had endless conversations with him, about him, not with him, with French friends. Why? When there was a survey in, I think it was in 2000, who's the greatest writer? Who's the greatest artist of the 20th century? Well, obviously Picasso. There can't be two opinions about that, really. Who's the greatest writer of the 20th century? Céline? I mean, who reads him outside of France? I think he's not readable in translation. I've tried reading him in French and I've tried reading him in English translation and it just sounds like total garbage to me. But a big, big fuss a year or so ago, maybe two years ago, before Covid, when Gallimard tried to bring out his anti-Semitic writings. I won't say writings, ravings. He was so violent in his anti-Semitism that even the Germans were embarrassed and couldn't really deal with him. Now, he was lucky because he escaped to Denmark and Denmark was slow in handing him back to France. So his trial didn't take place, I think till 1951. And he was given quite a minor sentence. And two months later even that was cancelled.

Now we come to Arletty. I suppose she, for French people, was the ultimate symbol of "collaboration horizontale." Again, I have no reason to think either that she was an anti-Semite or a Nazi, but of course her great love affair of her life was with... a German officer who you see on the right-hand side, a man called Hans-Jürgen Soehring. It was a great love affair. And there you see them together, riding. I think she is really being, she was punished, I suppose, for sexual transgression. And she had a very, very hard time at the end of the war. Some say her head was shaved, I don't know that. There were rumours at the time that her breasts had been torn off. And she herself joked about it, for years afterwards, that she would meet people at social occasions and she could see them looking down her cleavage. And she said, "Yes, yes, okay, they're still there."

I mean, she was a very extraordinary woman. I spent a day with her. It must have been about 1990, I think. She was blind then, you can see rather shaky writing. She's written "À mon nouvel ami Patrick." I suppose the most famous quote from her is at her trial when the judge said, "How could you sleep with a German?" And she said, (Patrick speaks in French).

Other notorious collaborators who got away with it. Well, I wouldn't say that Arletty did get away with it, although she did have a career after the war. She had actually had a comeback in the theatre playing the part of Blanche DuBois in the French version of "A Streetcar Named Desire." And there was much hilarity because of the translation was by Cocteau, and so I suppose it was rather knowing at the end when Blanche DuBois, I should go back Arletty for this, when Blanche DuBois says, "I've always depended upon the kindness of strangers," excuse my very bad Southern accent. And Arletty in French, it came out as "I've always gone with strangers," or with foreigners.

So Coco Chanel who really was a big Nazi and very involved in all sorts of skullduggery and well, there's a lot of conspiracy theory about that, that she had stuff on Churchill or Churchill was protecting her. And the dancer, Serge Lifar, who's... he certainly, well, you can see he even had it himself. He'd got a Parisian couturier to design him a Fascist uniform and had himself photographed in it. Complete idiot, actually. if you read his autobiography. You just think this guy should be excused on grounds of that's the stupidity excuse. And he was banned for life, but actually again, banned for working for the opera for life. But actually he landed up running the ballet at the opera within a year or so. So he was forgiven very quickly.

But everybody, you know, if you wanted to continue in a public way in the arts in France under the... collaboration, under the occupation, you were going to be compromised. And I'm going to read you an extract from Noël Coward's diary, it's the 14th of November, 1944. And he's talking about all these top French people. He says, "Pierre Fresnay is out of prison, as he did not denounce anybody and now admits miserably that he was wrong. Yvonne Printemps, his wife," you see those two, top left, "apparently behaved well and will be allowed to play again. Sacha Guitry has been very bad. Gaby Morlay, idiotic. Marcel Achard allowed himself to be flattered by the Germans. Maurice Chevalier has been very questionable."

In the performing arts, there were three total no-nos, black ticks, when it came to the épuration, when it came to the legal processes. One, did you participate in goodwill visits to Germany? There were a number of these visits were arranged. All the top film stars, top actors, top writers, top musicians, top artists. Here are the film stars. In the middle you can see, or to the right of the middle, is Danielle Darrieux, Susie Delair, various other top stars, all wearing their fur coats on a visit to Berlin in 1940. Here are the artists, and they include Derain, Vlaminck, van Dongen.

Another black mark was if you were an actor or a film director or whatever, anybody who had anything to do with the company Continental, Continental Films, which was German controlled and often used for propaganda. Some of you may have heard me talk before about the very remarkable film "Le Corbeau" starring Pierre Fresna, which was made by Continental Films and actually presents an extremely critical and bleak view of French society under the occupation.

And the third thing which was a real no-no was any collaboration with the German-controlled Radio Paris. So you were automatically punished. You automatically received some kind of ban if you... if you worked with Radio Paris. And I've got a picture here of a singer called Mona Laurena. I'm trying to find out more about her. There's nothing about her on the internet. And she was very, very prominent all the way through the years of the occupation. Her name was everywhere. It was on all the posters. She made very fine recordings. First complete recording of Berlioz's "Damnation of Faust" and so on. But I can't find any trace of her career before the war, and I can't find any trace of her career after the liberation. She was apparently the lover of the director, or the musical director of Radio Paris, a German called Otto Zonnen. And that is presumably why she got all these jobs. But she's actually a very good singer, she wasn't entirely down to what she could do in bed.

And yes, I'm finishing with... a question for you, really, about Olivier Messiaen. He was taken prisoner, and he was in a very harsh prisoner of war camp in Silesia where he wrote his first great masterpiece, "Quartet for the End of Time." And he was there for the winter of '40 to '41. He was allowed the chance to leave the camp and take up a position at the Paris Conservatoire. And the reason was that there was this position to take up was that it had previously been occupied by a Jew. So what would you do under those circumstances? I doubt whether there really was very much choice. He couldn't really say to the Germans, "Well, actually I'm not going to take the position of the Jew. I'm going to stay in the prison camp."

But I'm going to play finish with a little musical excerpt. This is actually a very interesting live recording from the first important new work to be premiered in Paris at the end of the war. Actually, it's even before the end of the war. It's in April, 1945. Hitler was still alive. He had still a few more days to live when this work by... Messiaen was first performed, "Trois Liturgies." I love it. It's a really manically ecstatic piece. You hear all these nuns, you think, God, what are these nuns on? They're just crazy, crazy, crazy. But this the sort of ecstatic joy. For me, it always makes me think of these famous photographs of the liberation of Paris.

♪ *Music plays* ♪

So that's that. Let's see what questions we've got.

Q&A and Comments

Right. We cannot forget. And the 19,000 children she saved, I'm not sure who that is. What is her name? Missed it. Perhaps women were dealt with more harshly because violence and evil were expected and accepted in males. That is true, to some extent. Whereas women had to go out of the feminine character to participate in cruelty and murder. Hence, that's an interesting point, interesting point.

Individuals sentenced to "dégradation nationale" lost their political, civil, and professional rights. Thank you Martin, for they became second class citizens. But again, I'm still not quite clear what that actually involved in practical terms.

Hope you'll talk about Fernandel. I could do. Will I have an opportunity now? Probably not anymore.

Somebody- Oh, that's a bit cruel. He survived and even flourished after the war. Yes, he had his great career after the war, despite his- you don't like Martin Fernandel for his acting skills. He's just one of those people who can make you laugh.

Women have been punished disproportionately for so-called cavorting with the devil for centuries. That's where the term "witch trial" comes from. In more modern times, it still has connotations of women having sold not just their soul but their bodies. Hence the head shaving, the other physical degradation as the ultimate betrayal, the sexual one. Thank you. Yes.

Q: Was Bruno Walter Jewish?

A: Yes, he was. He was Jewish. There is a wonderful book called "Boys in the Boat" mentioning Leni Riefenstahl. The film she did for the German is propaganda. The 1936 Olympics. I do have it on DVD. I've never managed to sit through the whole thing.

Fritz Busch was from Siegen, not Westphalia. But yeah, he may have been born in Siegen, but they, he, well you could hear what the interviewer said. He said, "You are back in your hometown of Cologne."

Collective amnesia you mentioned was possibly the reason why Hans Fallada's wonderful "Jeder stirbt für sich allein," "Alone in Berlin," did not take off when it was first published in German just after the war. You're probably right. It's the most- if anybody hasn't read that, you must, it's so powerful. It's so immediate. It doesn't read like a novel. It reads like a, you know, a diary, almost. It is really a powerful book.

Let me see. All the ugliness of French self-acclamation and actually blind anti-Semitism. More and more is emerging about the French. Well, of course, yes. I stayed with a Jewish family in Poitiers who told me stories of how the French police rounded up the Jewish children when they weren't even asked for by the Germans.

Somebody talking about de Gaulle's outrageous speech in Canada. I do remember that. God, that was quite a number wasn't it? And it's something for a head of state to be asked to leave the country.

Q: Is it true that de Gaulle made sure that no black soldiers from the USA were allowed *privée*?

A: I've heard that. I have heard that. I couldn't guarantee that it's true. And was it him that did it or did that actually come from the Americans?

Please say- Maillol, Aristide Maillol, that's M-A-I-double L-O-L.

Somebody's saying my father was taken across the Pyrenees by Maillol's muse. He was told to go into a cafe and follow a woman wearing a red dress. She met his son in New York when she was helping with a Maillol exhibition. And they met in a hotel. She wore a red dress. That's a lovely story. And what an amazing woman, and an amazing life too. And I hope, you know, of course she is responsible for the creation of the Musée Maillol in Paris.

An Italian opera company came to South Africa in 1948-9 which included Tito Gobbi, which my parents took me to. Lucky you. In 1950 Gigli visited South Africa, and as a schoolboy I sat on the stage and shook his hand and got his autograph. Yes. I mean, everybody loved Gigli. You know, he may have been a big fascist. I don't know, but it was impossible not to forgive him and love him with a voice like that and a kind of personality like that as well.

Have I read Albert Cohen for prose and... Celan for poetry? Sorry, I don't understand that one. I'm confused- You're confused about Céline? I'm confused about him. No, he wasn't Jewish, and he was violently, hideously, anti-Semitic.

Was Coco Chanel? No, she wasn't punished in any way at all. And of course she, after a gap, she resumed her career and had a very glorious period in her late career.

Yes. More about de Gaulle visiting Montreal in 1967.

Sickening how many Nazi perpetrators, collaborators. You know, I meant to say at the beginning, of course, and it was very interesting hearing Philippe Sands talk about it the other day, that however flawed, that the Nuremberg Trials were very important. And I think there was certainly, the justice was better, initially anyway, was better in the defeated countries than it was in the liberated countries.

Let me see, Maurice Chevalier. I have talked about him a few times. I just watched that interview that he gives that's in "Le Chagrin et la Pitié" and it's pretty uncomfortable. See what you think about it.

Q: Is there something enigmatic about the French character when one considers how Jews like Léon Blum, Mendés France, were elected to the highest office?

A: Yes. I, well I adore the French. I hope you know that. I hope you realise it by now. And I love France, but I think it is the most schizophrenic nation. It is two nations, and has been ever since the French Revolution.

Q: Why do you think the French were such eager collaborators? Are you sure that the Brits would've been any better?

A: Watch what Anthony Eden says, because he's asked that question, actually, at the end of "Le Chagrin et la Pitié." And apparently the Brits weren't better on the Channel Islands.

Q: What about Schulte?

A: Well, Schulte was of course a Hungarian Jew and he was very lucky to be in Switzerland through the war. Well, many, many Jews. The first thing they did, it was to go back to Germany. Hilde Sadek who, the first thing she did was to go, after the war, was to go and sing in Vienna.

Right. Somebody's just seen Mona Laurena, artiste lyrique. Yes, that's her. Well, you've already given me one piece of information I didn't know, which is that she lived until 1994. I'd be very interested to know what happened to her after the war.

Could you say again the book everyone should read, also the author, please. The Hans Fallada, "Alone in Berlin." I think that was the one we were talking about. F-A-double L-A-D-A. It was a huge, huge- Isn't it strange that nobody noticed it when it was first published in English after the war. And for some reason or other about three or four years ago, it was republished and it caused an absolute sensation.

He certainly does. I mean it's so real. Yes, somebody's saying it gives you a sense of how Hitler conquered his average citizens.

Germans did not forget or forgive Marlene. Yes, it is true. I remember people saying when I lived in Germany being quite iffy about me, Marlene Dietrich.

Right. Book, "Alone in Berlin." Yeah. And I think there's been a film. Somehow when you love a book like that, it was the same for me with Irène Némirovsky and "Suite Française." It's very difficult, really, to see a film if you really love the book.

That's a nice comment. I like that, actually. They go and perform to show everyone Hitler didn't win. You put a question mark, but I think that's very, very true. And Hilde Zadek said that to me. She liked to go on stage in Vienna with all those Nazis in the audience and sing Sieglinda and do it well and look fabulous.

The film. Yeah, probably. Somebody's saying that the film didn't really do justice to the book. It's very hard, isn't it, when a book is that brilliant.

"No Man Dies Alone." Yes, but the English, it was published in England as "Alone in Berlin." Right. So that's it. Thank you all, very, very much for bearing with me.

- Thank you Patrick, once again.

- [Patrick] Thank you.

- Thank you. And thank you everybody who joined us. We had one and a half thousand people online tonight. I know everyone likes to know who's online. And we will see everybody in about 45 minutes for Dr. Evron Zerov. Thanks everybody. Thanks.

- Thanks. Bye-bye.

- [Judi] Bye-bye.