

Films of the Anti-Nazi Resistance



OLLI Winter 2024
*Week 3: **France (part 1)***

WHERE?

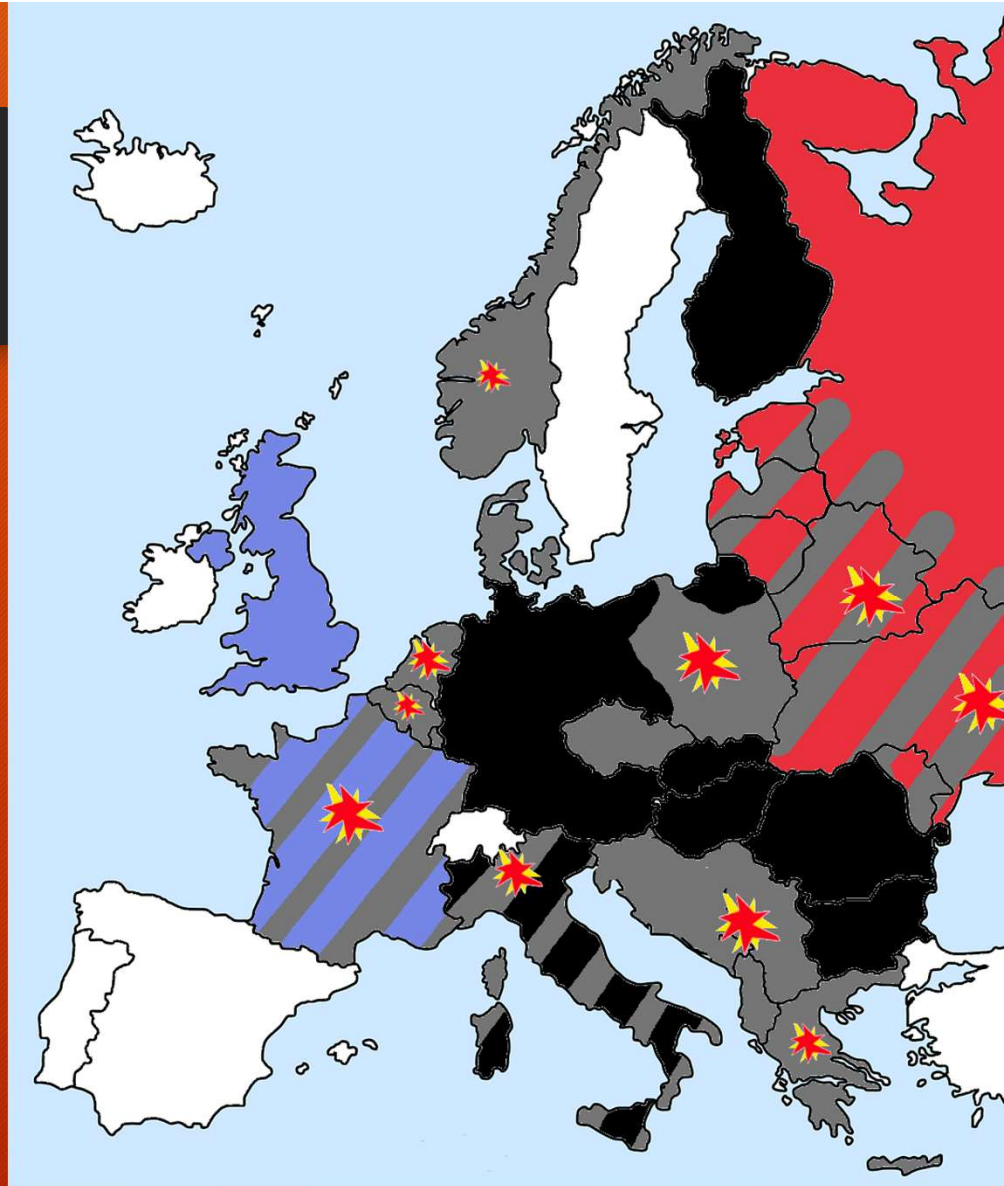
Blue: Western Allies

Red: Soviet Union

Black: Axis Powers

Gray: Axis-Occupied

White: Neutral



German Occupation of France



- **The Northern Zone:** The area along the Atlantic coast was entirely under German occupation from the start.
- **Vichy:** The southeastern part of France, along with all overseas territories (*the so-called Free Zone*) were under the administration of the Vichy fascist puppet government, led by Marshal Petain.
 - The motto of the French Republic (*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*) was replaced with *Travail, Famille, Patrie*.
- **November 1942:** When the Allies invaded French Northwest Africa (*Operation Torch*), and Vichy troops there went over to the Allies, the Germans occupied all the rest of mainland France.



German Occupation of France



- **Anti-Jewish Laws:** In addition to restrictions on economic and political activity, 75,000 Jews were deported from France to the death camps, of which fewer than 3,000 survived.
 - France had a pre-war Jewish population of 330,000, of which 75% survived the war, one of the highest survival rates in Europe.
- **Forced Labor:** 600,000 French workers were deported to Germany to work in the defense industry, creating a labor shortage in France. This was aggravated by the 1 million French POWs held in Germany until 1945.
- **Forced Extractions:** The French were forced to pay the cost of German occupation (400 million francs per day--very roughly 100 million dollars per day in current value).
- **Hidden Extractions:** The exchange rate was set at the artificially low rate of 20 francs to the *Deutschmark*. Thus all purchases by German authorities were at deeply discounted prices.

German Occupation of France



Results

- **Increasing Food Shortages:** Malnutrition became widespread, particularly for children, elderly, and for workers engaged in hard physical labor.
- **Increasing Resistance to the Occupation:** Small acts of sabotage and attacks on German soldiers and officials at first.
- **Harsh Collective Punishment:** As resentment to the occupation turned into resistance, the Germans initiated the policy of *Collective Punishment*.
 - "After each further incident, a number, reflecting the seriousness of the crime, shall be shot."
 - 30,000 French civilian hostages were shot in retaliation for acts of the resistance. (Total German deaths in the Battle of France were 27,000)

La Résistance



- **The Start:** Open insulting and ridicule of German troops began in late 1940 and resulted in the first executions of French passive resister. The executions hardened the attitudes of the French against the Germans.
- **1941:** The First SOE agents parachuted into France and arms deliveries began. For most of the war, though, the Resistance concentrated on intelligence gathering, assisting shot down Allied fliers to escapes back to Britain, and low-level acts of sabotage.

La Résistance



- **From Many, One:** Numerous resistance groups sprang up, with a variety of political agendas. Gradually they coalesced around the Government in Exile headed by General Charles de Gaulle, and they became collectively known as the French Forces of the Interior (FFI), taking the Cross of Lorraine as their insignia.
- **1944:** The FFI became instrumental in the success of the Normandy Invasion, by crippling the French telephone network and then harassing and delaying German reinforcements moving to the front.
 - The elite SS Panzer Division *Das Reich*, took 17 days to reach the Normandy battlefield, a road march which would normally have taken 4 days.
- **Numbers:** From 100,000 in mid-1944, the Resistance grew to 400,000 by October, at which time the Liberation of France was substantially complete and the FFI was merged with the French Armed Forces.

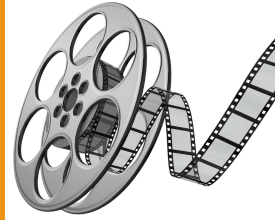
La Résistance



The Cost

- Killed in Action: 8,000
- Executed: 25,000
- Deported: c. 80,000
- Casualty Rate:
 - Based on a total surviving strength of 100,000 at the time of the Normandy Landings in mid-1944. Many of the combat casualties were suffered in the two months following the invasion.
 - That means that of the (*approximately*) 200,000 people who had joined the Resistance by mid-1944, about half of them were still alive.

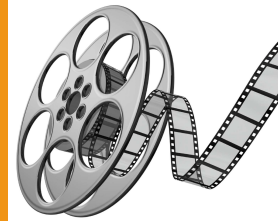
Today's Film: The Train



The Train (USA, 1964)

- Director: John Frankenheimer
- Principle Cast
 - Burt Lancaster
 - Paul Scofield
 - Jeanne Moreau
 - Michael Simon
 - Suzanne Flon
 - Wolfgang Preiss
 - Richard Munch

Today's Film: The Train



- **Trivia:** French railroad workers (*Cheminots*) were among the earliest French to engage in resistance, helping many Allied soldiers escape to the coast or to Spain in the wake of the defeat in June of 1940. They continued as a mainstay of the Resistance, being the main means of delivering messages and distributing underground newspapers.
- **Film's Inspiring Event:** Train Number 40,044, loaded with looted art, was scheduled to leave Paris August 1, 1944, to avoid the advancing allied forces. (*Paris fell to the Allies on August 25, 1944.*)

Today's Film: The Train



- **Actual Outcome:** The French Resistance successfully prevented the train from escaping, but not by violence or sabotage. The French railway officials (members of the Resistance) bombarded the train crew with red tape, paperwork, and route changes, which kept the train from getting any farther than a railyard on the outskirts of Paris.
- **Actual Capture:** The scene where Lancaster sees the paintings is based on the actual capture of the train by Free French Forces. The officer (LT Alexandre Rosenberg) who opened the door and looking into the car, immediately recognized some of the painting as those belonging to his father, Paul Rosenberg, one of the major pre-war art deals in Paris.