

LE CHANT DES PARTISANS

“Le Chant des partisans” (Song of the partisans), sung by Anna Marly, was one of the most important and frequently performed songs in the French Resistance. It became a symbol of France’s stand against the Nazis, and also played a functional role in several resistance movements in France and abroad.

Born in Russia during the October Revolution of 1917, Marly escaped with her mother shortly after her first birthday. She led a remarkably varied life, including living in Menton, working as a ballet dancer in Monte Carlo and studying with Prokofiev, before moving in 1934 to Paris where she worked in the cabarets. After the fall of France in 1940, Marly fled to London, where she made contact with the Free French forces. Emmanuel d’Astier, a prominent Resistance leader, heard Marly singing an old Russian air and had the idea of adding resistance lyrics. While taking refuge in d’Astier’s house, journalist Joseph Kessel and his nephew Maurice Druon carried out this task and the song was first broadcast on Radio-Londres, the French Resistance radio station broadcast from London, in 1943. Its popularity soared from here: the radio presenter André Gillois liked the song so much that he made it the theme tune for the BBC. In France, since the national anthem “[La Marseillaise](#)” (The song of Marseille) was banned by the Nazis, “Le Chant des partisans” was used instead as the official ersatz national anthem by the Free French Forces, and after the war it became a temporary national anthem for France. It also became customary to sing the song after a Resistance fighter was killed, followed by “La Marseillaise” Rituals such as these were facilitated by clandestine newspapers such as *Combat*, which produced simple paper copies of the sheet music and lyrics in order that it could be circulated throughout France. Even after the war, the song continued to hold its significance: when Jean Moulin’s ashes were transferred to the Pantheon of Paris in 1964, the lyrics featured in André Malraux’s speech.

The song was also used to motivate Allied forces outside of France. Marly joined the Entertainments National Service Association set up in 1939 to provide entertainment for British armed forces, and performed for Allied forces across Europe. In her remarkable autobiography, the resistance fighter Lucie Aubrac recalls meeting Marly, d’Astier, and Kessel, along with another prominent French Resistance fighter Henri Frenay, in an underground restaurant in London in 1944 where Marly sang “Le Chant des partisans” to boost morale among the dinner guests. In recognition of her work, Anna Marly was named a *Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur* (Knight of the Legion of Honour) on the 40th anniversary of the liberation, by Francois Mitterrand.



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ght over our plains?
of the country being shackled?
Ahoy! Resisters, workers and farmers, the alarm has sounded!
Tonight the enemy shall know the price of blood and tears.
Climb out of the mine, come down from the hills, comrades,
Take the guns, the munitions and the grenades from under the straw;
Ahoy killers, with bullets and knives kill swiftly!
Ahoy "saboteur", be careful with your burden of dynamite!
We're the ones who smash the bars of jails, for our brothers,
Hate pursuing us, it's hunger that drives us, dire poverty.
There are countries where people sleep in their beds and dream.
Here, you see, we walk and we kill and we die
Here, each one of us knows what he wants, what he does when he passes by;
Friend, if you fall, a friend comes from the shadows in your place.
Tomorrow, black blood will dry in the sun on the roads
Sing, companions, in the night, freedom listens to us.

Calypsos on World and Local Events – Featuring
1940. Editors: y Donald Hill, Denis Malins-Smith,
Richard Noblett, John Cowley, and Lise Winer.

Hitler – Calypso by Eric Balasco performed by Lord Ziegfield accompanied by Pascal and the Cotton Club Orchestra (Page 219)

Hitler, lad, you playing bad

Hitler, lad, you playing bad

Hitler, lad, you playing bad

We going to take your head if you come to Trinidad

You're only staying in Germany

Demanding everybody's colony

But do, boy, don't tackle over here

For you wouldn't meet it like Czechoslovakia

I didn't mind if he was a gentleman

But an unsophisticated Austrian

A rogue, a scamp and a vagabond

But, before you dead, go pay retribution

You want recognition of the German race

And now you making trouble all about the place

But if you tackle Britain, your day is come

For they treat you worse than the old Kaiser William

Well the first place you wanted was Austria

The next was the Seudenten area

But boy if you tackle Trinidad

We go burn you up like the lad in Fyzabad

Well you boast all about you is a great warlord

You are a Teutonic and you have no God

But if you play the fool, boy, you bound to feel

Because France and England are close behind your heel

Throughout Europe you want to reign

You even make France or rebel in Spain

But, if you tackle anything that Britain own

Your flesh for the cobo and the dog will eat your bone.

Commentary from page 220: The recording was made in February of 1940 and was unpublished because "it might have been too controversial for colonial censors". Britain declared war on Germany in September of 1940.

Never Say That You Have Reached the Final Road (Zog nit keynmol az du geyst dem letstn veg)

Lyrics by: Hirsh Glik

Music by: Dmitri and Daniel Pokrass

Language: Yiddish

Performed by Betty Segal, with Akiva Daykhes, concertina, ca. 1946

News of the Warsaw ghetto uprising of April 1943 inspired the Vilna poet and underground fighter Hirsh Glik (ca. 1921–ca. 1944) to write *Never Say That You Have Reached the Final Road* (the Yiddish title is often shortened to *Zog nit keynmol*). With a melody taken from a march tune composed for the Soviet cinema, the song spread quickly beyond the ghetto walls and was soon adopted as the official anthem of the Jewish partisans. Glik was later deported to an Estonian labor camp and is presumed to have lost his life during an escape attempt. His song remains a favorite at Holocaust commemoration ceremonies worldwide.

This early recording of *Never Say That You Have Reached the Final Road* features vocalist Betty Segal, who later became a well-known Israeli stage and cinema actress. A native of Vilna and a survivor of the Vilna ghetto and several labor camps, Segal recorded *Never Say That You Have Reached the Final Road* for the Munich Jewish Historical Commission, ca. 1946.

Never say this is the final road for you,
Though leaden skies may cover over days of blue.
As the hour that we longed for is so near,
Our step beats out the message: we are here!

Recording Source:

[Yad Vashem/USHMM recorded sound archive](#)

Related Links:

[Warsaw Ghetto Uprising](#) (article in the USHMM's Holocaust Encyclopedia)

[Excerpt](#) from Shmerke Kacerginski's memoir *I Was a Partisan*, in which he recalls the birth of this song.

Further Reading/Listening:

[Shmerke Kacerginski](#), *Ikh bin geven a partizan*. Buenos Aires, 1952.

At the Edge of a Forest **(Dort baym breg fun veldl)**

Lyrics by: Petr Mamaichuk and Shmerke Kacerginski

Music by: Leonid Shokhin

Language: Yiddish

Performed by Theodore Bikel with Daniel Kempin, guitar

Strange and wonderful is the picture before me: I see heroes made hard as oaks by life in the forest, strong men who wouldn't blink an eye when the time came to kill, slaughter, destroy. And here in the twilight, they turn sentimental as women, and pour their feelings of love and longing into songs they created themselves or had refashioned from pre-war tunes. Vanya sang more passionately than the rest—although many had finer voices. From him, I learned a song that I now sing all the time. I even translated it, with slight changes, into Yiddish. Now our other comrades sing it constantly, too.

— Shmerke Kacerginski, *I Was a Partisan*

“Vanya’s song,” originally about Soviet partisans, eventually found its way to Palestine where it was popularized as *Be-arvot HaNegev* (On the Plains of the Negev) during Israel’s 1948 War of Independence.

Recording Source:

Rise Up and Fight! Songs of Jewish Partisans USHMM CD-02 (1996) available in the Museum Shop

Related Links:

[Armed Jewish Resistance](#) (article in the USHMM’s Holocaust Encyclopedia)

Further Reading/Listening:

Shmerke Kacerginski. *Ikh bin geven a partizan*. Buenos Aires, 1952.

Robert A. Rothstein, “Homeland, Home Town and Battlefield: The Popular Song.” In *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*, ed. Richard Stites. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.