FILE PHOTO/ASSOCIATED PRESS

In 1950, writer and producer Adrian Scott was led away in cuffs to serve a one-year sentence for contempt of Congress.

REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

Blacklist: Hollywood's Raw Wound

Ruined Artists Finally Get Measure of Respect

By Sharon Waxman
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LOS ANGELES

On Nov. 24, 1947, executives from Hollywood's major studios held a meeting at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City. The proceeding was secret, the mood ominous and the outcome devastating.

Under intense pressure from Congress to demonstrate their patriotism, the moguls agreed not to employ "Communists or a member of any party or group which advocates the overthrow of the U.S. government by force."

The blacklist was born.

As a result, hundreds of the entertainment industry's most gifted actors, directors, screenwriters, musicians and technicians—many Communist Party members, some merely sympathizers—were shut out of their chosen profession. Dozens were subpoenaed by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and asked if they were, or had ever been, Communists. The first 10 writers and directors refused to answer, claiming protection under the First Amendment. They were cited for contempt of Congress and sent to jail. Those who followed claimed protection under the Fifth Amendment; they were blacklisted. Indeed, all those who did not "confess" and name names before the HUAC suffered a similar fate.

To survive, some blacklistees moved abroad and started over, learning new languages and working on substandard productions. Others, mainly screenwriters, were able to work under pseudonyms or through "fronts"—people who served as stand-ins for the outcasts. But many others lived hand to mouth, sold insurance, fell into depression. Among those who lost hope after years on the blacklist was actor Phil Loeb, who checked himself into a New York hotel and took an overdose of sleeping pills in 1955.

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of having betrayed their colleagues. Those who were blacklisted suffered in the shadows, yet many clung to a bankrupt system of beliefs long after communism's excesses were exposed. Today, some caught in this drama are hailed as martyrs. Others are remembered for making ringing declarations they did not believe in order to save their jobs. There are still whispers about "fronts" who built their professional careers on the work of their blacklisted peers. There are still stories of those who turned in their colleagues because they coveted their wives, their jobs, their houses.

Half a century is long enough for the guilty to die off, for memories to fade, for apologies to start. And that's just what has happened. In an Oct. 27 ceremony in Hollywood, the four major entertainment talent guilds—for writers, directors, actors and producers—formally apologized for their complicity in perpetuating the blacklist. The Writers Guild of America this year has restored the proper credits to 55 films written by blacklisted writers. But dozens more such movies remain, and a great number of such films—not to mention TV shows—are probably untraceable. For those no longer living, remorse and reparation comes too late.

The blacklist was broken in 1960 when the producers of "Spartacus" gave the screenplay credit to blacklisted writer Dalton Trumbo. But it took many more years for others to share the privilege. And the anguish caused by the blacklist endures among those

Hollywood's Darkest Hour

NOTEBOOK, From G1

Even today the complicated web of falsehood and hypocrisy created by the blacklist taints friendships and stirs animosity. Those who named names and continued to work retain the stain

who survived it.

To Mexico

Jean Rouverol Butler looked through the peephole of her front door and she knew. Outside, two men, strangers in suits and hats, stood on the front porch asking for her husband, Hugo. The hats gave it away; nobody wore them in Southern California, even in 1951. One man had an envelope that contained the end of their careers as screenwriters.

It was a subpoena.

"My husband isn't here," she told them, her voice cracking in fear. She improvised. "We've had a disagreement and I don't know where he is."

"We'll be back," they said.

Jean Butler left that night, leaving four kids to the care of her parents and in-laws. She and her husband, both Communist Party members, never again returned to their house in Hollywood for fear of the envelope and the men in hats. They stayed with friends, in mangy motels, in Palm Springs. Then one day as she was driving down Sunset Boulevard, Butler heard the radio announcer read a list of people whom HUAC had been unable to subpoena. Hugo Butler was one of them.

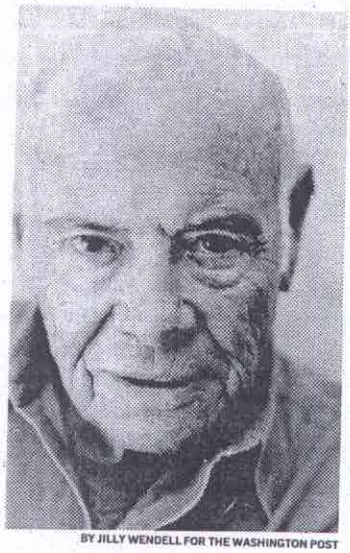
They fled to Newport Beach. They hid in Ensenada, Mexico, for the summer, then set out—with the kids, some clothes and a Siamese cat—for Mexico City. The trip took two weeks. They stayed 12 years.

In the colony of exiled Americans, Hugo Butler worked under the pseudonyms Hugo Mozo, or H.B. Addis. Sometimes a friend in Hollywood would front for him. He wrote two films for famed director Luis Bunuel, "The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe" and "The Young One." His docudrama about bullfighting, "Torero," won an Oscar nomination—for Hugo Mozo. Jean Butler wrote "Autumn Leaves" based on her novella; a friend, Jack Jevne, fronted for her. Joan Crawford starred. She co-wrote "The Miracle" with her father-in-law, Frank Butler; she got no credit. Roger Moore starred.

"We could've come back, but we would have been blacklisted anyway," says Butler, 81. She now lives in Santa Monica. Hugo died in 1968, four years after returning to the United States with a debilitating mental illness; the autopsy showed he had arterial brain disease. "We loved Mexico, but we never saved any money. I wouldn't change our lives—except that it killed Hugo young," she says. "He had long periods between his jobs, and he'd been used to things just dropping in his lap."

In Mexico they formed close friendships and had two more kids. No one talked politics for fear of provoking the Mexican government. Besides, revelations about Stalin's terror and the Soviet invasion of Hungary had complicated their political beliefs. "Hugo was never well cast as an activist," Butler says. "And I was so bloody busy. Survival became uppermost. Just plain survival." They went to Italy to work on "Sodom and Gomorrah" and stayed for three years before returning to Mexico. By the end of the '60s Butler sold two short stories to magazines under her own name. Life went on.

"Everything about our lives, although we worried economically, was exciting and kind of wonderful," Butler now says. Back in the States, she went on to write historical biographies for children about Harriet Beecher Stowe and Pancho Villa, and to script soap operas—"Guiding Light," "As the World Turns" and "Search for Tomorrow."



BY JILLY WENDELL FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Asked as for her politics, Butler

'RED SCARE'

COURTESY OF THE D.C. JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

The Hollywood 10 and their supporters in a photo from the exhibit.

Old-movie fans and recent students of the blacklist will enjoy a small exhibit currently on view at the D.C. Jewish Community Center. The one-room gallery at the JCC's 16th Street headquarters features posters and stills from the great films of the "Red Scare" era of the '40s and '50s: "Force of Evil," "Body and Soul," "Woman of the Year" and "Casablanca," to name but a few.

It's more an educational exhibit than an artistic experience, but it's worth checking out. A short video features live clips from the congressional hearings of October 1947, and the exhibit chronicles both the development of the House Committee on Un-American Activities and the careers of the Hollywood 10. The exhibit notes that 11 writers and directors were actually called. The 11th was Bertolt Brecht, who immediately denied his affiliation with the Communist Party and fled to his native Germany.

The exhibition is up through Feb. 15.

BY TODD BIGELOW FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

remains faithful to what she calls her "socialist ideals."

"Capitalism is a dynamic force that desperately needs a little humanity mixed in," she says. "I don't like what I see here. I think it's a beastly time. An 'I got mine' philosophy does not do us credit."

A few years ago she requested her FBI file. It took two years, but the agency finally released 350 of the 800 pages it had on her. All of the relevant information had been blacked out.

"It doesn't give me one damn bit of information," she says.

A Fateful Hour

Composer David Raksin should have known a subpoena was coming. He had mouthed off one too many times about his former membership in the Communist Party, which had kicked him out in 1940 after he voiced some iconoclastic views.

But then, he always had trouble keeping his mouth shut.

Night after night, he tossed in his

BY SCOTT E. ROEBEN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Banned in Hollywood: front row, Alfred Levitt, Alfred Palca, Ring Lardner Jr. and Jean Butler; back row, Bernard Gordon, Frank Tarloff, Robert Lees, Ben Barzman's widow, Norma, Paul Jarrico and Adrian Scott's widow, Joan, at luncheon honoring blacklisted writers. Butler, top, still remembers when lawmen came to her door. Jarrico, left, died the day after the luncheon.

bed. No way would he rat out his friends. No way would he name names. He was no fink.

But then. There was his wife and his 2-year-old son. How would they live? Raksin made a splash in Hollywood in 1935 when he wrote the score to "Modern Times" with Charlie Chaplin, then scored the hit mystery "Laura" in 1944. By the time of his subpoena in 1951, the composer was red-hot: He had scored "Forever Amber"—winning an Oscar nomination—plus "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" and "Daisy Kenyon" in a single year.

Now what?

Raksin sought the advice of two men he respected; one said something about a "ritual." Raksin seized on this; sure, he thought. It was merely a ritual. A charade. A necessary evil. He felt he'd found a way out.

"Originally my thought was the only honorable thing to do was not to testify," says Raskin, now 85. "But I began to think about it. I was not unaware that I had no money, a brand-new child, a wife. I'd lose everything I had, my career would be at end."

He decided to testify, but in his own way. He would name only people who had been named before. He would not grovel. He would try.

Rep. Charles Potter (R-Mich.): "I assume you probably weren't a very good member of the Communist Party because you did question certain principles . . ."

Raksin: "Well, I just don't think that most of the people I knew were good members because they used to question them all the time."

Potter: "Would you say that a person who is active in the Communist Party of today and subject to party discipline can at the same time be a loyal American?"

Raksin: "Well, I would say that anybody who accepts that word for word cannot be a loyal American, but I just don't see anybody accepting anything like that."

It didn't matter much. The right wing found him not terribly convincing as an anti-communist and he was blacklisted for about six months. Raksin's former friends on the left shunned his company. There were nasty phone calls, threats, talk behind his back. At the Los Angeles Philharmonic, he heard an orchestra member brush past and hiss, "Don't worry, you'll get yours." At a beach party the hostess whispered in the ear of a newcomer, who avoided him. It continues to this day. At a dinner party just a few years ago, Raksin heard a friend across the table say to his wife, "He was an informer, wasn't he?"

Eventually Raksin went back to work on dozens of films, including "The Bad and the Beautiful," "Apache" and "Al Capone." But his own private torture over an hour of public testimony has lasted half a lifetime.

"Unless you have been through this, you may not know how humiliating it can be, how dreadful it is," Raskin says. He debates himself endlessly. He hates that it still bothers him.

He says: "I'm not saying I've lived an exemplary life. But I have, except for that one time." He amends an earlier statement. "It wasn't a major sin. It was a middling sin." Pause. "Why should I be saddled with it?"

He says: "What I did was the best a man like me—imperfections and all—could do in a situation like that. Some people remained my friends. It is one of the things that if I needed reassuring—and maybe I do—substantiates my belief that some people knew it was not abject capitulation."

And then: "All that hell I went through, and it really was hell—I said, 'Why am I being victimized?' And there

ERA OF THE PURGE: A TIMELINE

1917—Bolshevik Revolution.
1919—American Communist Party founded.
1924—American Communist Party candidate William Z. Foster wins 33,000 votes in presidential election.
1939—German invasion of Poland; World War II begins.
1941—German invasion of Soviet Union.
1945—German surrender, end of World War II in Europe.
1947—Unofficial start of Cold War.
1947—October: House Committee on Un-American Activities begins hearings on Hollywood subversives.
1947—November: Hollywood studios adopt blacklist.
1950—Sen. Joseph McCarthy era begins with accusations of Communists working in State Department, continues for four years.
1951—Second round of HUAC hearings into Hollywood Communists. American Communist Party outlawed by Supreme Court decision upholding the Alien Registration Act, which bans any group conspiring to "advocate violent overthrow of the Government."
1960—Blacklist broken with "Spartacus" screenwriting credit to Dalton Trumbo.
1975—The Un-American Activities Committee (the Internal Affairs Committee in later years) dissolved.
1997—Writers Guild of America restores credits of blacklisted writers on 55 films.

was nothing I could do. I'd go and work. That was the only thing I could do, was compose music."

And then: "I had it wrong. I was thinking only of myself. And how this [expletive] wound never closed."

Testimony

■ "I was blacklisted for eight years, but I worked using different fronts. People fronted for different reasons. Some did it for money. Others refused to take money. Some did it to try to get a career because they were aspiring writers and they were getting credits, which is what a career in this business is based on. Some did it out of friendship, or because they felt the blacklist was bad. But even today I feel I couldn't expose them."

—TV and film writer Walter Bernstein ("You Are There," "The Front," "Semi-Tough," "Miss Evers' Boys").

■ "I was working on a weekly in New York City, the Chief, covering City Hall, and one day Walter called me and asked if I could help. He was in trouble, and could he use my name. I said absolutely. I did it as a favor to a friend. I wouldn't take any money at all. His brother Stanley was my best friend, and Walter was our hero; he went to Dartmouth before the war, he was on the fencing team. He went into the service very early, one of the first draftees. . . .

"One time I had to go to a producer's meeting; they wanted to meet the writer. I dressed up like a writer, I wore a tweed sports jacket, smoked a pipe, and apparently I pulled it off very well."

—Leslie Slote, front for Walter Bernstein and other blacklistees.

■ "Philip Yordan hired me and used his name on some of the pictures I wrote. It depends on how you look at it: Either he was doing me a favor by letting me work and paying me and not giving me credit, or he was exploiting me because I was blacklisted and worked for less money and could do work without demanding credit. A lot of people are very critical of him. I consider him a friend. For which people are critical of me."

—Blacklisted screenwriter Bernard Gordon ("The Law vs. Billy the Kid," "Hellcats of the Navy," "Escape From San Quentin").

■ "I'm 82 years old, I don't talk about that stuff anymore. I just sell my old pictures."

—Writer-producer Philip Yordan, front for Gordon and other blacklisted writers.

■ March 13, 1951, letter from Oscar-winning actress Gale Sondergaard, who was subpoenaed to appear before the Un-American Activities Committee, appealing to the Screen Actors Guild for support:

"I must earnestly and fraternally ask the Board to consider the implications of the forthcoming hearing. It may now be widened. It may ultimately be extended to include any freedom-loving nonconformist or any member of a particular race or any member of a union—or anyone. . . .

"I can find no reason in my conduct as an actress or as a union member why I should have to contemplate a severing of the main artery of my life: my career as a performer."

■ March 20, 1951, response from the Screen Actors Guild to Sondergaard, who was subsequently blacklisted:

"Like the overwhelming majority of the American people, we believe that a 'clear and present danger' to our nation exists. The Guild Board believes that all participants in the international Communist Party conspiracy against our nation should be exposed for what they are—enemies of our country and of our form of government. . . .

"If any actor by his own actions outside of union activities has so offended American public opinion that he has made himself unsaleable at the box office, the Guild cannot and would not want to force any employer to hire him."

■ "Screen Actors Guild would like to express how deeply we regret that the poison of fear so paralyzed our organization, when courage and conviction were needed to oppose the blacklist. Only our sister union, Actors Equity Association, had the courage to stand behind its members and help them to continue their creative lives in the theater."

—Richard Masur, president, Screen Actors Guild, Oct. 27, 1997.

'Project Lawrence'

In 1988, Hollywood reporter David Robb found what he was looking for in a cardboard box abandoned in a UCLA film school archive: the unsorted papers of blacklisted screenwriter Michael Wilson, one of the great talents of his time.

Robb could barely believe his eyes as he sifted through letters, telegrams and memorandums. Here was incontrovertible evidence that Wilson, who died in 1978, was the original screenwriter of the epic "Lawrence of Arabia."

A telegram from "Lawrence of Arabia" director David Lean to Wilson, dated Feb. 3, 1960: re "a proto-treatment for next project Lawrence," it read. "What a masterly job you are doing. Your extraordinary grasp and inventive appreciation of complex subject and character fills me with admiration and excitement."

Then a letter dated Nov. 29, 1962, from Wilson to Robert Bolt, who received sole screenwriting credit for the film: "If I were 'clean,'"—as in, not blacklisted—"my name would already

be alongside yours as co-author of this picture. Anyone who takes the trouble to read my stuff chronologically—from the time I wrote my first notes on 'Lawrence' in 1959 until I wrote my third draft screenplay in 1961—will see where and how the basic ideas and overall conception of this picture germinated."

Robb called Lean in London to ask about these documents, and the prickly director denied that Michael Wilson deserved any credit. He said he was "absolutely astounded" that anyone would think so. The credit remained unchanged until Lean died, when the Writers Guild added Michael Wilson's name to the screenplay.

That was two years ago.

Last year Robb found 30 other unattributed credits by matching the Social Security numbers of pseudonyms to those of blacklisted writers—like Gerald L.C. Copley for screenwriter Lester Cole on "Born Free," or Raymond T. Marcus for blacklistee Bernard Gordon on "Chicago Confidential" and "Escape From San Quentin." Their credits were restored this year.

The credits on many other such films remain unchanged; the topic is still too sensitive. Blacklisted writer Ben Barzman is now known to have written the script of "El Cid," the medieval Spanish epic starring Charlton Heston and Sophia Loren, but Philip Yordan has refused to have his own name removed, according to Robb. Del Reisman, a past Writers Guild president who has helped to restore credits, says: "It's in midair. We haven't nailed it down yet." Yordan declined to comment.

And Now?

Where has Congress been as all this remembering unfolds? People in Hollywood want to know.

"After all, it was a congressional committee that instituted these investigations. It was the [Un-American Activities] committee and Congress who cited people for contempt and was responsible for sending them to jail," Reisman says. "I would have thought that Congress or a representative of Congress—someone in office—would have referred to this committee's origins and the nature of the investigations."

House members, however, say they have better things to do. And besides, they weren't even invited to the official event on Oct. 27.

"The only reason I was aware of [the anniversary] is because I'm in Los Angeles and I heard something on public radio," says Rep. Howard Berman (D-Calif.), a Judiciary Committee member.

"How the hell are we supposed to know about this event?" says Barney Frank (D-Mass.), another Judiciary Committee member. "Congress has unfortunately more than one such moment. HUAC did a lot of bad things, not just to these people. Should we commemorate every anniversary?"

He adds, "I'm not in favor of having contemporary politicians make formal pronouncements about history because it will be politicized. It won't be good history. And it's a diversion from changing public policy."