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CANNES FILMFESTIVAL 2023
OPENINGSFILM

Arthur
Harari



le Procès Goldman

een film van
Cédric Kahn

produced door Benjamin Elouf

PREVIOUSLY
UNRELEASED

MATHEIAS GALEO VILLÉ, NÉJLA BRUNÇON, ARIEH WORTHALTER, CHRISTIAN MAZZUCCHI, JEREMY LEWIN, GILOÉ LECHE et JURY BAZDROWICZ
MONTAGE par CÉDRIC KAHN, ASSOCIATION DES CÉDRIC, LAROUSSE, BATHAZAR, HERTZBERG, SAGA PATER, K. GIBINGBELLI, GUYON VAN TRUET, BORGUE LAURE, FERRERY
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PERSMAP



LE PROCÈS GOLDMAN is onderdeel van Eye Filmmuseums landelijke programma Previously Unreleased.

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Synopsis

Strakke verfilming van de geruchtmakende rechtszaak rond de Franse revolutionair en crimineel Pierre Goldman uit 1976 kaart meer aan dan de schuldvraag alleen.

Een van de geruchtmakendste rechtszaken uit de recente Franse geschiedenis vond plaats in 1976. In de beklaagdenbank stond dertiger Pierre Goldman, zoon van Joodse verzetsstrijders, revolutionair en crimineel. Na een jaar te hebben meegevochten met Venezolaanse rebellen, keerde Goldman platzak terug in Parijs, waar hij met roofovervallen het hoofd boven water probeerde te houden. Hij werd opgepakt, verdween voor meerdere jaren achter de tralies, maar gaat in beroep tegen de verdenking van een tweevoudige moord. Goldman, inmiddels de lieveling van links Frankrijk - filosoof Régis Debray en actrice Simone Signoret steunden hem openlijk - ontkende hardnekkig schuld. Rond deze zaak trekt regisseur Cédric Kahn een intense, rumoerige rechtbankfilm op, waarbij de schuldvraag al snel wordt overschaduwd door complexere thematiek als Joodse identiteit en racisme. Getuigenverklaringen blijken op vooroordelen gebaseerd en de rol van de politie is op z'n zachtst gezegd discutabel te noemen. Dat alles maakt de razende en tierende, zijn advocaten tot wanhoop drijvende Goldman nog niet tot een aangename hoofdpersoon, integendeel. Tegenover Goldmans verbale geweld stelt Kahn een onnadrukkelijke maar met vaste hand gevoerde regie, waaraan het de rechtbank zelf destijds blijkbaar ontbrak.

Le procès Goldman was de openingsfilm van de sectie Quinzaine des cinéastes op het Filmfestival van Cannes. De film kreeg diverse nominaties en prijzen, vooral voor hoofdrolspeler Arieh Worthalter. De film is beschikbaar met Nederlandse of Engelse ondertitels.



Director: Cédric Kahn



Director's biography

Cédric Kahn started out as an assistant editor for Maurice Pialat's *Under the sun of Satan* and then directed his first short film *Les Dernières Heures du millénaire* in 1990. Two years later, his first feature film *Bar des rails* premiered at the Angers European First Film Festival and was then presented at the International Critic's Week in Venice. He then received the Jean Vigo Prize with his next film *Too Much Happiness* and the Louis-Delluc Prize with *Boredom* in 1998, and in 2001, *Roberto Succo*, was presented in the official selection of the Cannes Film Festival. Cédric Kahn then directed *Red Lights* with Carole Bouquet and Jean-Pierre Darroussin, which was presented in the official competition of the Berlinale, *The Plane* with Vincent Lindon and Isabelle Carré, *Regrets* with Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi and Yvan Attal and *A Better Life* with Guillaume Canet and Leïla Bekhti. After a first acting experience in *N'oublie pas que tu vas mourir* by Xavier Beauvois, we find him twenty years later in *Alyah* and *Les Anarchistes* by Elie Wajeman, *Miss and the Doctors* by Axelle Ropert, *Up for Love* by Laurent Tirard and *After Love* by Joachim Lafosse. In 2014, he won the Special Jury Prize at the San Sebastián Film Festival for his film *Wild Life* with Mathieu Kassovitz and in 2018, his lead actor won the Silver Bear for Best Actor at the Berlin Film Festival for his film *The Prayer*. He could also be seen in *Cold War* by Pawel Pawlikowski, in *Head Above Water* by Margaux Bonhomme and in the series *Call My Agent!* in which he plays his own role alongside Isabelle Huppert. His eleventh feature film, *Happy Birthday* with Catherine Deneuve and Emmanuelle Bercot was released in 2019.

Director's Note

Political activist, armed robber, literary icon, child of the Holocaust... The trial of Pierre Goldman is a world unto itself, a case much larger than the court room.

To begin with, the time period: This is the mid-'70s. The revolutionary ideals of the 1960s are collapsing. Just as the OJ Simpson trial is a window onto 1990s America, the trial of Pierre Goldman is a window onto 1970s France. The ideals of the '60s had been corrupted in a world that reverted to imperialism and capitalism and turned its back on revolution. And like the OJ Simpson trial, the Pierre Goldman trial was a politicization of a legal case marked by social and ideological questions that the case allows us to explore.

The script was based, first and foremost, on documentary research. Nathalie Hertzberg and I interviewed Georges Kiejman and André Chouraqui at length; we reconstructed the day-to-day proceedings of the trial from newspaper articles. We made sure to create the most effective narrative possible, reinforcing its content by merging elements from the two Pierre Goldman trials.

Using the model of the closed hearing, we sought to put on display these dialectics that come into play: the intensity of Goldman, the rigor of Kiejman, the treachery of Garaud, the sense of balance of the presiding judge, etc. The word becomes a directorial device, like a camera: it can direct our point of view, or even create it. Goldman's life rises up in our imagination like a film in itself, one that exists outside the temporal boundaries of the film and the physical confines of the courtroom.

The other powerful narrative element is the courtroom audience, present at every moment. The audience generates another point of view and puts greater pressure on the orators and the presiding judge. They influence the jury; they influence the viewer. The audience's presence helps bring across the notion that a trial is also an arena where a battle is being held: it is a cross between spectacle and a search for truth.

At the core of the film is the antagonism between Goldman and Kiejman. Through this conflict, a single story reveals two opposing destinies: Goldman and Kiejman are both Polish Jews born in France to modest backgrounds. Both are the products of a tragic past. Their backgrounds are nearly identical, and yet their destinies could not be more opposed. This oppositional symmetry comes across in the two men's fascination with each other, shot through with rivalry and guilt: Kiejman, the brilliant Parisian lawyer who succeeds wherever he goes; and Goldman, the misguided idealist who has failed to make his life heroic, dragged down by his demons.

- Cédric Kahn

Interview with...

CÉDRIC KAHN

How did this film come about?

I discovered Pierre Goldman about fifteen years ago, through his book, "Dim Memories of a Polish Jew Born in France". What struck me wasn't his innocence; it was his extraordinary use of language. His style, his dialectic, his thought process. I thought something had to be done with the book, in cinema. I feel that Goldman's masterpiece is his acquittal, and the book was the catalyst for that. At the time, the French left was very excited about the book; they organized support groups, and that created a very particular context for the second appeal trial. Apart from that, Goldman's life is a series of failures, dramas, and renunciations. So I dismissed the idea of a biopic and thought instead that the film to make was a film about the pivotal trial.

How close did you stick to the trial transcripts when writing the film's dialogues?

I worked closely with screenwriter Nathalie Herzberg, whom I had reached out to when I first came across the book. She got in touch with people in her networks: Michael Prazan (author of a Goldman biography); Georges Kiejman and Francis Chouraqui, his lawyers, etc. Nathalie then set about reconstructing the trial from newspaper articles, a painstaking task of over 300 pages. It was like a block of clay we could sculpt from. We then locked ourselves up together and wrote the script from all that material. For the most part, we didn't change much about the way the trial unfolded. We combined elements of the two trials, but we also took parts from his book, and we integrated things that were discovered after the trial. We took a lot of liberties, but at the same time, we were very faithful: Kiejman's defense speech is reproduced almost word-for-word, as is the prosecution's. In the beginning of the film, the scene is made up but what's true are the letters: Goldman really did want to fire his lawyer a week before the trial. Kiejman defended him in this context of hostility and distrust, and it's all the more to his credit.

Isn't this film as much about the complexity of dispensing justice as it is about Goldman?

Exactly, and that's what fascinated me. In the absence of evidence -- which was true in the Goldman affair -- all that remains is language. In the arena of combat that is a trial, language is used to establish a point of view, a conviction, and that is truly dizzying. A trial is a combat fought with language. It is pure dialectic. The subject of this film is dialectics.

Goldman's book didn't convince you of his innocence, yet when you see the film, he makes a very strong case for himself - thanks to his charisma, but also thanks to the intensity and conviction of the actor playing him, Arieh Worthalter.

Goldman says "I am innocent because I am innocent." That was my first title for the film. I gave up on it because it would have been too abstract a title, but what a sentence! Arieh embodies the role so well that he gives us access to all of Goldman's complexity. When he approached the role, he asked me just one question: is he innocent or not? I didn't have an answer, because that's the very question the film asks. But I told Arieh that for him, it wasn't a question at all: he had to be innocent in his own eyes.

Was the pared-down style of the directing something that was there from the beginning?

Yes, it was part of the project from the start. When I spoke to Nathalie Herzberg and Benjamin Elalouf, the producer, about a film based solely on the trial, to me that also meant no music, no flashbacks, just the bare bones. And that wasn't for reasons relating to cinematography; it was for ethical reasons. If we had started using flashbacks or music, we would have been directing the viewer's point of view and arousing empathy. But I wanted to put the viewer in the juror's seat. So the form had to be as pared-down as possible. There was no room for embellishment, the subject dictated the form. I wanted to show the art of oration that's involved in a trial; I wanted to show how difficult it is to hand down justice. What's interesting about the Goldman case is that it has not in fact been solved. What interested me is that the truth eludes us, and that different truths collide with one another. All the witnesses are unsettling, whether they're for the prosecution or the defense. Each of them is sure of what they know to be true, but their confidence is shaken. Trials are chock full of truths and lies.

The Goldman Case tells the story of a trial from fifty years ago, and yet the film resonates strongly with contemporary themes. For example, the issue of the police.

During the writing process, it became clear to us that the social issues of that time were the same as they are today. Society is fractured similarly between the far left and the far right. Goldman's position on the police is very radical, whereas Kiejman represents a more centrist way of thinking: he basically says that some police officers are racist but that the institution as a whole is not. The plaintiff's attorney says that he speaks for France, the real France, the France of honest people, against the Parisian intelligentsia of the far left. The idea of the elites versus the people, Paris versus small towns, etc. - all of that was already in play.

The film also resonates because it shows the media's effect on court cases as well, as we see with social media now.

I think that journalists have always had an influence on the outcome of legal cases. What goes on outside the courtroom has an influence on the jury's decision. This is very clear in the case of Goldman. We read all the articles that were published at the time, and they had clearly taken his side. If the press had gone against Goldman, he might not have been exonerated for the two murders. The activism of Simone Signoret, of Régis Debray, of the celebrities of the time - it's obvious that all that played a role.

Doesn't the justice system, as a democratic institution, come out on top in this case, even if this trial in particular does have a darker side?

I don't know about justice, but the people who dispense justice, yes, certainly. Goldman was exonerated for lack of evidence, and from that point of view, it's indisputable the courts did their job.

If the case can be viewed as a theater of justice, Pierre Goldman is a sensational "actor." He's a "star," if you will.

I wanted the viewer to doubt him. But I also wanted to give him a chance. The extras in the room hadn't read the script, and we shot the trial in chronological order. Halfway

through filming, I asked someone to shoot some small interviews with the spectators in the courtroom. They were asked if they thought Goldman was innocent or guilty. A lot of people said they wanted him to be innocent. That's the definition of charisma. Goldman had the kind of charisma that brought people over to his side. What's incredible is that Goldman did it fifty years ago, and that Arieh managed to do it again today! Goldman's magic has done the trick yet again.

Another important issue in the film is Jewishness.

Jewishness, yes, but in particular, I'd say, it's the issue of being "a child of the Shoah," as Goldman defined himself. It's clearly a very important aspect of his story. It manifests itself in the antagonism between Goldman and Kiejman, who are both children of the Holocaust, but with two diametrically opposed destinies. Goldman was the "cursed Jew" and Kiejman the "resilient Jew." Kiejman transformed his origins into something positive, into success. Both were also children of Communist Jews. Their parents were not religious. Leaving religion behind in the name of the Communist ideal is fundamental in the history of Ashkenazi Jews in Poland. And then it's just one more step from Communism to resistance. Goldman declares, "I wanted to be like my parents, a hero, that's why I went to carry out guerrilla warfare in Venezuela..." He was overwhelmed by his parents' history. He was the heir, but without the context, along with a good number of personality flaws. Lots of people who come from that background have had complicated destinies.

Goldman says at one point "Negroes and Jews are the same." That resonates too. And you have respected the terminology of the time by using the word "negro," which could be badly received today. But Goldman employs the word in its noble sense, in the postcolonial tradition of [Aimé] Césaire or [Léopold Sédar] Senghor.

I hesitated for a long time on some of this language, but I decided to stay true to Goldman's word. Goldman was very much ahead of his time when it comes to the issue of competition over historical memory. He immediately understood that all oppressed peoples had something in common. As a matter of fact, he lived only with Black people, as I show in the film. That broadens the film and the questions raised by the trial. And that's important.



The film takes place behind closed doors, like on a theater stage. How did you work with your director of photography, Patrick Ghiringhelli, in this particular visual context?

The set-up for the shoot was as follows: full house, very quick shoot, live reactions from the audience, three cameras at all times. We were somewhere between a classic shoot and a recording. I never staged the audience's reactions. I just gave each group a starting instruction: you all are the leftists who are fans of Goldman, you all are his buddies from the West Indies, you all are the aggrieved victims, you all are the cops... and that's all. Everyone was following the debates and reacting according to the group they belonged to. I could tell from listening to the intensity of the reactions whether the actors were good or not. It was truly live!

The entire set was built on a tennis court. It was lit from above by a glass roof, with natural light. We did a lot of takes to be able to film everyone. Each scene was shot between twenty and thirty times, on average. For each take, we put the cameras back to film what we hadn't yet filmed. I was looking at my three screens and directing each camera operator live, using an earpiece device. It was kind of like shooting a live sports event. In the end, directing depends a lot on what you set up ahead of time. As time goes on, I've come to be a bigger believer in the device than in the staging.

So you had a lot of material to sort out and get the pacing right with your editor, the great Yann Dedet?

There was an endless amount of rushes. We were overwhelmed before we even got started. We started working on it slowly. We watched everything with the three screens running at the same time. We'd say "camera B, camera A, etc." We marked out all the sections we were interested in, and from that material, we started editing. It was extremely meticulous, because focusing on the words that were being spoken turned out to be a monumental task. We had to strike a balance with the image so that the listening experience would be just right. We did a lot of editing with our eyes closed. That work was done hand-in-hand with Yann, who was the ideal partner to work with on this.

Much of the film's power comes from the actors, from the leads to the extras.

My casting director, Antoine Carrard, and I felt strongly that in order for the reenactment to feel credible, we couldn't have any famous actors in the film. There couldn't be a distinction between the extras, the bit players, and the actors. It was a communist shoot!

For Arieh, he read three lines, and I could have said, "stop, we're good!" It was that obvious. He had everything that was needed for the Goldman part: the physicality, the intellect, and the power. The word that comes to mind to sum up Arieh's acting is "density." He brings this kind of density to everything he does. You can see it in the very first shot, when he's sitting in his cell, staring up. I also like that we hear him before we see him, through his letters. You hear the character's words and understand his complex psyche before you even see his face. And Arieh lends a very convincing body and face to that voice. During the shoot, I didn't need to give him much direction. I'd say that he brought his own story to the Goldman role.

Main cast

ARTHUR ARARI

Selective filmography - actor:

2023: ANATOMY OF A FALL - Justine Triet

2023: LE PROCES GOLDMAN - Cédric Kahn

2019: SIBYL - Justine Triet

2017: LE LION EST MORT CE SOIR - Nobuhiro Suwa

Selective filmography - director:

2021: ONODA: 10,000 NIGHTS IN THE JUNGLE

2016: DIAMONT NOIR

2013: PEINE PERDUE

2007: LA MAIN SUR LA GUEULE

2005: DES JOURS DANS LA RUE (short)

ARIEH WORTHALTER

Selective filmography - actor:

2023: LE PROCES GOLDMAN - Cédric Kahn

2022: BOWLING SATURNE - Patricia Mazuy

2021: SERRE MOI FORT - Mathieu Amalric

2019: SYMPATHIE POUR LE DIABLE - Guillaume de Fontenay

2018: GIRL - Lukas Dhont

Like Kiejman, Arthur Harari is an eagle, both physically and in thought. He is eloquent, precise, and cerebral. I think he brings across a very faithful portrait of what Kiejman is: enormous intelligence and controlled emotion. We met in the middle of quarantine, on a bench in a square. In my mind's eye, I saw his face meld with Kiejman's.

I could go on and on... Chloé Lecerf, who plays Goldman's wife is just staggering... I get the feeling she was bringing something more to her role, just like ArieH: a sense of honor, a story... It's not nothing to play a Black woman faced with White justice. Maxime Tshibangu, who plays Lautric, is also fantastic and very moving. He's part of Joel Pommerat's theater company. Jerzy Radziwilowicz, who plays Alter Goldman, came from Poland to shoot this film. He only had one scene, and he stayed three weeks on a bench! I figure he agreed to do the part because there was something powerful in it for him. His scene is the cornerstone of the film. We had actors from all walks of life, and that really created this kind of "theater company" effect. It'd be impossible to name everyone, but they're all essential to the film.

What's striking is that this extremely pared-down, almost minimalist film is nevertheless quite thematically dense.

It's a film about justice and the complexity of justice; it's about the children of the Shoah, about the condition of being Black... But it's also about poor white people - the ones who feel belittled and despised because they don't have the words to express themselves. They, too, have a right to their truth and a right for their experiences to be respected. I don't like the ideas put forth by Garraud, the victims' lawyer, but I have to say that sometimes, he hits the nail on the head. This trial was an exact microcosm of French society at the time. It was a time when justice was White and male, and in some sense, nothing has really changed.



Cast

Pierre Goldman	ARIEH WORTHALTER
Maître Kiejman	ARTHUR HARARI
Maître Garaud	NICOLAS BRIANÇON
Le président	STÉPHAN GUÉRIN-TILLIÉ
L'avocat général	AURÉLIEN CHAUSSADE
La psychiatre	LAETITIA MASSON
Alter Goldman	JERZY RADZIWILOWICZ

Crew

Director	CÉDRIC KAHN
Writer	CÉDRIC KAHN
Writer	NATHALIE HERTZBERG
Producer	BENJAMIN ELALOUF
Associate Producer	NATHALIE DENNES
Casting	ANTOINE CARRARD
Cinematographer	PATRICK GHIRINGHELLI
Editor	YANN DEDET
Sound Designer	ERWAN KERZANET
Sound Designer	SYLVAIN MALBRANT
Sound Designer	OLIVIER GUILLAUME
Post Production	YOV MOOR
Post Production	DELPHINE PASSANT
Production Designer	GUILLAUME DEVIERCY
Costumes	ALICE CAMBOURNAC
Production Director	DAMIEN SAUSSOL

