### Klaus Barbie

**From Wikipedia the free encyclopedia**

| **Born** | Nikolaus Barbie  
25 October 1913  
Godesberg, Rhine Province, Prussia, Germany |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------|
| **Died** | 25 September 1991 (aged 77)  
Lyon, France |
| **Nationality** | German |
| **Other names** | "Butcher of Lyon" |
| **Political party** | NSDAP (1937–1945) |
| **Criminal charge** | Crimes against humanity |
| **Penalty** | Life imprisonment |

#### SS career

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<td><strong>Unit</strong></td>
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| **Spouse(s)** | Regina Margaretta Willms  
(m. 1939) |
| **Children** | 2 |
Nikolaus "Klaus" Barbie (25 October 1913 – 25 September 1991) was an SS and Gestapo functionary during the Nazi era. He was known as the Butcher of Lyon for having personally tortured prisoners of the Gestapo—primarily Jews and members of the French Resistance—while stationed in Lyon under the collaborationist Vichy regime. After the war, United States intelligence services employed him for anti-Marxist efforts and also aided his escape to Bolivia.[2]

The West German Intelligence Service later recruited him. Barbie is suspected of having had a role in the Bolivian coup d'état orchestrated by Luis García Meza in 1980. After the fall of the dictatorship, Barbie no longer had the protection of the government of La Paz and in 1983 was extradited to France, where he was convicted of crimes against humanity. He died of cancer in prison on 25 September 1991.

Early life and education

Nikolaus "Klaus" Barbie was born on 25 October 1913 in Godesberg, later renamed Bad Godesberg, which is today part of Bonn. The Barbie family came from Merzig, in the Saar near the French border. It is likely that his paternal ancestors were French Roman Catholics named Barbier who left France at the time of the French Revolution. In 1914, his father, also named Nikolaus, was conscripted to fight in the First World War. He returned an angry, bitter man. He was wounded in the neck at Verdun and captured by the French, whom he hated, and he never recovered his health. He became an alcoholic who abused his children. Until 1923, when he was 10, Klaus Barbie attended the local school where his father taught. Afterwards, he attended a boarding school in Trier, and was relieved to be away from his abusive father. In 1925, the entire Barbie family moved to Trier.[3]

In June 1933, Barbie's younger brother, Kurt, died at the age of 18 of chronic illness. Later that year, their father died. The death of his father derailed plans for the 20-year-old Barbie to study theology, or otherwise become an academic, as his peers had expected. While unemployed, Barbie was conscripted into the Nazi labour service, the Reichsarbeitsdienst. On 26 September 1935, aged 22, he joined the SS (member 272,284), and began working in the Sicherheitsdienst (SD), the SS security service, which acted as the intelligence-gathering arm of the Nazi Party. On 1 May 1937, he became member 4,583,085 of the Nazi Party.

Second World War

After the German conquest and occupation of the Netherlands, Barbie was assigned to Amsterdam. He had been pre-assigned to Adolf Eichmann's Amt (Department) IV/B-4. This department was responsible for identification, roundup and deportation of Dutch Jews and Freemasons. On 11 October 1940, Barbie arrested Hermann van Tongeren, Grand Master of the Grand Orient of the Netherlands. In March 1941, Van Tongeren was transported to Sachsenhausen concentration camp where, in freezing conditions, he died two weeks later. On 1 April, Barbie summoned Van Tongeren's daughter, Charlotte, to SD headquarters and informed her that her father had died of an infection in both ears and had been cremated.[4]

In 1942, he was sent to Dijon, France, in the Occupied Zone. In November of the same year, at the age of 29, he was assigned to Lyon as the head of the local Gestapo. He established his headquarters at the Hôtel Terminus in Lyon, where he personally tortured adult and child prisoners.[2][5][6] He became known as the "Butcher of Lyon".[7] The daughter of a French Resistance leader based in Lyon said her father was beaten and his skin torn, and that his head was immersed in buckets of ammonia and cold water; he could not sit or stand and died three days later from burns to his skin.[8]

Historians estimate that Barbie was directly responsible for the deaths of up to 14,000 people[8][9] personally participating in roundups such as the Rue Sainte-Catherine Roundup which saw 84 people arrested in a single day. He arrested Jean Moulin, a high-ranking member of the French Resistance and his most prominent captive. In 1943, he was awarded the Iron Cross (First Class) by Adolf Hitler for his campaign against the French Resistance and the capture of Moulin.[10]

In April 1944, Barbie ordered the deportation to Auschwitz of a group of 44 Jewish children from an orphanage atlzieu.[11] He then rejoined the SiPo-SD of Lyon in its retreat to Bruyères, where he led an anti-partisan attack in Rehaupal in September 1944.[12]

U.S. intelligence and Bolivia

In 1947, Barbie was recruited as an agent for the 66th Detachment of the U.S. Army Counterintelligence Corps (CIC).[13] The U.S. used Barbie and other Nazi Party members to further anti-communist efforts in Europe. Specifically, they were interested in British interrogation techniques which Barbie had experienced firsthand, and the identities of SS officers the British were using for their own ends. Later, the CIC housed him in a hotel in Memmingen, and he reported on French intelligence activities in the French zone of occupied Germany because they suspected that the French had been infiltrated by the KGB and GRU.[14]

The US Department of Justice report to the US Senate opens with the summary paragraph[15]

As the investigation of Klaus Barbie has shown, officers of the United States government were directly responsible for protecting a person wanted by the government of France on criminal charges and in arranging his escape from the law. As a direct result of that action, Klaus Barbie did not stand trial in France in 1950; he spent 33 years as a free man and a fugitive from justice.

The French discovered that Barbie was in U.S. hands, and having sentenced him to death by absence for war crimes, made a plea to John J. McCloy, U.S. High Commissioner for Germany, to hand him over for execution, but McCloy allegedly refused.[4] Instead, the CIC helped him flee to Bolivia assisted by “ratlines” organized by U.S. intelligence services;[16] and by Croatian Roman Catholic clergy, including Krunoslav Draganović. The CIC asserted that Barbie knew too much about the network of German spies the CIC had planted in various European communist organizations, and were suspicious of communist influence within the French government, but their protection of Barbie may have been as much to avoid the embarrassment of having recruited him in the first place.[13] Other authors have suggested that the anticommunist element of Italian fascism and the protection of the Vatican allowed Klaus Barbie and other Nazis to flee to Bolivia.[17]
In 1965, Barbie was recruited by the West German foreign intelligence agency Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND), under the codename “Adler” (Eagle) and the registration number V-43118. His initial monthly salary of 500 Deutsche Mark was transferred in May 1966 to an account of the Chartered Bank of London in San Francisco. During his time with the BND, Barbie made at least 35 reports to the BND headquarters in Pullach.[18]

Barbie emigrated to Bolivia,[19] where he lived well for 30 years in Cochabamba, under the alias Klaus Altmann. It was easier and less embarrassing for him to find employment there than in Europe, and he enjoyed excellent relations with high-ranking Bolivian officials, including Bolivian dictators Hugo Banzer and Luis García Meza Tejada. “Altmann” was known for his German nationalist and anti-communist stances.[19] While engaged in arms-trade operations in Bolivia, he was appointed to the rank of lieutenant colonel within the Bolivian Armed Forces.[20]

Barbie collaborated with General Barriento’s regime, including teaching the general’s private paramilitaries named “Furmont” how torture can best be used. The regime’s political repression against leftist groups was helped by Barbie’s knowledge about intelligence work, torture and interrogations. In 1972 under General Banzer (with whom Barbie collaborated even more openly), he assisted in illegal arrests, interrogations and murders of opposition and progressive groups. Journalists and activists who wrote or spoke about the regime’s crimes against human rights were arrested and many fell victim to so-called “disappearances”, the state’s secret murders and abductions of leftists. Barbie actively participated in the regime’s oppression of opponents.[21][22][23][24]

Barbie was strongly linked to the neo-Nazi paramilitary Alvaro De Castro, who was his personally hired bodyguard and the two participated in criminal actions and businesses together. De Castro had connections with powerful drug barons and the illegal drug trade and, together with Barbie (under the name Altmann) and an Austrian company, sold weapons to the drug cartels, and when De Castro was arrested he admitted in interviews that he had earlier worked for drug lords in the country. Other sources say Barbie most likely also had connections with these organizations.[25] Initially, he worked for Roberto Suarez Gomez who eventually introduced him to Colombian traffickers. Barbie met with Pablo Escobar and several other high ranking members of the Medellin cartel in the late 1970s, and agreed to arrange for security of Escobar’s raw coca supply, from its cultivation until it reached processing plants in Colombia. In exchange, Escobar agreed to fund Barbie’s anti-communist activities.[26] De Castro continued to correspond with Barbie when Barbie was later under arrest.[27][21][22][23][24][25] Their connections did also provide intelligence information to US authorities at the US Embassy. A group called “The Fiancées of Death”, which included German Nazis and Fascists, had links to some of Barbie’s actions in Bolivia. Barbie earlier also carried out a large arms purchase of tanks from Austria to the Bolivian army. These were then used in a coup d’état.[21][22][23][24]

People who met Barbie during his time in Bolivia have told that he was a firm and fanatic believer in the Nazi ideology and an anti-Semite. Barbie and De Castro reportedly talked about the cases and searches for Josef Mengele and Eichmann, whom Barbie supported and wanted to assist in remaining on the run.[21][22][23][24][25]

Extradition, trial, and death

Barbie’s Bolivian secret police ID card

Barbie was identified as being in Peru in 1971 by the Klarsfelds (Nazi hunters from France) who came across a secret document that revealed his alias. On 19 January 1972, this information was published in the French newspaper L’Aurore, along with a photograph of Altmann which the Klarsfelds obtained from a German expatriate living in Lima, Peru.
Despite global outcry, Barbie was able to return to Bolivia where the government refused to extradite him, stating that France and Bolivia did not have an extradition treaty and that the statute of limitations on his crimes had expired. Barbie’s close fascist friends knew who he was, but to the public, Barbie denied being none other than his innocent alter-ego “Altmann” and in the videotaped interview conducted by Ladislas de Hoyos which he allowed, he continued to lie about never having been in Lyon, never knowing Moulin or having been in the Gestapo. However, in the 1970s, the community of refugee Jews who had survived or escaped the war, openly discussed the fact that Barbie was the war criminal from Lyon now living on the Calle Landaeta in La Paz and frequenting the Cafe de La Paz daily. It was no secret.

Journalist and reporter Peter McFarren and a female journalist for The New York Times said that while they were outside Barbie’s house in Bolivia in 1981, wanting to speak to him for an article, they saw Barbie in a window while they were taking photos at the place, and shortly thereafter they were taken away by twelve armed paramilitary men who had quickly arrived in a van and asked what they were doing there.

Ladislas de Hoyos went to see him and asked if he had come to Bolivia to hide from the French. Barbie told him “I have two names, Altmann and Barbie. If it is not convenient for you to talk about Altmann, I will talk about Barbie.”

The testimony of Italian insurgent Stefano Delle Chiaie before the Italian Parliamentary Commission on Terrorism suggests that Barbie took part in the “cocaine coup” of Luis García Meza Tejada when the regime forced its way to power in Bolivia in 1980. In 1983, the newly elected democratic government of Hernán Siles Zuazo arrested Barbie in La Paz on the pretext of owing the government 10,000 dollars for goods he was supposed to have shipped but did not, and a few days later, the government delivered him to France to stand trial.

In 1984, Barbie was indicted for crimes committed as Gestapo chief in Lyon between 1942 and 1944, chief among which was the Roundup. The jury trial started on 11 May 1987 in Lyon before the Rhône Cour d’Assises. Unusually, the court allowed the trial to be filmed because of its historical value. A special courtroom was constructed with seating for an audience of about 700. The head prosecutor was Pierre Truché.

At the trial, Barbie’s defence was funded by Swiss financier François Genoud and undertaken by attorney Jacques Vergès. He was tried on 41 separate counts of crimes against humanity, based on the depositions of 730 Jews and French Resistance survivors who described how he tortured and murdered prisoners.

The father of French Minister for Justice Robert Badinter had died in Sobibor after being deported from Lyon during Barbie’s tenure.

Barbie gave his name as Klaus Altmann, the name that he used while in Bolivia. He claimed that his extradition was technically illegal and asked to be excused from the trial and returned to his cell at Prison Saint-Paul. This was granted. He was brought back to court on 26 May 1987 to face some of his accusers, about whose testimony he had “nothing to say.”

Barbie’s defence lawyer, Vergès, had a reputation for attacking the French political system, particularly in the historic French colonial empire. His strategy was to use the trial to talk about war crimes committed by France since 1945. He got the prosecution to drop some of the charges against Barbie due to French legislation that had protected French citizens accused of the same crimes under the Vichy regime and in French Algeria.

Vergès tried to argue that Barbie’s actions were no worse than the supposedly ordinary actions of colonialists worldwide, and that his trial was tantamount to selective prosecution. During his trial, Barbie said “When I stand before the throne of God, I shall be judged innocent.”

The court rejected the defence’s argument. On 4 July 1987, Barbie was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment. He died in prison in Lyon four years later of leukemia and spine and prostate cancer at the age of 77.

**Personal life**

In April 1939, Barbie became engaged to Regina Margaretta Willms, the 23-year-old daughter of a postal clerk; they had two children, a son named Klaus-Georg Altmann and a daughter named Ute Messner. In 1983, Françoise Croizer, Klaus Barbie’s French daughter-in-law, said in an interview the CIA kidnapped Klaus-Georg in 1946 to make sure his father carried out intelligence missions for the agency. Croizer met Klaus-Georg while both were students in Paris; they married in 1968, had three children and lived in Europe and Bolivia using the surname Altmann. Croizer said when she married she did not know who her father-in-law was, but that she could guess the reasons for a German to settle in South America after the war. Klaus-Georg died in a hang-gliding accident in 1981.

In media

The French documentary film *My Enemy’s Enemy* (*Mon meilleur ennemi* in French) is the story of Klaus Barbie through World War II and post-war hiding journey in Bolivia including his involvement in the assassination of Che Guevara before being tried in France for war crimes committed in Lyon and the assassination of Jean Moulin.

Barbie is portrayed in the 2020 film *Resistance (2020 film)*- which tells the story of French mime Marcel Marceau’s efforts as part of the Jewish resistance saving Jewish children from the Nazi regime.

In the 2001 film *Rat Race*, the Pear family visits a museum dedicated to Klaus Barbie, after mistakenly thinking it was a museum dedicated to the famous doll, located in the southwest United States.

See also
References

2. "Bonisch, Georg; Wiegrefe, Klaus (20 January 2011). "From Nazi to criminal to post-war spy: German intelligence hired Klaus Barbie as agent." Der Spiegel.
10. "On behalf of his cruel crimes and specially for the Moulin case, Barbie was awarded, by Hitler, the First Class Iron Cross with Swords", jewishvirtuallibrary.org; accessed 29 September 2015.
11. "On the deportation of the children of Izieu at Yad Vashem website.
25. "La increíble historia del ‘carnicero nazi’ que ayudó a Pablo Escobar a forjar su imperio narco". Infobae.
37. "The CIA kidnapped the young son of Klaus Barbie", UPI.

Further reading


External links

Wikiquote has quotations related to: Klaus Barbie

French Judicial Archives on Klaus Barbie (in French)
Klaus Barbie at the German National Library (in German)
Klaus Barbie on IMDb
Marcel Ophüls's Hôtel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie (1988) on IMDb
Kevin Macdonald's My Enemy's Enemy (2007) on IMDb
L'avocat de la terreur on IMDb (English: "Terror’s Advocate")

Post-war flight of Axis fugitives
Fugitives

- Franz Abromeit
- Ludolf von Alvensleben
- Klaus Barbie
- Hermine Braunsteiner
- Alois Brunner
- Adolf Eichmann
- Aribert Heim
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- Viktors Arājs
- Herberts Cukurs
- Tscherim Soobzokov (Circassian)

Organizations

- Ratlines
- Colonia Dignidad (Chile)
- Franco (Spain)
- Nasser (Egypt)
- Perón (Argentina)
- Videla (Argentina)
- Operation Paperclip (USA)
- Operation Osoaviakhim (USSR)
- Robert Leiber (Holy See)
- Banzer (Bolivia)
- Stroessner (Paraguay)
- Rodolfo Freude
- Alois Hudal
- Charles Lescat
- Hans-Ulrich Rudel
- Otto Skorzeny

State involvement

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- Other persons
- Other nationalities

Hunters

- Serge Klarsfeld & Beate Klarsfeld
- Eli Rosenbaum
- Simon Wiesenthal
- Efraim Zuroff
Disputed / dubious

- Krunoslav Draganović
- ODESSA
- Stille Hilfe

See also

- List of most-wanted Nazi war criminals

Main article
The Holocaust

Related articles by country
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Belarus
Belgium
Bulgaria
Croatia
Estonia
France
Hungary
Italy
Latvia
Libya
Lithuania
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Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Romania
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Serbia
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- Nadine Heftler [fr]
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- Château de Chabannes
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Righteous Among the Nations

- Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Déportation
- Sons and Daughters of Jewish Deportees from France
- Mémorial de la Shoah
- Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation
- Mémorial national de la déportation [fr]
- Rivesaltes Memorial
- List of Holocaust memorials and museums

Memorials

See also
- Antisemitism in France
- Armée Juive
- Battle of France
- History of the Jews in France
- Occupied France
- Vichy anti-Jewish legislation

Authority control

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- GND: 118653121
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