

Klaus Barbie's defense lawyer moves to destroy the Resistance tradition

by Philip Golub

Although it is far from unusual that the KGB and East Berlin's Staatsicherheitsdienst enlist Nazi or neo-Nazi elements to promote their causes, the case of SS officer Klaus Barbie and his lawyer, the communist Jacques Vergès, spectacularly underlines the scope of Russian psychological warfare and disinformation activities in France. The outcome, not of the trial itself, but of the political battle surrounding the trial, will be crucial for the future political stability of France. For technical and other reasons the trial will drag on for years; Barbie in all likelihood will never leave his prison.

The strategy of Vergès and Genoud

More than Barbie himself, Jacques Mansour Vergès has become the issue in the Lyon trial. Vergès proposed his services to Barbie and his family soon after the SS officer's deportation. It has emerged that the contact between Vergès and Barbie was arranged by the present head of the Nazi International, François Genoud, a longstanding friend and business associate of the radical-communist lawyer.

In the Klaus Barbie case, he has attempted to transform the trial of a leading Nazi war criminal into an attack against French society in general, and the non-Communist branches of the Resistance in particular. In a series of much-publicized declarations, not only has Vergès accused the French government of kidnapping Barbie and violating due process, and proclaimed Barbie's innocence with regard to the specific indictment for the murder of Jean Moulin, a leader of the French Resistance in 1942-43: He is now making every effort to prove that the non-Communist wing of the Resistance betrayed the left-leaning Jean Moulin to the Gestapo and hence to Barbie in June 1943.

The mixture of half-truths, slanders, and lies used in this effort is obviously aimed at discrediting the tradition and the bearers of the Gaullist and the military Resistance. The defense of Barbie banalizes Nazism and attempts to rehabilitate Hitler in the same fashion as the scandalous publication of bogus Hitler diaries by *Stern* magazine last year.

Vergès is, of course, trying to capitalize on the ambiguities of the French Resistance, its factional conflicts, and their continuation in post-war France. As he himself has said through Barbie, he wishes "to put France on trial."

Unquestionably, from the beginning, the French government sought to exploit Barbie's deportation from Bolivia as a public relations coup rather than as a serious effort to "educate post-war generations" to the horrors of Nazism as had first been claimed. When the French government succeeded in catching Barbie, in return for a substantial financial emolument to the Bolivian government, it could hardly have overlooked the fact that a law passed in 1977 by the National Assembly proscribed the prosecution of individuals having committed crimes of war or crimes against humanity during the Second World War. Hence, from the very start, war criminal Klaus Barbie could not be prosecuted for the mass murders and deportation of Jews that he organized as the head of the Gestapo in Lyon, but only for the crimes he committed against the French Resistance and Resistance leader Jean Moulin specifically.

The Moulin issue

The latter crimes do not fall under the general heading "crimes against humanity" as defined by the Nuremberg tribunals. Jacques Vergès has profited from this legal conundrum and has used the uncertainties surrounding the figure of Jean Moulin to proclaim Barbie's "innocence" and to vilify the Resistance. Moulin maintained ecumenical relations with all Resistance tendencies, including the Communists. His nomination by General de Gaulle in 1943 as head of the Conseil National de la Résistance (CNR) made an otherwise secondary leader into a national figure. De Gaulle's choice was motivated by a clear desire to unify resistance forces in preparation for the liberation of France. Jean Moulin died a hero, yet the real Moulin story begins after his arrest in June 1943 in Caluire, his imprisonment, and his assassination by the Gestapo of Klaus Barbie.

No one really knows who alerted the Gestapo to the CNR meeting occurring that June, although evidence points to René Hardy, who attended the meeting after having been arrested by the Gestapo and released without any traces of bodily harm. Hardy was tried twice after the war, and twice acquitted on technical grounds; presently, he is hospitalized. Last week Jacques Mansour Vergès visited the dying Hardy to entice him to accuse the non-Communist Resistance of hav-

ing betrayed Moulin. The coward Hardy, *EIR* has learned, assented. In sum, Vergès claims, as the French Communist Party has long proclaimed, that Moulin was betrayed because of his Communist sympathies.

Communists, Islamic fundamentalists, and Islamo-Marxists, as well as ultra-leftists have made Vergès into a celebrity. His friend and long-time associate Hervé is currently the president of National TV 1, the Socialist government's TV station.

In a more discreet way than Vergès, the French Communist Party has been rewriting the history of the French Resistance since the end of the war. Their position inside the French government today has given them access to propaganda means—press, cultural events, historical exhibitions, and so forth—which they previously did not possess. A systematic and subtle campaign of disinformation has been ongoing for the past year or so tending to credit the Communists as national heroes during the war years while the rest of the Resistance, the majority forces of the country, is spat upon by Barbie and Vergès.

The gradual disappearance of the leaders of the Resistance has aided the Communists' efforts. Communist Party rewriting of the history of the Resistance began right after the war under the direction of the ultra-Stalinist Jacques Duclos. In 1949 Duclos published an edition of the collected issues of the CP's clandestine wartime newspaper *Humanité* which deletes two full years of issues devoted to Soviet-Nazi collaboration during the Hitler-Stalin pact.

The two years of ignominious Nazi-Communist collaboration are obscured year by year, archives disappear, memories fade away. There is no doubt that once they joined the Resistance after Operation Barbarossa, the Communists represented a large armed force in the maquis. But the history of their resistance is stained after 1941 by the suicidal decisions taken by their leadership which led to the death of tens of thousands of their own combatants. There were always individual Communists, patriots more than anything else, who fought from 1940 on against party orders. The party itself worked with the Nazis on orders, then fought them on orders, and ultimately attempted to seize power in 1944 against de Gaulle and the Free French.

The French CP and Jacques Mansour Vergès are presently engaged in an effort not merely to discredit those who enabled France to survive during and after the war but are attempting thereby to destroy the still-existing networks, associations, and individuals who represent the moral backbone of France.

Ultimately, the Socialist Party will emerge as discredited and stained by this affair as everyone else but the Communists. Their propaganda coup has backfired.

A veteran KGB operative

As for Vergès himself, a 58-year-old born in the French overseas department of La Réunion where his brother Paul

Vergès is the general secretary of the local Communist Party, he has been an important operative of the international Comintern and KGB apparatus since the late 1940s.

As an activist of the French Communist Party at that time, Vergès entered the leadership of the Liaison Committee of anti-colonialist students in 1949, a front organization for Soviet operations in the developing sector. Soon after, in 1950, Vergès arrived in Prague as a founder, and entered into the executive committee, of the International Students Union, run at the time by Aleksandr Shelepin, then head of the Komsomols. (Shelepin became head of the KGB under Brezhnev until his downfall in the early seventies.) In 1951, Vergès traveled back and forth between Paris, Prague, and East Berlin for the International Students Union. His East Berlin stay is considered by specialists to have been of great importance to his future deployments. After 1954 he returned to Paris to study Hindu and other oriental languages at the Institute of Oriental Languages; at approximately the same time he was integrated into the solidarist network, and attempted to mask his real loyalties by denouncing Moscow's line on the Algerian war while still acting as a defense lawyer for the French Communist Party.

It was in the late 1960s that he entered into contact, at least to public knowledge, with the leader of the post-war Nazi International, François Genoud, who sought, like Vergès, to use the National Liberation Front of Ben Bella against France in the way they had sought to use Nasser against the West in the early 1950s.

In 1962 Vergès emigrated to Algiers, where he led the liaison group between the National Liberation Front and revolutionary African and Middle Eastern movements. Jacques Mansour Vergès is a convert to Islam, hence his middle name.

Later he established contact with the terrorist Carlos, whom he eulogizes as "a man of honor for whom I have great admiration"; Vergès works with and defends the terrorist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) of George Habash and maintains close ties to Al Assifa, a segment of the PLO which produced Abu Nidal. Abu Nidal's operations in Baghdad and Damascus in the early 1970s conform to the profile of Vergès's migrations during that period of time. Vergès's "disappearance" in the early 1970s is the result of a recycling which places him successively in Moscow, in Damascus, and in Cambodia under his friend Pol Pot, whom he first met in Paris in the late 1940s.

Before his disappearance, Vergès was one of the major defenders of international terrorism in the West. Following his reappearance in 1978, his role in the court defense of members of the PFLP, the Red Brigades, and other international terrorists became even more crucial. He was an attorney for terrorists Bruno Breguet and Magdalena Kopp, who are also protected by Genoud, in 1979. Today he is the publisher of the Red Brigades-linked magazine, *Correspondances Internationales*.