

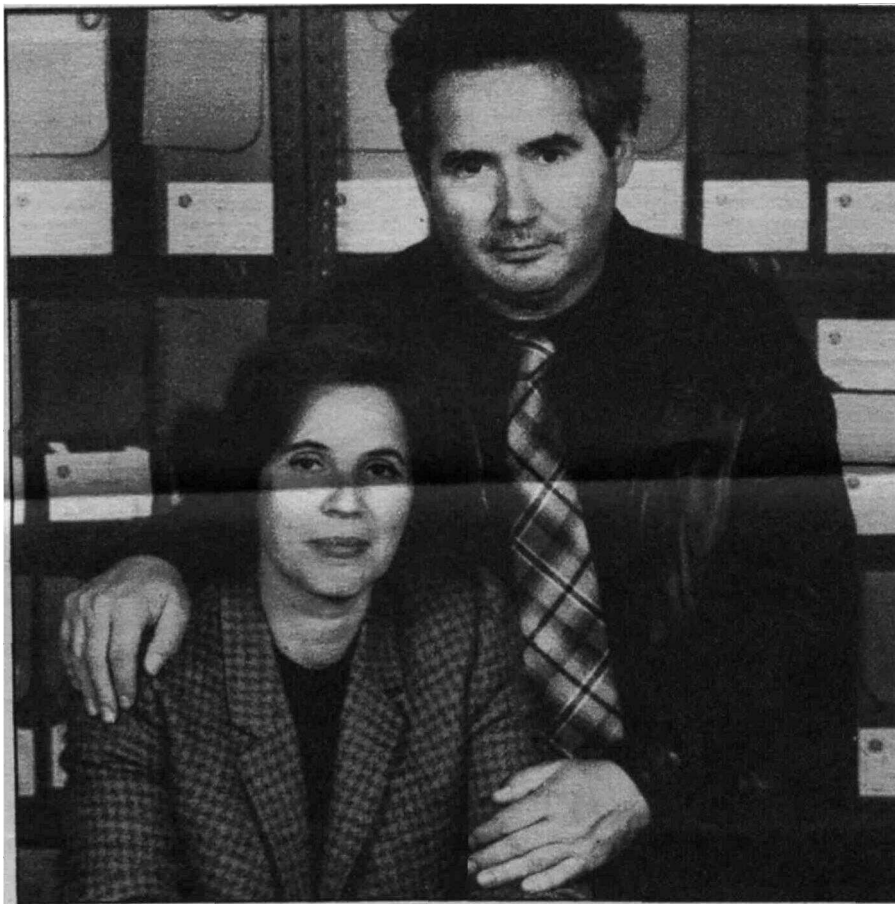
Haw Beate Klarsfeld tracked down the Butcher of Lyons

The Woman Who Avenged THE CHILDREN OF IZIEU

THE CHILDREN'S home was a two-story rough-hewn stone building on the top of a hill in the village of Izieu, 50 miles east of Lyons, France. In the attic, which ran the length of the house, was a classroom with several battered desks, long wooden tables, two blackboards and children's drawings pasted up on the walls. Except for a farm next door there were few neighbors. Firewood and food were delivered once a week. There were no visitors. This was occupied France in 1944, and in this house 41 Jewish children were hidden away from the Nazi terror that surrounded them.

Thursday, April 6, was a warm day—no clouds, bright sun. At 7:30 a.m., two canvas-covered trucks ground their way up the steep hill and roared into the courtyard, disgorging eight German S.S. men and two men in overcoats with wide-brimmed hats, one of whom was clearly in command. Two witnesses have identified him as S.S. Obersturmführer Klaus Barbie, head of the Gestapo's dreaded Department IV in Lyons. Most of the children were in the dining hall eating a breakfast of hot chocolate, bread and jam when the S.S. men broke in. Aiming machine guns at the children, they forced them into the trucks in the courtyard. Then the men ransacked the house, becoming increasingly angry at the paucity of the children's possessions. Several more children were discovered hiding under a table in the attic classroom. The school doctor leaped from the second-story window and escaped into the woods amid bursts of gunfire. In the confusion, one small boy began racing across the courtyard, but the soldiers grabbed him and beat him with rifle butts. Blood streamed from his nose as he was thrown into the truck.

The last child, a blond, ringletted boy



A couple who hunt Nazi criminals: Beate and Serge Klarsfeld

of 3, too terrified to walk, was carried into the truck. Julien Favet, a farmworker who happened to be passing by, was held at gunpoint while the arrests were going on. He remembers, "I couldn't do anything. Machine guns covered everyone. Most of the children were crying, a few were bravely singing. I knew it was finished for them."

The children of Izieu were taken to the cellar of the Fort Montluc Prison in Lyons. Klaus Barbie dispatched a telegram to Gestapo headquarters in Paris:

Subject: The Jewish children's home in Izieu. In the early morning hours the Jewish children's home "The Children's Colony" in Izieu was terminated. A

total of 41 children from 3-13 in age were removed. . . Cash or any other kind of possessions could not be secured. Transport to Drancy is arranged on April 7, 1944.

BARBIE, S.S. OBERSTURMFÜHRER

In less than five months, Paris would be liberated. This was a time when it was difficult to move troops or essential war supplies, but Klaus Barbie arranged the very next morning for the cattle cars that would take the children to the transit camp of Drancy on the first leg of their journey to Auschwitz and death in the gas chambers.

The slaughter of innocents is a subject so horrible that the mind rejects it.

Buried, the evil festers and must be purged—or so feels one woman, Beate Klarsfeld, who has devoted her life to searching out Nazi war criminals and bringing them to justice. Beate Klarsfeld is almost single-handedly responsible for bringing Klaus Barbie, the infamous "Butcher of Lyons," to trial for his Crimes Against Humanity, which include not only those committed against the children of Izieu but the torture, deportation and murder of others as well.

How did a German Lutheran become an active and successful hunter of Nazi war criminals? Beate Kunzel was born in Berlin in 1939. Her father was a soldier in Hitler's Wehrmacht. She grew up playing in the rubble of a divided Berlin, surrounded by people whose only regret was that Hitler had lost the war. At 21, she went to Paris to work as an au pair girl in a French home, taking care of the children and doing housework.

Eight weeks later, she met a young man named Serge Klarsfeld, a graduate student in political science. On their second date, Serge told her about the night of Sept. 30, 1943, when the Gestapo began rounding up the Jews in his apartment building in Nice. Serge, his father, mother and sister hid in the closet behind a flimsy false partition—Serge's father whispered to his wife, "They must not find you. I'm going out. I'm strong enough to survive a concentration camp. You and the children couldn't take it." His father died in Auschwitz.

Through Serge, Beate awakened to a history she had never known. She began to feel East and West Germany could never be reunified until all Germans came to understand and accept their role in the Holocaust. Beate and Serge married; he worked for the Continental Grains Co. and she as a writer and bilingual secretary at the Franco-German Alliance for Youth. Their life was a comfortable one. In 1965, a son, Arno,

BY BARBARA GOLDSMITH

was born. (A daughter, Lida, followed in 1973.) Then, suddenly, Beate's secure domestic existence vanished.

Beate wrote an article revealing that the new chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Kurt-Georg Kiesinger, had been one of the directors of the Nazi Propaganda Ministry during World War II and had encouraged hatred and persecution of the Jews. When her article was published, she was fired for disrupting Franco-German relations and told to leave immediately. She telephoned Serge, and they met at a nearby bistro. He reached across the table, took her hand and gently kissed it. "It was the turning point of our lives," says Beate. Together, Serge and Beate prepared a voluminous, exhaustive dossier on Kiesinger's wartime activities. In November 1968, Beate flew to West Berlin, where the German Congress was in session. With false press credentials, she managed to work her way to the speaker's table, where Kiesinger was seated. With a swift motion of her hand, she slapped him across the face and cried out, "Nazi! Nazi!" She felt hands grab her and drag her away and then a sudden elation. "I did it. I did it," Beate said to herself. She was arrested, produced her dossier on Kiesinger and distributed it to the press. When she was tried, the news media were sympathetic. She received a suspended sentence, and in the 1969 election Willy Brandt defeated Kiesinger.

This first experience set the pattern for Beate's modus operandi. She uses irrefutable documentation amassed through scrupulous scholarship; the media serve as her outlet and protection: "Always, when I go somewhere. I call the newspapers. That way. I do not 'disappear.'" Finally, (here are her "actions," dramatic deeds that call attention to her cause. She has been arrested five times in four countries for leading anti-Nazi demonstrations and once for attempting to kidnap Nazi war criminal Kurt Lischka.

For the last two decades, Beate and Serge have traveled around the world locating criminals, distributing documents, arousing public opinion, organizing protest groups, encouraging legal action and publishing books. "If the Holocaust is documented," says Beate.

If the Holocaust is documented,' says Beate, 'no one can say it didn't happen'



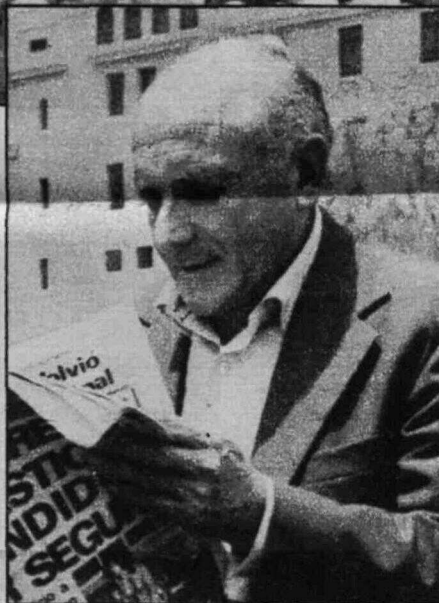
Group photograph of the children of Izieu taken in August 1943, the summer before the raid led by Barbie.

"no one can say it didn't happen."

Beate has no social life. Part of her years for the life of a contented housewife, but she is driven, obsessed. The duality of Beate's personality is encapsulated in the fact that, before embarking on an "action" where her life may be in danger, she writes up the menus for the week, takes out the dry cleaning, buys the groceries and leaves a schedule of her family's appointments.

The Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, which is financed by contributions, helps them continue their work. They have tracked down and brought to trial many Nazi war criminals. But Klaus Barbie eluded them. All trace of him had disappeared. Twice, he was tried in absentia for his crimes against the French and sentenced to death, but the statute of limitations had run out.

In 1971, the German High Court decided to drop a similar legal case against Barbie. Beate knew that if this happened, it would set a precedent that would enable the 312 other unapprehended Nazi war criminals who had been tried in absentia to go free. To reopen, the case,



Barbie photographed in the Place St. Martin in Lima, Peru, in 1972.

Beate and Serge amassed new evidence of thousands of deportations, including the children of Izieu. The prosecutor, Manfred Ludolph, was so impressed that he called Beate into his office. Opening his file, he handed her two photographs, one of Barbie taken in 1943 and another of a group of businessmen seated around a table, one

of whom looked like an older Klaus Barbie. "This group picture was taken in La Paz, Bolivia, in 1968," he told her. "Since you have demonstrated how efficient you are, why don't you help me identify that man?"

Beate saw to it that the two photographs were printed in French and German newspapers. On his way to Lima, Peru, a German businessman, Herbert John, leaving through the Munich daily *Sddeutsche Zeitung*, recognized that the photographs were of Klaus Altmann, a fellow German visiting in Lima at the home of someone John knew, Fritz Schwend. Herbert John wrote Prosecutor Ludolph, who telephoned Beate. A check of local immigration records re-

vealed that Klaus Altmann, his wife and two children had arrived in Bolivia from Genoa in 1951, carrying a safe-conduct pass supplied by the Red Cross. Serge went to the German Registry office at Kasel and found the birth records of the Barbie family. The birth dates and first names of the Barbie and Altmann families were identical.

To draw world attention to Barbie's whereabouts, Beate flew to Lima, but Barbie mysteriously disappeared over the border to Bolivia. Beate returned to Paris, printed her evidence in leaflets and called Ita Halaunbrenner, whom she had met while gathering evidence on the children of Izieu. At 11 a.m. on Oct. 24, 1943, Klaus Barbie and two S.S. men had arrived at the Halaunbrenner home in Villeurbanne and arrested her husband, Jakob, and eldest son, Leon. Her husband's body was found in Barbie's Gestapo cellar with 17 bullets in it. Her son was deported and died. That was when she decided to send her two little girls—Mina, 8, and Claudine, 4—for safekeeping at the home in Izieu.

Madame Halaunbrenner, though nearly 70 and ill, accompanied Beate to Bolivia. There, Beate distributed her evidence of Barbie's identity to the press. She was promptly arrested but released after two days. Beate went straight to a hardware store, bought two chains and padlocks, and she and Madame Halaun-

continued

IZIEU/continued

brenner chained themselves to a park bench directly opposite Barbie's office. Madame Halaunbrenner held up a picture of her dead children, and Beate held a poster demanding the extradition of Altmann-Barbie. Crowds formed. After six hours, the police sawed through the chains, and the women were expelled from Bolivia. In a burst of publicity, the world now knew who and where Barbie was, and what he had done.

Herbert John telephoned Beate in Paris to tell her that the reason Barbie had escaped across the border with such ease was that his host, Fritz Schwend, had powerful political connections and was employed by the CIA. The Klarsfelds found documents proving that the U.S. Army Counterintelligence Corps had shielded Barbie after the war and had employed him to spy on the Russians. They had lied to both the French and German governments about his whereabouts. In 1950, Secret Service agents arranged to smuggle him to South America via a secret route called the "Rat Line."

The Klarsfelds now began organizing Jewish survivors and French Resistance groups to pressure for Barbie's extradition, but Barbie was protected by a series of Bolivian dictators who used his unholy skills in interrogation and torture to maintain power. Over the years, the Klarsfelds never ceased their efforts. Because of their persistence, a ~~new Nazi group called Ode~~ ~~both threatened~~

"candy" was delivered to their house, but Serge took it to the police station. It held a powerful bomb. In 1979, a second bomb demolished their car.

Finally success came when there was a change in the Bolivian government and a democratic leader was elected. In January 1983, Barbie was expelled from Bolivia. When his plane landed in France, he was put into a van and brought to the same Fort Montluc Prison in Lyons where the children of Izieu had spent their final night before deportation. When Beate heard that Barbie was in his cell, "I felt relieved," she recalls. "Relieved. Nothing more."

There was one other piece of unfinished business: The Klarsfelds brought their documentation of the United States' role in shielding Barbie to government attention. The Justice Department appointed Special Investigator Allan Ryan Jr. to conduct a full-scale investigation. The result was a 218-page report in which Ryan concluded that the U.S. government had been culpable and apologized to France, expressing "deepest regrets for delaying justice for 39 years."

Because the statute of limitations precludes Barbie's being tried on previously used evidence, he is being tried on the new charge of Crimes Against Humanity. Thus the evidence concerning the children of Izieu is of prime importance. According to French law, the surviving

relatives of these children may also bring companion suits against Barbie. These suits offer no monetary compensation, only a moral victory. For Beate, that is enough. "If only one of these criminals would say, 'I regret,'" she says, "then perhaps I could stop my work. But for the children who died, where there is no regret, there also must be no statute of limitations."

To locate these relatives, the Klarsfelds published the names of the children in newspaper advertisements in seven countries. In Israel, the government put the Central Police Computer and the files of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial museum and archive in Jerusalem, at their disposal. Slowly the relatives of the children were found in Israel, the United States, South America, France, Belgium, Holland, England and Australia. Thirty-nine years had passed, but many had kept evidence of the existence of their lost children in faded photographs and childish letters, documents that speak of a love of life, immediate and intense.

One such child was 11-year-old Liliane Gerenstein, whose letter was found in the abandoned home in Izieu:

"God? How good You are, how kind, and if one had to count the number of goodnesses and kindnesses You have done us he would neverfinish. God? It is You who command. It is You who are justice, it is You who reward the good andpunish the evil. God? It is thanks to You that I had lovely things that others do not have. God? After that, I ask You one thing only: MAKE MY PARENTS COME BACK, MY POOR PARENTS, PROTECT THEM (even more than You protect me) SO THAT I CAN SEE THEM AGAIN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. MAKE THEM COME BACK AGAIN. Ah! I could say that I had such a good mother and a good father! I have such faith in You that I thank You in advance."

When this was written in April 1944, Liliane's mother, who had been deported was already dead. Her father had escaped from the train taking them to Auschwitz and was making his way toward the Swedish border. Her brother, Maurice, died with Liliane at Auschwitz.

In 1983, Beate located Liliane's father through a document he had filed at Yad Vashem. She sent Liliane's letter to him at his Los Angeles address. It was returned to her with a note saying that he had died four years previously, ~~never~~ knowing the fate of his children.

Beate Klarsfeld is one woman—not rich, not intellectual, not well-connected. What she has done, however, is extraordinary. She has had the courage to look evil in the face and never turn away.

For further information, write to the Beate Klarsfeld Foundation at 515 Madison Ave., Dept. P, New York, N. Y. 10022.