

Barbie gets life

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and agencies

LYON. - Klaus Barbie began a life sentence yesterday after a French court found the former Nazi officer guilty of crimes against humanity.

• The 73-year-old ex-secret police chief was jailed for life early yesterday morning amid emotion-charged scenes in the city he held in his grip over 40 years ago as head of the Gestapo.

"A page has been turned and Barbie is finished...Justice has finally been done," said Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld after the Lyon Assize Court found the defendant guilty on 340 counts of crimes against humanity.

The Barbie trial, once thought to have the potential to divide France and rip open 40-year-old wounds, was hailed yesterday for reminding the old and teaching the young about the suffering inflicted during the World War II German occupation of France.

During his plea Verges constantly picked on Klarsfeld, lawyer for the civil plaintiffs, calling him a forger, a rat, saying that the evidence had been doctored, and speaking of lies and tricks and guile. Verges cunningly implied that the Jews and Israel had influenced the media and the jury. Klarsfeld had chosen not to attend Verges's plea.

Barbie's lawyer even quoted, at one point, excerpts from Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* to explain that, in fact, Barbie had not joined the Nazi party because he was an anti-Semite.

"Klarsfeld, who with his wife Beate helped track Barbie to his post-war sanctuary in Bolivia, was applauded and cheered as he walked from the courthouse at the end of the two-month trial.

told *The Post* that he was "relieved. I had no doubts about the sentence, but anyhow, I was quite anxious... I think it is a very good verdict that will serve not only the Jews, but the cause of human rights."

Former anti-German resistance fighters and members of Jewish groups wept and embraced each other outside the colonnaded Palace of Justice, where hundreds of people



Convicted Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie is led in handcuffs from the Lyon court which yesterday sentenced him to life imprisonment.

(AFP)