

Beate Klarsfeld

—dauntless Nazi hunter

RENOWNED Nazi-hunter Beate Klarsfeld—the woman who tracked down the notorious "Butcher of Lyon" Klaus Barbie, is coming to Glasgow next week on a national tour on behalf of the Joint Israel Appeal.

For 20 years Beate Klarsfeld has carried out an impassioned, committed and fearless one-woman campaign to hunt down Nazi war criminals and bring them to justice.

Golda Meir summed up the admiration of tens of thousands of people throughout the world for Beate Klarsfeld with the words: "Courage, conviction, compassion, decency, justice and self-sacrifice to the point of personal danger ... to Israel and the Jewish people Mrs Klarsfeld is a Woman of Valour—a title that has no peer in Jewish tradition."

She was born Beate Kunsel in Berlin in 1939. A Christian, she did not learn of the horrors of Nazism until she arrived in Paris in 1960 and subsequently married Serge Klarsfeld, a Jew whose father had been a member of the French Resistance and had died in Auschwitz.

Beate first came into the public eye in 1968 in Germany when she mounted the podium at the Christian Democrats Congress and delivered "the slap heard round the world" to the face of Kurt-Georg Kiesinger, the West German Chancellor. At the price of her own arrest and prison sentence, Beate focused world attention on Kiesinger's Nazi past and involvement in war crimes. This typically audacious and fearless action was only the first in a series of dramatic coups that have made Beate Klarsfeld a world-renowned figure and leader in the drive to unmask Nazi war criminals, no matter how eminent or powerful they may be in their post-War guise or well-hidden around the world.

Beate and her husband Serge, an international lawyer, hit the headlines most recently when they tracked down in Bolivia the former SS Captain Klaus Barbie, "the Butcher of Lyon. On revealing his true identity she chained herself to a tree on the main street of La Paz, flanked by posters detailing his crimes. Due to the Klarsfelds' intervention Barbie was finally extradited to France and convicted.

In another famous escapade, Beate attempted to kidnap Kurt Lischka, former Chief of the Gestapo's Bureau in France, deliberately courting arrest to gain publicity. Beate received a jail sentence (later quashed), but succeeded in obtaining the promise of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt to urge the West German Parliament to ratify a convention allowing German courts to try criminals already convicted in France. The convention was ratified in January 1975, enabling Beate Klarsfeld to bring about in Cologne the judgment, condemnation and imprisonment of Lischka, Hagen and Heinrichsohn, who were responsible for the deportation of 73,000 Jews from occupied France to Auschwitz.

Vowing that she will not rest until she has brought all those who murdered Jews to justice, Beate has compiled with her husband a list of several hundred suspected Nazis who are still at large.

Beate was arrested twice in Eastern Europe, protesting against anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist campaigns in Poland in 1970 and in Prague in 1971. She protested publicly in Buenos Aires in 1977 and in Montevideo against the growth of anti-Semitism and against the violators of human rights in Argentina and Uruguay.

In 1984 she campaigned in Santiago for the extradition of Walter Rauff, the SS colonel responsible for the Nazi mobile gas vans. She also demonstrated against General Stroessner in Paraguay in 1984 and 1985 in order to discover the truth about the Mengele case. She is no stranger to threats—and attempts—on her life.

With her husband, Beate has published several volumes documenting the Holocaust, including *Memorial to the Jews deposed from France*, *The Children of Izieu*, and *The fate of Romanian Jewry, 1939-1945*.

Beate is equally fearless in her commitment to Israel. On one occasion she publicly disseminated pro-Israel leaflets in Morocco in front of the building where leaders of Arab States were holding a summit meeting. Most remarkably, Beate protested in the streets of Damascus after the Yom Kipur War, on behalf of Israeli prisoners of war and Syrian Jewry.

She was nominated for the 1977 Nobel Peace Prize by a committee of more than 100 Israeli notables, including 60 members of the Knesset, for "the actions which she has taken for 10 years throughout the world and at the risk of her liberty and her life against anti-Semitism, against the impunity of Nazi war criminals and in favour of peace between the Arab States and Israel." She was nominated again by Israel in 1985 and 1986.

In January this year, Beate spent one month in West Beirut trying to negotiate with the kidnappers of Lebanese Jews, and offering herself as a hostage in their place. In May and June she campaigned in Vienna against Kurt Waldheim's candidacy, and was arrested several times during public protests in Austria.

Beate is the recipient of a number of distinguished communal honours, including the 1984 Jabotinsky Prize and the 1985 Hias Liberty Award. She was made a Chevalier of the French Legion of Honour by President Mitterand in 1984. She lives in Paris, and has a son and daughter.

Of the personal motivation behind her unique career, Beate Klarsfeld states: "In order not to be ashamed of my people and to atone for the crimes perpetuated in its name, it was not sufficient to tell the victims that I sincerely sympathised with their suffering. It was not enough to go to Israel and plant a tree. Instead I decided to act according to the moral guidelines in which I have always believed."

It was Nazi hunter Beate Klarsfeld who asked Rev. Jesse Jackson to intervene in the case of wanted Nazi war criminal Alois Brunner, who has been living safely in Damascus for about 30 years (*reports Susan Birnbaum from New York*).

Klarsfeld spoke to people in the Washington office of the Democratic presidential aspirant asking if Jackson, who has good relations with Syrian President Hafez Assad, would help with multi-national efforts to have Brunner extradited from Syria so that he could stand trial on war crimes.

Klarsfeld says that she sent Jackson documents chronicling Brunner's wartime history and efforts by several nations to bring him to justice for his crimes. She said she was told by two members of Jackson's staff that a letter from Jackson to Assad would be sent off.

Jackson went to Damascus in 1984, during his first bid for the Democratic presidential nomination, and was successful in obtaining the release of US Navy flier Robert Goodman, whose plane had been shot down and captured by Syrian troops in Lebanon during an American reconnaissance flight. Since that time, Jackson has maintained good relations with Damascus.

The Damascus government has repeatedly maintained that Brunner is not in Syria. Klarsfeld demonstrated in front of the Syrian Mission to the United Nations for Brunner's extradition. Although the mission would not open its doors to her, she pursued her effort after appearing at a news conference following the announcement that thousands of war crimes files stored at the UN archives would be opened to governments, scholars and journalists.

Later at the General Assembly, Klarsfeld confronted a Syrian press attache who "had no choice" but to take the Brunner file she handed him. She said he was "surprised to find someone in front of him." Klarsfeld told him: "You have to transmit this to your government."

For five years, Beate Klarsfeld has been championing a campaign with her husband, Paris lawyer Serge Klarsfeld, for Brunner's extradition from Syria to West Germany.



Now, the intensity of their crusade, as picked up a certain momentum, abetted by statements made very recently by Brunner himself.

An interview with Brunner was published in the *Chicago Sun-Times* in which the unrepentant Nazi said in a telephone conversation from Damascus that he continued to believe in the killings of Jews. "All of them deserved to die, because they were the devil's agents and human garbage. I have no regrets and would do it again," he was quoted as saying.

Brunner had made a similar statement about two years ago in an interview with a purported friend which appeared in the German weekly *Die Bunte*, and which included a photograph of Brunner in Damascus, disproving the Syrians' claim that Brunner is not in their country.

Brunner joined the clandestine Nazi Party in 1931. He attended the police school in Graz, Austria, from 1932 to 1933. He belonged to the Austrian Legion from September 1933 to 1938, and joined the SS in 1938.

In 1938, Brunner became Adolf Eichmann's right-hand man in the SS, working at the Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Vienna. When Eichmann left, Brunner was placed in charge. He allegedly deported Jews from Vienna and Berlin; 46,000 Jews from Salonika, Greece; and more than 24,000 Jews from France from 1943 to 1944, "when he was in charge of the Drancy internment camp.

Brunner is accused of deporting 24,000 Jews from Nice in June 1944. Among them was Serge Klarsfeld's father, Arno. "

In July 1944, Brunner is said to have ordered the deportation of more than 300 children who had been in Jewish children's homes in the outskirts of Paris. Klarsfeld said that when one Jewish leader appealed for the children's lives, Brunner, said, "No, they will be the future terrorists."

Having finished with France, Brunner went to serve in Slovakia, where he allegedly deported 13,500 Jews. Altogether, says Beate Klarsfeld, "he is accused of having personally engaged in the deportation of over 100,000 Jews, certainly worse than Klaus Barbie, who only killed and deported Jews in France."

Brunner was sentenced to death in absentia in France in 1954 for the crimes he committed there, but the French issued no extradition request. The first extradition request for Brunner was made by his native Austria in 1961.

In June 1982, Serge Klarsfeld went to Damascus personally to try to locate Brunner, but he was expelled from the country. Beate Klarsfeld tried this again in March of this year, and was likewise placed under police arrest at the airport and expelled.

Serge went to the prosecutor in Cologne following his expulsion from Damascus. In December 1984, the West German foreign affairs ministry issued a warrant for Brunner's extradition. In February 1986, the prosecutor-general in Frankfurt, Walter Griebel, said that Syria had refused another extradition request by West Germany, and that Syrian authorities had refused to confirm published reports that Brunner was interviewed in Damascus with their approval.

Beate Klarsfeld says that even the East German Foreign Affairs Ministry has placed Brunner on its "Watch List," as has Interpol in Paris. -JTA