

Klarsfeld Calls on Jury To Find Barbie Guilty

Reuters

LYON — The lawyer who sought for more than a decade to bring Klaus Barbie to justice called on Wednesday on the jury at the former Gestapo officer's trial to find him guilty of crimes against humanity.

Serge Klarsfeld, the first of 39 civil lawyers due to testify against Barbie during the final stage of the trial, urged the jury to condemn him for his role in the World War II arrest and deportation to Nazi death camps of 44 Jewish children.

Another lawyer, Charles Libman, who with Mr. Klarsfeld represents 86 of 130 plaintiffs who have filed civil suits against Barbie, took the stand to attack the defendant's lawyer, Jacques Verges, for making a "V-for-victory" sign to photographers after the trial opened on May 11.

Barbie, 73, faces life imprisonment if convicted of complicity in the arrest of the children, whose ages were between 4 and 17. They were taken from hiding in the hamlet of Izieu on April 6, 1944, and deported to camps from which they never returned.

The raid on the children's refuge is one of five charges of crimes against humanity leveled against the former SS officer.

Mr. Klarsfeld told the jury that the only two surviving mothers of the children had waited since the day of the raid for Barbie to be brought from where he thought he

was safe to be condemned to a sentence worthy of the gravity of his crimes.

Mr. Klarsfeld, who with his wife, Beate, spent 11 years tracking Barbie to Bolivia and bringing him to justice, said, "The assassin of Izieu must be stopped from ending his days in peace and passing his time recounting his exploits as a Nazi officer."

Arguing that as the head of the Lyon Gestapo Barbie was responsible for the Izieu arrest, Mr. Klarsfeld recounted how German soldiers drove to the farm where the children were hiding and forced the sleepy youngsters into trucks.

Mr. Klarsfeld read out the names of each child, most of whom, he said, were the offspring of refugee European Jews whose parents had been rounded up by France's Vichy collaboration government and sent to Nazi gas chambers.

The lawyer brought tears to the eyes of many of the 700 people thronging the courtroom when he read letters written by children, some of whom were already orphans, before they were sent to the death camps.

In a note addressed to God, Liliane Gerenstein, 11, wrote "We are happy here and you are kind. But please God, I want to ask just one thing — make my parents return."

Discussing Barbie's claims of innocence in the Izieu case, Mr. Libman said, "When you are asked whether Barbie was guilty of the arrests you can only reply 'yes,'" he told the jury.

"When you are asked whether there are any extenuating circumstances, you will reply 'no!'"

Mr. Klarsfeld reminded the jury that after earning the nickname "The Butcher of Lyon" when he was Gestapo chief of the city from 1942 to 1944, Barbie was recruited after the war by U.S. intelligence officers who, he said, helped him escape to Bolivia in 1951.