

# Klaus Barbie's lawyer: a KGB operative

by Laurent Murawiec

The "Butcher of Lyons," the Gestapo killer and torturer Klaus Barbie, presently awaiting trial for crimes against humanity in a French jail, has taken the most flamboyant of the leftist lawyers of Paris, Jacques Verges, as his lawyer. No liberal or left-wing publication questioned the strangeness of the bedfellows: Verges, the former Maoist, the passionate lawyer for the Algerian freedom fighters, defending a Nazi!

Jacques Verges was born in Thailand in 1924, the son of a French father and a Vietnamese mother. The family moved while Verges was young to the French island of La Reunion in the Indian Ocean, where Verges's brother is currently the secretary-general of the local communist party and a rumored KGB station chief. Verges reports, unverifiably, that he participated from age 17 in the Resistance in mainland France. After the war, he became one of the leaders of the Anti-Colonialist Student Association in Paris, along with his friend, young Pol Pot.

Verges exhibited such talent that he was sent to Prague as an executive committee member of the International Student Union, a Soviet front, where he worked under Alexander Shelepin—the head of the Soviet "youth movement," the Komsomol—who was to head the KGB in the early 1960s. There is no doubt that Verges had been recruited to fulfill KGB functions, given his assignment: running the so-called International Student Relief Fund, a front for Soviet intelligence's logistical operations.

Verges's KGB superiors decided that he would be more useful as a non-communist. Returning to Paris, by 1956 he had become one of the star lawyers on the staff that defended the leaders of the Algerian FLN in French courts. The FLN was a mix of genuine nationalists and assets of a myriad secret services; FLN chieftain Ahmed Ben Bella was a trainee of the Nazi Abwehr, the military intelligence service. In his defense of Ben Bella et al., Verges met for the first time François Genoud, the coordinator of the field operations of the Nazi International, who had become Ben Bella's protector. Verges also met Henri Curiel, whose network was supporting the FLN on behalf of the KGB.

Verges by then had made himself an "anti-imperialist" celebrity. In 1962, he converted to Islam, adopted the name of "Jacques Mansour," married a former FLN bombing specialist, Djamilia Bouhired, and landed in now-independent Algeria, where Ben Bella deployed him as a link with African "revolutionary movements."

Verges was coopted onto the editorial board of the FLN

weekly journal, *Revolution Africaine*; then came one of his about-faces. After having been relieved of his post for mysterious reasons, he traveled in March 1963 to Peking, where he was received by Mao Tse-tung. He was now a Maoist, and founded, with Chinese money, a glossy monthly newspaper called *Revolution*, with offices in Peking, Cuba, London, New York City, Paris, Dar-es-Salaam, and François Genoud's headquarters, Lausanne. An apparent "political break" with Ben Bella ensued in May 1963.

In 1965 Verges flew to Tel Aviv to defend a Palestinian terrorist, and in 1966, an Israeli court dismissed him as attorney to the defendant, a Jordanian terrorist. He was kicked out of Algeria in 1966. Just before that, the leftist lawyer was also defending Moïse Tshombe, the old pawn of the Union Minière du Haut-Katanga, who had been detained by the Algerian authorities.

By 1969, Verges was the defense lawyer for three members of the terrorist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. There is no known reference to what he did or where he was between 1972 and his reappearance in Paris in 1979, except a story published by *Le Matin* that Verges stayed with Kampuchea's monstrous dictator Pol Pot for all those years! Had old acquaintances been renewed?

Re-emerging from the shadows, Verges's first legal client was Japanese heiress and French casino owner Tsutsumi, and his second client the lawyer for the terrorist Baader-Meinhof (RAF) gang, Klaus Croissant, then fighting an extradition order.

## Nazi Communists

In May 1982, French police arrested two associates of the terrorist "Carlos," Bruno Breguet and Magdalena Kopp. Breguet had been freed from an Israeli jail after negotiations between Nazi chief François Genoud and the Israeli authorities. The KGB-Nazi connection was subject to no qualms: Genoud himself is said to be in regular contact with the KGB at the level of a directorate leadership. Verges defended Breguet and Kopp; he had stated on television in April 1982 that "Carlos is a man of honor for whom I have a great admiration." By June 1983, Verges was defending the chief of the French terror group Action Directe, Frederic Oriach.

In these circumstances, old friends of Verges, notably Presidential Special Adviser Regis Debray—whose dealings with the Klaus Barbie network in Latin America have never fully been brought to light—arranged the expulsion of Barbie from Bolivia. Debray et al. are seeking to destroy the powerful intelligence, military, and political old boys' networks dating back to the Resistance, whose Gaullist or nationalist persuasions represent a roadblock to the KGB in France.

Verges's method for the Barbie trial is easy to predict: he will use the "Dimitrov method" to "turn the defense into the accusation." Barbie, coached by Verges, will be in a position of charging anyone with anything, and will exploit the extraordinary emotional power attached to the French occupation experience.