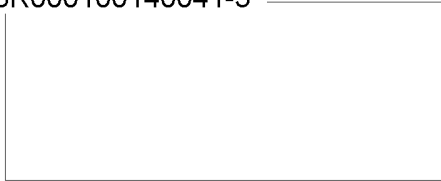


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A fascist returned

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As Gestapo chief in Lyons during the German occupation, Klaus Barbie tortured and murdered Resistance members and French Jews. Sometimes he did the torturing himself, with whips and clubs and boiling water, and sometimes he signed a piece of paper sending Jewish children to the death camps.

His return to the same prison where he once tormented his victims may seem a curious anachronism. But the extradition of Barbie is more than a random example of historical symmetry because his post-war itinerary has been part of a shameful pattern.

Barbie is only one of many notorious Nazi leaders who were welcomed like prodigal sons into service with Western intelligence agencies after the war. Their unspeakable crimes against humanity were implicitly forgiven and conveniently forgotten. They were paid and protected so that they could return to active duty in the anti-Communist crusade which their fuhrer, Adolf Hitler, had temporarily discredited with his extremism.

Their names compose a rogues' gallery of fascist thuggery. Hitler's master spy, Reinhardt Gehlen, was made chief of the West German intelligence agency (BND) and shared his Nazi intelligence data with his protectors in the CIA. Otto Skorzeny, a Nazi specialist at organizing terror networks in occupied countries, was employed in the US Army's historical division, which served as a way-station for former Nazis who would go on to serve in the Gehlen-CIA intelligence network. Skorzeny used his

tacit immunity to shepherd old Nazi comrades out of Europe, working through cover organizations known as *Odessa*, *Kamaradenwerk*, and *Die Spinne*.

As the years went by, Gehlen, Skorzeny and their network of old-boy collaborators accumulated enormous influence both in Europe and Latin America. Skorzeny shuttled between Franco's Spain and Peron's Argentina, where he served the Argentine dictator as a gray eminence. His goal was to foster the growth of a fascist Fourth Reich centered in Latin America.

He could count on such loyalist operatives as Josef Mengele in Paraguay; on Adolf Eichmann and Hans Ulrich Rudel in Argentina; on Walter Rauff in Chile; and on Klaus Barbie in Bolivia.

Rauff, who is charged with sending 97,000 Jews to their death, has served as a revered adviser to the fascist dictatorship imposed on Chile by Augusto Pinochet after the overthrow of Salvador Allende, and was instrumental in setting up the infamous Chilean secret police agency known as DINA. Barbie, in Bolivia, organized paramilitary death squads and drug smuggling networks for a succession of military regimes.

To grasp the full meaning of Barbie's belated appointment with justice, his career may be seen as an emblem of the unchecked metastasis of fascism. It is particularly mortifying for Americans to be reminded that our government put Barbie on its payroll a few years after he worked for Hitler.