

# From Klaus Barbie to François Genoud

by Thierry Lalevée

When François Genoud withdrew his legal complaint against four French journalists, he may have avoided having to answer certain unpleasant questions, but his expressed desire to be left in anonymity will certainly not be granted. By the simple fact that it occurred, the Nov. 15 trial directed an international spotlight on the shadowy figure of Genoud. Despite his best efforts to keep the cover on the true story of the postwar Nazi International, Genoud's history and that of his cohort Klaus Barbie, the Gestapo's "Butcher of Lyons," have drawn extraordinary attention in France, and the scandal is not going to die down any time soon.

In the immediate days following the trial, no fewer than 13 daily newspapers in France and Switzerland reported the strange dénouement of the trial. More coverage is expected now, as the international newsweeklies join the fray. Most articles have borne headlines such as *Le Monde's* "Judicial Capitulation of a Pro-Nazi Swiss Financier." The presence of at least 30 journalists at the trial manifested the kind of media mobilization that Genoud so dislikes, as did the special authorization given by the judge to both French and Swiss television networks to enter the courtroom to film the beginning of the session. Both gave the trial 10 minutes of coverage.

This was no major surprise, in fact. Though the last major exposés of François Genoud—outside of those to appear in *EIR*—were in 1982, many in France, Switzerland, Germany, Britain, and the United States have been following the legal procedures ever since, waiting for their opportunity.

But even before the trial started, Genoud received a few unpleasant surprises. One was the publication on Nov. 14 of a new monthly magazine in France, called the *Globe*, whose first cover story was dedicated to the Nazi banker. To publicize its first issue, the *Globe* bought advertisements in several French newspapers, with such tantalizing texts as, "Who is the friend of Carlos, the friend of Vergès, and the friend of Barbie?" The cover story itself was a five-page exposé of Genoud's ties to international terrorism and his activity within the neo-Nazi movement, citing earlier exposés by *Nouvelle Solidarité* newspaper and the European Labor Party.

Another surprise was the publication of a book by Canadian journalist Erna Paris. The book appeared the day before the trial began, and major extracts concerning the life of

Genoud's "old friend" (in his words) Jacques Vergès, Barbie's lawyer, were printed in the weekly *l'Express*, one of the magazines that Genoud was suing. Erna Paris herself had come from Canada to Geneva with the intention of being a witness at the trial against Genoud, and is expected to hold press conferences to publicize her book in France, where Genoud's activities will be prominently exposed.

Though unable to testify at the trial itself, she summarized in a post-trial press conference what she would have said. It was Genoud, she emphasized, who looked to Barbie's legal defense a few days after the latter was extradited from Bolivia and arrived in a Lyons jail. Genoud went to see Barbie's court-appointed lawyer, Mme. de la Servette, and offered money for Barbie's defense. In the following weeks and at the initiative of Genoud, a group of West German lawyers was mobilized to find Barbie a more suitable attorney. For propaganda reasons, it was decided against giving Barbie a West German lawyer, so Genoud offered Jacques Vergès, a friend from the period of the Algerian war as well as from the 1969 trial of four terrorists of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). By June 1983, Mme. de la Servette had been diplomatically pushed aside, leaving Vergès as Barbie's only defender. The financing, Paris revealed, was organized by Genoud.

## The Barbie trial

These revelations mean that the case of François Genoud is far from closed. The Genoud File is very much open, in a new context: that of the Barbie trial, which is expected to begin sometime in 1986.

While the extradition of Barbie to France in 1983 was hailed as a victory against the Nazi International, the trial of the former SS captain is looked at apprehensively by many in France and abroad. Many embarrassing questions have been raised since 1983, such as the exact role that Barbie played in Lyons during the Nazi occupation and the obvious fact that his SS activities relied on many French collaborators of the Vichy regime. Many unhealed wounds of the war period have been reopened, and it has been Barbie's defense, through lawyer Vergès, to threaten to thrust the knife deeper into those wounds. Other disturbing questions concern Barbie's life since 1945, and the friendly networks which kept him alive and hidden in exile for so many years.

Vergès has warned that should Barbie die in jail, he would have been assassinated. And Vergès makes no bones as to who would want to kill him: members of those former resistance networks who, he charges, will be embarrassed by Barbie's venom.

But that sword cuts both ways; Barbie's declarations may turn out to be most damaging for those who are presently behind him, and financing his defense. If only because François Genoud's name and shadowy activities would surely be drawn into such a trial, Genoud certainly has no wish to see it ever held.