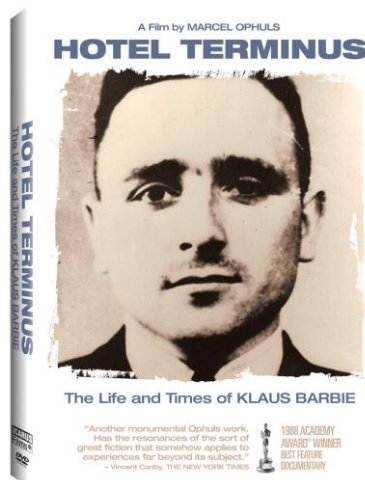


# **HOTEL TERMINUS: The life and Times of Klaus Barbie**

## **A film by Marcel Ophuls**



**An Icarus Films release**  
Color, 267 minutes, 1988  
In French, German, Spanish & English with English subtitles

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**\*Winner of Best Documentary, 1988 Academy Awards**

**\*International Critics Prize, 1988 Cannes Film Festival**

**\*1988 New York Film Festival**

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## Synopsis

An examination of the Nazi SS officer Klaus Barbie, the infamous “Butcher of Lyon”, HOTEL TERMINUS weaves together forty years of footage from three continents and interviews culled from over 120 hours of discussion with former Nazis, American intelligence officers, South American government officials, victims of Nazi atrocities and witnesses. Barbie, while Gestapo chief in Lyon, tortured and murdered resistance fighters, innocent hostages, Jewish men, women and children, and had thousands deported to death camps.

After the war he was protected by and worked with the U.S. Army and American intelligence officers, and then allowed to hide in Bolivia, where he lived peacefully for 30 years. Only in 1987 was he brought to trial in a French courtroom (in Lyon).

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“Making this film, is like an intense fight for the survival of memory itself. I want Barbie to be judged so that what he did is burned into history and will never happen again.” -Marcel Ophuls

“Another monumental Ophuls work, HOTEL TERMINUS emerges ultimately not as a study of one person, place or event, but as a contemplation of the human condition.” –Vincent Canby, New York Times

"A real-life detective story. Entertaining and engrossing." —Kevin Thomas, Los Angeles Times

"Two Thumbs Up. A shocking, unforgettable film." —Siskel & Ebert

“The brilliance of Ophuls’s editing lies in its capacity to pose uncomfortable questions for the viewer- or, to put it another way, in its capacity to force the viewer into uncomfortable subject positions in relation to the material. Never- or at least, never for long- do we have a chance, in this film, to bask in righteous indignation or moral superiority, not even toward a villain like Barbie.” –Susan Rubin Suleiman, author, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War*

## Historical Background on Klaus Barbie

Excerpted from *History, Memory, and Moral Judgment in Documentary Film: On Marcel Ophüls's "Hotel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie"*

By Susan Rubin Suleiman, University of Chicago Press 2002

Klaus Barbie, born in 1913 in Bad Godesberg in the Rhineland, into a family that came from the Saar region near the French border, was head of the German Security Police (SIPO-SD) in Lyon during the German occupation of France, from November 1942 to late August 1944. Known as "the butcher of Lyon" because of his cruelty, Barbie was responsible for the torture and deportation of many hundreds of Jews and members of the Resistance during that period. In particular, he was known as the man who had arrested and tortured to death the best-known hero of the Resistance, Jean Moulin. After the war, Barbie disappeared from view; it came to light much later that for several years he had worked for the American Army's Counter-Intelligence Corps (C.I.C.) in Germany, which was deep into the cold war almost as soon as World War II had ended. In 1951, the C.I.C. helped him escape from Europe via the "rat line," the notorious escape route for former Nazis organized by members of the Catholic Church. In 1952 and again in 1954, he was tried for his war crimes in France and condemned to death in absentia.

In the early 1970s, Barbie was tracked down in South America. Under the false name of Klaus Altmann, he was living at ease with his family in Bolivia and Peru, involved in shady business deals and very close to the military rulers in La Paz. In the late 1970s, pressure built up for his extradition to France, thanks in large part to the efforts of Beate and Serge Klarsfeld. But Altmann, interviewed by French newspaper and television reporters, denied categorically that he was Barbie; and he was confident in the protection of the Bolivian government. The French government, under conservative president Giscard d'Estaing, was not overly eager to press the matter. It was only in February 1983, after changes in regime both in France (where socialist president François Mitterrand was elected in 1981) and in Bolivia (where president Siles Zuazo replaced the military junta in late 1982), that Barbie was flown back to France and incarcerated at Montluc Prison in Lyon, the scene of his own earlier exploits (this was for symbolic

reasons-he was transferred out of Montluc into a more secure prison a week later).

The arrest and return of Klaus Barbie to Lyon, more than forty years after he first arrived there and set up his headquarters in the luxurious Hotel Terminus (which gave its name to Ophuls's film), caused an immense uproar in France. His trial took over four years to prepare, and at times it was not certain that it would take place. The trial-which unfolded over an eight-week period between mid-May and early July 1987-was a watershed in the history of French memories of World War II and in the history of French jurisprudence as well, for the case brought about a new definition of crimes against humanity in French law.

## **New York Times review of Hotel Terminus**

October 6, 1988

The 'Butcher of Lyons' Is Himself Picked Apart

By Vincent Canby

Marcel Ophuls's "Hotel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie" begins with a deceptive sense of restraint and calm. In the opening sequence, a friend of Mr. Barbie's recalls a New Year's Eve party at which the former Gestapo officer took offense at some disrespectful remarks made about Hitler. The friend was amused that Mr. Barbie still might find some subjects not funny.

Cut to Lyons, where three former members of the French Resistance are playing pool and talking about Mr. Barbie's forthcoming trial for crimes against humanity, committed in and around Lyons in 1944 and 1945.

The aging Frenchmen now seem philosophical. Terrible things were done, that's true, but it was all such a long time ago. One fellow recalls that he was a 15-year-old bellboy at the Hotel Terminus when it was the Gestapo headquarters in Lyons. Were the Germans good tippers? They were, he says with a smile, "but we also cheated them a bit."

Sitting in front of a Christmas tree, a former American intelligence agent does his best to appear at ease and cooperative. He talks to Mr. Ophuls in a friendly, now-that-you-mention-it manner.

Oh, yes, he says, he certainly did use Mr. Barbie, no doubt about that. He worked with him closely, in fact, but he never had the feeling that Mr. Barbie was the sort of man who might be guilty of atrocities. Mr. Barbie was such a devilishly clever fellow that he wouldn't have to lower himself. A very old German farmer remembers Klaus as a boy he called "Sonny."

This early testimony is almost genial.

Yet "Hotel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie" quickly gathers the force and the momentum of a freight train that will not be stopped or sidetracked. It is inexorable in its pursuit of truth, not just about Barbie the "butcher of Lyons," but about the moral climate of his world and of ours today.

This spellbinding, four-and-a-half-hour film will be shown at the New York Film Festival today at 6:15 P.M. and on Saturday at 6:30. It starts a commercial engagement Sunday at the Cinema Studio.

In form, "Hotel Terminus" is much like Mr. Ophuls's classic "Sorrow and the Pity" (1970), a vivid, harrowing, minutely detailed recollection of France under the German Occupation as it was experienced in and around the town of Clermont-Ferrand. Like "The Sorrow and the Pity," the new film is composed of dozens and dozens of interviews, each of which evokes another narrative within the principal narrative.

These accumulate, finally, to create a vast historical panorama far beyond the scope of conventional movie fiction. At the center there is the unprepossessing figure of Mr. Barbie himself, self-described as "privileged to act as a small but active member of the Fuhrer's following."

A boyhood friend recalls Mr. Barbie as a good pal. In addition, he is, variously, "a Nazi idealist"; a man who would fondle a cat one minute and beat up a young girl the next, and a Nazi survivor who, in the immediate postwar years, was employed by American intelligence, both for his own talents and those of his informants, a network, one man says, stretching "from Portugal to Moscow." Mr. Barbie was a con artist who sold snake oil to his American benefactors.

At the end of his career, in South America before his extradition to Europe in 1983, he was a tireless hustler and deadly crackpot, wheeling and dealing in Bolivia and Peru where he was an active member of the German business communities, hobnobbing with politicians, arms dealers and drug traffickers.

The witnesses to Mr. Barbie's life and times include his victims, his colleagues in the Gestapo (who are less defensive than his colleagues in American intelligence), veterans of the French Resistance, collaborators, historians, janitors, businessmen, leftists, rightists, neighbors, journalists

and, the film's most enigmatic character, Jacques Verges, the man who defended Mr. Barbie at his trial last year.

The method is the same that Mr. Ophuls used in "The Sorrow and the Pity," but "Hotel Terminus" is very different from that film and from Claude Lanzmann's "Shoah." "The Sorrow and the Pity" is meditative, a sad but even-tempered film that can find pathos in the desperately frightened face of a woman, a collaborator, having her head shaved in front of an angry mob.

"Shoah" is almost unbearably mournful, not only because of the graphic testimony recalled so matter-of-factly by Mr. Lanzmann's witnesses, but also because there's scarcely a frame of film that doesn't suggest the manner by which time softens the past. "Shoah" says that some things must not be forgotten, but distance blurs the image and, no matter how we try to remember it, pain recedes. The images of a concentration camp as it looks today - a peaceful, ghostly, park like setting with well-tended grass - are metaphors for the impermanence of all things, including memory.

In "Hotel Terminus" Mr. Ophuls is anything but meditative. He's angry and sarcastic and, as the film goes on, he becomes increasingly impatient. He argues with reluctant witnesses. He pushes his camera into a stranger's face and laughs when the stranger refuses to cooperate. (One such stranger is an ex-President of Bolivia, caught as he's putting out his garbage.) The tempo of the cross-cutting between witnesses speeds up, on occasion so maddeningly that one forgets the identity of the speaker. At times, it seems as if the director were telling some self-serving interviewee to stop all this nonsense and come clean. At other times, he appears to fear that he simply won't be able to get everything in. The more he digs, the more he finds.

Mr. Ophuls is not dealing with some vague, comfortingly abstract concept of guilt, but with provable guilt, which includes guilt by association, by stupidity, by naiveté and, most of all, by deed.

The film is rich with the details of how people look, sound and behave, and with the details of middle-class decor, from the rugs on the floor to the pictures on the walls. There are plenty of things a film cannot do, but no novelist could possibly set a scene with the inventorying eye of the Ophuls camera.

"Hotel Terminus" leaves certain questions unanswered, but that's all right too. One longs to learn more about the rabidly anti-Communist Rene Hardy, twice acquitted of charges that he betrayed his Resistance comrades, and about Mr. Verges, who attempted to defend Mr. Barbie by equating Nazi atrocities with France's colonial policies. In any case, the questions are raised.

The Barbie trial is something of an anti-climax in the film, as it was in fact when Mr. Barbie refused to take the stand. Yet "Hotel Terminus" proceeds to its conclusion with the breathtaking relentlessness of superior fiction. It's a fine, serious work by a film maker unlike any other. Great.



## **The Washington Post**

January 27, 1989

Marcel Ophuls & History's Testimony; The Documentary Filmmaker's Frustrating Pursuit of Answers to the Holocaust

By Paula Span

He is just a moviemaker, Marcel Ophuls likes to say; "I put bits of film together."

This is hard to accept.

Consider what happened the first time his "Hotel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie" was shown to an audience, at last spring's Cannes Film Festival. An elderly woman sought him out in the theater lobby during intermission to thank him and show him the number tattooed on her arm. Then, Ophuls recalls, "she started a long monologue about how all Germans should be killed." Ophuls attempted to calm her, and when she left to return to her seat for the second half of his film about the "Butcher of Lyons," he thought he had succeeded.

But moments later, he heard shouting in the theater. The woman was sobbing hysterically about Auschwitz and "a 20-year-old man, who I later learned was a journalist, was insulting her, saying sit down, we've heard enough, how can you blame young Germans for what they never participated in," Ophuls recalls. Other audience members were joining the confrontation as Ophuls moved in to try to silence the man, whose position on collective guilt he shared, and comfort the woman, whose rage and grief he understood. Security guards led the man away.

The melee so eerily paralleled the questions stirred by Ophuls' documentaries-disquieting questions about guilt and complicity, justice and indifference and forgiveness-that reporters later asked him whether he'd staged the scene to promote his film.

Just a moviemaker. At last fall's New York Film Festival, critics who'd just seen "Hotel Terminus" were flinging questions and comments at Ophuls across the auditorium. Sitting through more than four hours' exploration of how and why a Nazi mass murderer evaded justice for four decades had left

them in a philosophical mood. (The film had its Washington premiere Tuesday night at a Kennedy Center benefit and opens today at the Outer Circle.)

"The world owes you a debt of gratitude," one woman declared.

Ophuls thanked her, but added, "I'm just happy to be out of the editing room; anything else is cream on the pie." The critics chuckled, and Ophuls had wriggled back off the moral soapbox for the moment.

No doubt Ophuls, 61, would be more convincing as just-a-guy-with-a-camera if he were a more ordinary director. His movies wouldn't be so hard to finance and take so many years to shoot, and perhaps he would feel less dolorously consumed by his subjects. He has been saying for years that what he'd really like is to make a comedy, like the early Hollywood classics he admires, like the movies his father Max Ophuls directed.

Instead, filmgoers show Ophuls their tattooed forearms and expect him to issue moral rulings. His documentaries, "The Sorrow and the Pity" being the best known, are intricate mosaics of interviews with those intimately acquainted with contemporary evil—the wrongdoers, the victims and the bystanders. Not surprisingly, people who see the movies are prone to questions such as that posed by a sincere young woman at the New York Film Festival, who rose to ask Ophuls for his "deepest feelings" about good and evil.

Ophuls—wearing a characteristic expression mingling sorrow, bemusement and weariness—replied that he wasn't Hannah Arendt, that the nature of evil was "far beyond me," that he was "just a filmmaker."

But he went on, also characteristically, to wrestle with the young woman's question, saying he'd "tried to resist the idea that there's a Barbie in all of us. I think that's a terribly poisonous and dangerous idea. But then," he concluded with an acerbic chuckle, "there is more and more evidence of it."

Conversations with Ophuls, public and private, proceed in this back-and-forth fashion, recoiling from, then straining toward the daunting verdicts demanded by the Holocaust: How can one judge? How dare one not? The five-year ordeal of making "Hotel Terminus" brought him at one point to the brink of emotional breakdown. How can anyone—especially a man whose

own family fled Germany, then France, just ahead of the Nazis-bear to keep sifting, year after year, through the grim ashes? But how can one stop?

"Another monumental Ophuls work," New York Times critic Vincent Canby exulted last spring from Cannes, where "Hotel Terminus"-the title is the horribly apt name of the Lyons hotel that served as Gestapo headquarters-won the International Critics Prize. (It has since been named 1988's best documentary by the Los Angeles film critics, who invented the category for that purpose.)

It's a term that Ophuls has heard before. " `Monumental,' " he observes, "is a code word for `long.' "

Somewhat to his and his producers' chagrin, sheer length is one of the characteristics for which Ophuls' documentaries are known. "The Sorrow and the Pity," which caused a furor in 1970 by examining French response to the German Occupation, ran roughly 4 1/2 hours. "The Memory of Justice," 1976's scrutiny of the consequences of the Nuremberg trials, which was less seen here, also qualified as monumental at four hours, 40 minutes.

"It's not a matter of the importance of the subject," says Ophuls, reflecting on his latest film, which does not seem four hours and 27 minutes long, but is. He's holding forth in a modest suite at the Algonquin. "I'm not calling on people to do their patriotic and civic duty by enduring long and serious movies. It's a matter of dramatic construction."

Tracing the life of Klaus Barbie, who as Gestapo chief of Lyons was responsible for imprisoning, deporting, torturing and murdering thousands of Jews and French resistance fighters, was no simple task. His frightful story involved witnesses on three continents: Victims, collaborators and Nazi hunters in Europe; associates and protectors in Latin America, where he became an affluent businessman after the war; intelligence officers in the United States who helped him escape Europe in return for his supposed anticommunist expertise. Then, once all those interview subjects are located, "how long does it take them to stop being people making statements and just be people?"

The upshot is that Ophuls, who was talking in terms of a 2 1/2-hour movie shortly after Barbie was extradited from Bolivia to France in 1983, wound up shooting an onerous 120 hours of film. His American producers, led by

John Friedman, are still straining to raise the last \$350,000 of the \$1.65 million it cost to make "Hotel Terminus."

"Everything involved with this picture has been very difficult," Friedman says. "Endless phone calls, letters, meetings and more meetings. We ran out of money and then the stock market crashed ... Sometimes salaries were not paid. We still owe a great deal."

While the financial types scrambled, Ophuls and his crews and researchers followed Barbie's trail, trudging from Bolivia in the spring of 1985 to the United States that Christmas season (trees and tinsel provide an ironic visual counterpoint throughout) to France and Germany. Ophuls shot extensively around Lyons, working through Barbie's trial and conviction in 1987. Almost every step of the process made him feel "cranky and old and fed up with the whole thing."

With the help of Washington author Christopher Simpson ("a Freedom of Information Act wizard") he had acquired a list of former Nazis who, like Barbie himself, had been hired by American counterintelligence after the war to apply their alleged skills in espionage to European communists. Finding them in small European towns 40 years later required considerable detective work, Ophuls says, "going through old phone books, going to town halls to find who had died and who had moved and who had changed their names."

Once located, of course, most of those former colleagues were not interested in talking to Ophuls about Barbie. Nor were their neighbors. Nor were municipal officials in the town where Barbie had grown up, nor authorities at the school he once attended. "Hotel Terminus" contains numerous scenes of elderly Germans slamming doors, of younger ones insisting that decades have passed and that old men should be left in peace, of people of all ages professing ignorance.

The film was acquiring a mock in-house title: "Bored With Barbie." There was, recalls coproducer Hamilton Fish, "a kind of ennui about atrocity. It just made {Ophuls} furious."

In response Ophuls, driven by "sheer frustration," makes a number of spontaneous, sardonic on-camera appearances himself. He and a researcher parody a phone call to an old woman possessed of a particularly faulty

memory. When the man who was Barbie's lieutenant refuses to come to his door, Ophuls searches through his garden calling, "Herr Bartelmus? Herr Bartelmus?" and peering under cabbage leaves. "Very often it comes out of anger, an immediate reaction to things happening," says Ophuls of these exercises in sarcasm. "It may also offend some people."

Indeed, New Republic critic Stanley Kauffmann has said the sequences are "worse than bad jokes, they are disturbing," and he was not alone in that assessment. "The Sorrow and the Pity" was widely admired for its mournful compassion; "Hotel Terminus" has an undercurrent of bitter humor. "I used to be blander, more elegant, more discreet," Ophuls acknowledges. "I came out of the bushes more this time."

Behind the camera, too, his frustration continued to build. Barbie's trial was delayed repeatedly. Like many in France (where Ophuls lives in the same Neuilly flat his family leased before bolting for Hollywood in 1941), Ophuls wondered whether there would be a trial at all. Barbie's controversial attorney had promised humiliating revelations about French collaboration; perhaps the government would opt for the "biological solution" and let Barbie, then in his seventies, die quietly in prison.

Without knowing whether the trial would be a centerpiece of the documentary or an epilogue or would occur at all, Ophuls found it difficult to know how to structure his mounting footage. Meanwhile, the dollar plunged against the franc, intensifying the need to keep costs down. Ophuls worried, too, about his own finances: The salary he was paid to direct "Hotel Terminus" (initially \$75,000, later slightly increased) became less and less adequate as the project stretched to two, three, four years.

The Barbie trial, when it finally began in 1987, proved a catharsis for France, Ophuls believes. Day after day for two months, the elderly witnesses trembled and wept on the stand and told their terrible stories. Barbie, denying guilt to the end, was convicted of crimes against humanity and sentenced to life imprisonment. "What the trial accomplished was taking French public opinion from a gossipy, scandal-making kind of thing ... 'who collaborated and how many names does Barbie still have?' ... to the children of Izieu," Ophuls says, referring to Barbie's infamous roundup of 44 Jewish children and seven teachers, only one of whom survived Auschwitz. "The shoulder-shrugging stopped once the trial started."

But the trial was not a tonic for Ophuls, shuttling between the Lyons courtroom where witnesses raged and cried and the Paris editing room where he was attempting to splice together their persecutor's story. How could his documentary do justice to what he had just seen and heard? He was fatigued, he was in debt, he felt unable to deliver the film when he had planned or to hold it to normal theatrical length. For two months after the trial, he could not work; the production ground to a halt.

"I was overwhelmed by the weight of the evidence compared to the flimsiness of a film," he says, asked in a subsequent phone interview about that period. "I didn't know how a film, my film, the material I had, could cope with the horror."

He had watched Lea Feldblum, the teacher who was the only survivor of the children's home in Izieu, shouting and muttering about holding the children's hands as they arrived at the camp, where the sky was red even though it was night. "Her testimony made me cry a great deal; I wasn't the only one," Ophuls says, remembering, his voice shaking. There was no time or money remaining to go to Israel to film an interview with Lea Feldblum.

"I thought the film was tinny and thin and I reproached myself for wasting a lot of time and money and other people's lives on something that was callow," the filmmaker says.

In short, "I broke down."

It has never been an easy process, making a Marcel Ophuls movie. When John Friedman, a former professor and journalist, considered producing "Hotel Terminus," he got a warning from Hamilton Fish, former publisher of The Nation and Ophuls' producer on "The Memory of Justice." Fish told him, "You don't know what you're getting into," Friedman remembers.

Part of the difficulty stems from the nature of documentaries: With limited box office potential, it's hard to get money to make them. Distributors don't know how to market them. (Few Americans saw "A Sense of Loss," the documentary about Northern Ireland that Ophuls completed in 1972, for instance.) They are unlikely to have big TV sales or a profitable afterlife on videocassettes. And Fish points out that Ophuls' "particular technique"-with its scores of interviews, high travel expenses and long months of editing-"is a prescription for a prolonged and intense process."

Beyond that there is Ophuls himself, wielding his fiercely guarded right of final cut. He is, Friedman says, "cantankerous and very ornery," a director who "has set ideas of what he wants and doesn't listen to opposing points of view, particularly." They wrangled about the budget and the film's length; Friedman says Ophuls generally got what he wanted; Ophuls would probably disagree. "I'd compare it to a stormy marriage," Friedman says. "There's still affection and respect but problems come up."

Compared with the problems encountered in making "The Memory of Justice," Friedman had it easy. In that case, Ophuls had a conflict about length with his British and German producers (including David Puttnam, later chairman of Columbia Pictures) that resulted in their locking him out of the editing room and exercising their contractual right to cut the film themselves. But one of Ophuls' associates pirated an early work print from a London lab, as Fish recounts the saga. Ophuls began showing it-in fuzzy black and white without a mixed soundtrack-to a few New York critics. While Fish, who'd signed on as Ophuls' new producer, was beating the bushes for money, the original producers showed a two-hour version of the film on German television, whereupon Ophuls brought suit in Germany claiming his right of authorship had been violated. He won.

"The most uncompromising human being I've ever encountered," Fish calls him, "right down to the mundane details of everyday life."

There was no such confrontation in the making of "Hotel Terminus." But there were many occasions on which Friedman, working with Fish and Washington investor Peter Kovler as coproducers, doubted the film would ever be finished. Ophuls' summer of despair after the trial was one of those times.

And yet, of course, Ophuls did summon the resolve to finish. He and his producers are circumspect about this part of the process ("I'm not running for office," he demurs), but by mid-September he and a new team of editors were back at work. "They helped rescue the film physically and me psychologically," Ophuls says of the editors, who supported his contention that the film needed to be more than four hours long and warranted the ironic tone he was giving it. "I needed encouragement from others and they gave it to me."

So much for his just-a-filmmaker shrugs. The roughly 14 hours of film Ophuls has assembled in three movies constitute a sustained inquiry into the perpetrators and victims of Nazism, a cinematic archive that sometimes threatens to deplete its creator.

He has chosen a subject-or it has chosen him-that forces audiences to examine, as the young woman at the New York Film Festival put it, their deepest feelings about good and evil. "I feel very uncomfortable with that," he says. "Maybe we've all disqualified ourselves" as answerers. But the questions persist.

In "Hotel Terminus," he asks Brooklyn District Attorney Elizabeth Holtzman (who as a congresswoman pushed for the extradition of Nazis in the United States) whether only "old Nazis and Jews" still care about the Holocaust. Holtzman explains why she doesn't agree, but "I'm less optimistic than she is," Ophuls says. "Even in the interviews with people who come here to the Algonquin, I get provoked once in a while into saying that this film and this subject matter is still of importance to the goyim"-the non-Jews. "And I say it to the goyim. Because if it isn't, it will happen again."

Around and around. Ophuls insists he doesn't "feel comfortable in the role of judge or prophet," that it sounds presumptuous to say his movies speak for the voiceless victims. He winces at words like "obsession." He still wants to make a comedy.

"But in the last analysis, I guess it is true," he muses. "That using film to try to put that part of contemporary history on record before {the witnesses and victims} die is a kind of mission. I always try to wiggle out of that, having a mission, but yes. I think it is there. Just the idea that it gets on film."



**Essay by Marcel Ophuls (from Hotel Terminus Cannes press kit)**

The question I did not ask myself:

WOULD YOU, PERSONALLY, HIDE A JEWISH CHILD?

Lyon, May 12, 1987

With regard to Klaus Barbie, people ask a certain number of questions, to one another, but above all – and this is what is essential – they ask themselves. These questions, I am convinced they are being asked at this very moment, between friends, in the press, during the lawsuit and about it, but also in the dark of sleepless nights.

Any person who assumes the heavy task of presenting a feature-length documentary on this man, his life and his crimes, must have himself asked these questions and proposed possible answers.

“Is any man capable of committing such crimes, and would he do so under the same conditions? For example, my old friend Tartempion, or even, by chance, that not very polite customer in the supermarket?”

This is quite obviously a very important question because, if we can't answer it, we have a hard time seeing why Klaus Barbie – or anyone – should be judged and punished. Furthermore, if it is only a question of circumstances, of education, environment, etc., we can then ask ourselves precisely what circumstances lead to such crimes, or even under what circumstances we can be sure of not turning into a Klaus Barbie. The Gestapo (what section in particular?), National Socialism (Being born and raised during the Third Reich?). As of what age? With what label? Within which organization? For what period of time? Is it necessary to have read MEIN KAMPF? To have assisted in arrests? To have listened to Hitler's speeches? How many of his speeches? To have heard about the Final Solution? How? When? To have been born or educated in Germany? And what about the anti-Nazi Germans? And the 500,000 non-Jewish Germans who went to the concentration camps? And the non-German Fascists? The Croats, the Ukrainians, the French, the opportunists and the ideologues in all of the occupied countries? And those that weren't occupied – the English, the Americans, all those people who did not have the chance to be an accomplice to such crimes, or to collaborate, or to become Nazis, because they had not yet been born, or because they were, precisely, Jews or Gypsies? And all those people who are committing similar crimes in a

different context, like a colonial war or a totalitarian regime, at this very moment? Is the fact that National Socialism created an even more repressive and murderous system than other regimes, beneath other skies, an aggravating circumstance or, to the contrary, is it an attenuating one? If these crimes are not attributable to objective factors, we must thus look for subjective elements: the individual's psyche, his temperament, hereditary abnormalities, and his particular weaknesses? And which ones, more precisely? Sadism, a lack of imagination, cruelty, narrow-mindedness, self-complacency, paranoia, contempt for others, cynicism? To what degree, in what proportions? None of these questions is really new, nor even profound, nor particularly stimulating for the mind. Quite the contrary, we are in the sphere of unanswerable trivialities, thus in a hopeless dullness. But above all, what must be made clear to the entire world is that these questions have no basis and lose all moral value if we do not first ask them to ourselves.

Thus, my personal response to this initial question is "NO!": No, I don't think, despite everything pushing me to say otherwise – that I myself would be capable of committing such crimes under the same circumstances – or under any other circumstance. Consequently, I don't think I am like a Klaus Barbie or even a Lacombe, Lucien. And this belief gives me reason to hope that my old friend Tartempion and that not very polite man in the supermarket are not Klaus Barbie's either.

"Is someone – whomever – capable of resisting torture? Did so and so betray his friends before the Gestapo or to Klaus Barbie? What would, for example, What's-his-name or What'd-you-call-him, or my neighbor, that television actor, my daughter's boyfriend, do?..."

Whoever has a modicum of good sense must recognize that this is a dirty question, quite particularly in the context of the Nazis, the tortures of the Gestapo, the French Resistance and the death camps. It is a question that can't be ignored, perhaps, but once again one that is entirely "out of left field" if it not preceded by a self-analysis. This time, my personal response is that I would be very surprised to learn that I could one day behave as a hero! To date, my life has not brought me sufficient proof of my physical or moral courage to respond to this question otherwise. As sad and disappointing as this response may appear to me, I don't believe it has to push me aside – me or other people like me – or prevent me from claiming a modicum of current dignity, or even prevent me from broaching the subject

concerning us here from a professional point of view (as a historian, journalist or filmmaker). The doubt one may have about oneself does not have to be completely paralyzing. Having admiration for what other people knew how to do is not necessarily a handicap.

“How many French people did this? How many French people did that? How many of them helped Barbie? How many helped Jean Moulin? How many would have done so had they been able to do so? How many did nothing? And my old friend Tartempion? And that not very polite customer in that supermarket?”

This is a different question than the two preceding ones. I think that, compared to the Lyon trial, in the context of the French and international public debate, it is important to separate these questions in order to not fall into a mass of very vague clichés, a mass that is drowned in an even vaguer whole, in a pseudo-philosophical and self-destructing debate of the style “Aren’t we all guilty?, etc...etc....And, in any event, what is guilt? Moreover, the more we expand the debate to the problem of “Barbie and the French,” the more we become unpleasant and even...completely boring! I’m bored to death – and for a long time now! – of hearing all the theories on “The French” and “The French behavior”. Does this mean that I am bored and disgusted by the role that I myself have played in this debate? Without a doubt, but that is not exactly the problem, because my role was not so important, even in my eyes, and in particular in the face of the reality of the Barbie case.

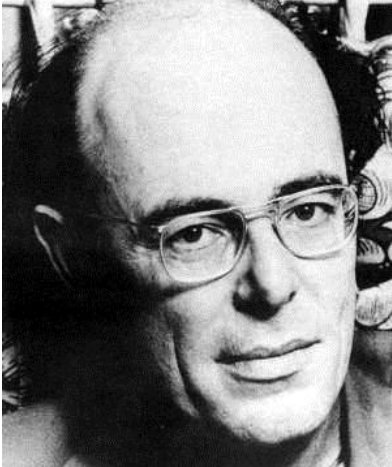
Beyond this reflection, there is a variant of this third question, which is precisely the reason why I am sitting at my typewriter this morning, and which has led me to a very painful discovery about myself:

“Would my friend Tartempion, my neighbor, the not very polite man from the supermarket, that member of my family, would he help me (or would he hide a Jewish child, or someone who had escaped from the Gestapo, or Jacques Chaban-Delmas or a British pilot) at the risk of falling into the hands of Klaus Barbie? Not only is this a very old question – in particular within the Jewish community-, not only have we asked ourselves it long before Barbie was rediscovered in La Paz, but also, I believe that in truth, this question has become a sort of neurotic society game for many people, one of the numerous murderous consequences of events linked to the Nazi terror, to our era. I am certain that I have always lugged this fascinating

question around with me somewhere in the back of my mind since my childhood, but the unforgivable truth is this: right until this very minute, until the moment that I woke up this morning to eat my breakfast, I had never asked myself it!

## **Biography**

### **Marcel Ophuls- Director**



Marcel Ophuls was born on November 1, 1927 in Frankfurt, Germany. Having become a French citizen in 1938, his father, filmmaker Max Ophuls, left France with his family during the Occupation to escape Nazi persecution.

That is why Marcel Ophuls spent a portion of his formative years in the United States and in Hollywood.

Having returned to finish his studies at the Sorbonne, he quickly took the long route to the Champs-Élysées, abandoning philosophy to become a film assistant in the fifties.

John Huston, Julien Duvivier, and lastly his father – for the filming of *LOLA MONTES*, were among his bosses.

Passing up staging in favor of New Wave, he directed several fiction films, including *PEAU DE BANANE*, with Jeanne Moreau and Jean-Paul Belmondo in 1963.

His most famous film however is the documentary, **THE SORROW AND THE PITY**, which received world-wide acclaim. Having left to go work in Germany and the United States following the ORTF [French Television and Broadcasting Office] strike in 1968, Marcel Ophuls directed abroad a film on North Ireland, **A SENSE OF LOSS**, a five-hour film on the Nuremberg trials, **THE MEMORY OF JUSTICE** and a dozen other reports and dramas, from **SACHA GUITRY** to **GOETHE**, for several foreign television stations.

He also taught film at Princeton University.

### **Filmography**

Veillées d'armes (1994)  
November Days (1991)  
Hôtel Terminus (1988)  
Festspiele (1982) (TV)  
Kortnergeschichten (1980) (TV)  
The Memory of Justice (1976)  
A Sense of Loss (1972)  
"America Revisited" (1971) TV mini-series  
Clavigo (1970) (TV)  
The Harvest of My Lai (1970) (TV)  
The Sorrow and the Pity (1969)  
Munich or Peace in Our Time (1967) (TV)  
Fire at Will (1965)  
Banana Peel (1963)  
Love at Twenty (1962)  
Matisse ou Le talent de bonheur (1960)  
Das Pflichtmandat (1958) (TV)

## Credits

Produced and directed by.....Marcel Ophuls  
Executive Producers.....John S. Friedman, Hamilton Fish, Peter Kovler  
Editors.....Albert Jurgenson, Catherine Zins  
Sound Editors.....Michel Trouillard, Anne Weil  
Assistant Editors.....Sophie Brunet, Anne Weil, Brigitte Benard,  
Therese Giraud  
Editing interns... François Chilowicz, Francesca Piqueras, Olivier Rossignol  
Editor/Team.....Brigitte Grymblat  
Directors of Photography.....Michael Davis, Pierre Boffety, Reuben  
Aaronson, Wilhelm Rosing, Lionel Legros, Daniel Chabert, Paul  
Gonon, Hans Haber  
Camera Assistants.....Madelyn Most, Laurent Machael, Beatrice Misrahi  
Sounds Engineers.....Michael Busch, Judy Karp, Bernard Bats, Yves  
Zlotnicka, Francisco Adrienzea, Alain Champolevier  
Mixer.....Paul Bertault  
Production Manager.....Bernard Farrel  
Head Documentalist and Assistant Director (U.S.).....Christopher Simpson  
Journalist's Assistant.....Peter McFarren  
Associate Directors.....Dieter Reifarh (Germany), Sophie Brunet (France)  
Documentalists.....Deborah Spier, Beatriz Clover, Wendy McFarren,  
Rene Riley, Paul Thiers  
Stage Managers.....Louna Grid, Bert Schmidt  
Producer's Assistant.....Deana Jordan  
Production Consultant.....Kathleen McCaffrey  
Legal Services.....Robert Lasky, Henri Choukroun  
Production backup.....Olivier Allais, Daniel Charrier  
Production Assistant.....Lisa Daniela Kirshenbaum  
Publicists.....Simon Mizrahi, Laurence Granec  
Subtitles.....Bernard Eisenschitz  
Accountant (U.S.).....Nancy Rosenband  
Insurance.....D.R. Reiff and Associates  
Piano.....Charles Bouisset  
Voiceover.....Jeanne Moreau

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## Interview Subjects

Johannes Schneider-Merck.....German import-exporter,  
Barbie's former neighbor in Lima

Raymond Levy..... inhabitant of Lyon, pool player

Marcel Cruat..... inhabitant of Lyon, pool player

Henri V Arlot..... inhabitant of Lyon, pool player

Pierre Merindol..... journalist from Lyon

Johann Otten..... farmer, village school classmate

Peter Minn..... from the Wehrmacht, high school classmate

Claude Bourdet..... companion of the Liberation

Eugene Kolb..... secret agent and Barbie's former boss, retired

Lise Lesevre..... Resistance fighter

Lucie and Raymond Aubrac..... companions of the Liberation

Simone Lagrange..... former concentration camp prisoner

Daniel Cordier..... companion of the Liberation

Dr. Frederic Dugoujon..... physician in Caluire

Rene Hardy..... former leader of the FER network, acquitted

Fernand Bucchanieri..... mayor of Solutre

Claude Bal..... director of the film "L'Amere Verite"

Rene Tavernier..... poet and Resistance fighter

Bertrand Tavernier..... filmmaker

Karl-Heinz Muller.....Gestapo member

Harry Steingritt.....Gestapo member

Me. Serge Klarsfeld..... lawyer

Albert Rosset.....leader of the Front National in Lyon

Gilbert Wolf..... former Resistance fighter and his friends from Lyon

Roger Maria..... Resistance fighter

Armand Zuchner..... retired policeman

Nicole Gompel..... plaintiff

Françoise Hemmerle..... inhabitant of Lyon

Leon Landini..... Resistance fighter

Erhard Dabringhaus..... American secret agent

Michel Thomas..... language professor

Daniel Cohn-Bendit..... writer

Gunter Grass..... writer

Wolfgang Gustmann..... SS veteran

Dr. Knittel..... spokesperson of the Bavarian Ministry of Justice

Karl Polke..... CIC informer



Robert Taylor..... American secret agent, retired  
 Leni Taylor..... his wife  
 Allan A. Ryan Jr..... America lawyer  
 Cl. Earl Browning..... American secret agent, retired  
 Cl. Paul Paillole..... chief of French secret services, retired  
 Jacques Delarue..... historian  
 Benjamin Shute..... former director of U.S. secret services in Germany  
 Ivo Omrcamin..... Croatian, leader of “la ligne des Rats”  
 Elisabeth Holtzman..... Brooklyn District Attorney  
 Georges Neagoy..... of the C.I.A., retired  
 Gustavo Sanchez Salazar..... Bolivian Secretary of State  
 Gaston Velasco..... Bolivian businessman  
 Mirna Murillo..... Bolivian journalist  
 Peter Mc Farren..... journalist, Associated Press  
 Alvaro De Castro..... Klaus Barbie’s bodyguard  
 Joachim Fiebelkorn..... adventurer, chief of the "Fiances de la Mort”  
 Albert Brun..... journalist  
 Beate Klarsfeld..... activist  
 Ita Halaunbrenner..... plaintiff  
 Alexandre Halaunbrenner..... plaintiff  
 Monique Halaunbrenner..... plaintiff  
 Ladislav de Hoyos..... journalist  
 Klaus Barbie..... convicted prisoner  
 Guido Vildoso..... former Bolivian President  
 Werner Guttentag..... publisher in Bolivia  
 Regis Debray..... writer  
 Paul Schmitt..... chief prison guard at Montluc  
 Jacques Verges..... Barbie’s lawyer  
 Jacques Derogy..... journalist  
 Claude Lanzmann..... filmmaker  
 Ute Messner..... librarian in Bad Kufstein, Austria  
 Françoise Croizier..... homemaker in Santa Cruz  
 Roger Roucou..... restaurant owner  
 Christian Bourillot..... restaurant owner  
 Marie-Louise Vettard..... restaurant owner  
 Chantal Vetiard..... restaurant owner  
 Judith Miller..... journalist at The New York Times  
 Richard Bernstein..... journalist at The New York Times  
 Dr. Milton Dank..... history professor  
 Luis Bassets..... journalist

Françoise Stoll.....student  
Isabel Hilton..... journalist  
Jean-Marie Le Pen..... leader of the Front National  
Pierre Truche..... Lyon District Attorney  
Dr. Alfred Streim.....District Attorney for Nazi crimes in the former  
Federal Republic of Germany  
Sorj Chalandon and the journalists of LIBERATION-LYON  
Julien Favet.....farm hand  
Roland Rappaport..... lawyer  
Sabrina Zlatin..... director of the “Home d'Izieu”  
Alain Finkielkraut..... writer  
Andre Castelnau..... journalist