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PROGRAM ABC World News Tonight

STATION WJLA-TV  
ABC Network

DATE February 11, 1983 7:00 P.M. CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT Klaus Barbie

FRANK REYNOLDS: The Soviets have now begun what will probably be a sustained campaign of attacks on the United States for the alleged connection between this country's intelligence services right after World War II and Klaus Barbie, the former Gestapo chief in Lyon, France, who has now, after all these years finally been extradited from Bolivia to France to stand trial for war crimes.

Tonight, John Martin has a report on Barbie and a man who knew him in Bolivia.

JOHN MARTIN: The man who took these photos of Nazi fugitive Klaus Barbie in Bolivia is a former international jewel thief and burglar named Robert Wilson, who says the two men met there in 1972 and formed a fast but wary friendship.

ROBERT WILSON: I have a criminal background for some 30 years. And he's obviously a very cultivated criminal. We felt very comfortable around each other.

MARTIN: So comfortable, by 1975, Wilso says, that Barbie permitted him to record a conversation in which he asked Barbie about his infamous reputation.

KLAUS BARBIE: In the world history, that is true. That is absolutely true.

MARTIN: In halting English, Barbie talks, says Wilson, of wartime Lyon, where 4000 French Jews and resistance fighters died at the hands of Barbie and his men, crimes for which he was later convicted in absentia.

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BARBIE: I [unintelligible] to kill, to [unintelligible]. I have been ordered to try to correct, and this order has been [unintelligible] to kill.

MARTIN: Wilson says Barbie claimed that Rene Hardy (?), a resistance officer, betrayed his leader, Jean Moulins, who Barbie says he tortured but did not murder.

BARBIE: He died not in my hands. I have given a test [unintelligible]. I take him to Paris. And many, many years after, in '64, I have read that he has died on the way from Paris to Frankfurt.

MARTIN: After the war, there were allegations that in exchange for information on Soviet intelligence, Barbie and his family escaped to Bolivia with the help of American agents.

WILSON: They became very friendly towards him. And according to him, he struck a deal with them.

MARTIN: Did he ever tell you that he had continuing contacts with the American intelligence...

WILSON: Oh, he told me that on a number of occasions. Yes.

MARTIN: What did he say about that?

WILSON: Well, he just used the term, "I'm on very friendly relationships with the Americans, and have been." He mentioned the fact that he's been in New Orleans, he loved San Francisco.

MARTIN: The CIA had no comment.

Military intelligence told ABC News it is researching its files on Barbie to decide whether to release information.

In Vancouver, Wilson is writing a book, sifting materials he says he took from Barbie, including this rare photograph of young Adolf Hitler, which he says Barbie kept on a dresser in his bedroom.

Much of Wilson's material remains to be documented. And the original of a 126-page statement he says Barbie wrote out for him in Spanish is missing. But if they are authentic, his recollections and his recording offer an unusual glimpse of the man France is preparing to prosecute for crimes against humanity.