

Papon Trial

War crimes trial of Maurice Papon, who served as the Vichy government's secretary-general in the Bordeaux region of France during World War II. Papon was the highest ranking Vichy official ever to be convicted by a French court of Crimes Against Humanity. In his position in the collaborating Vichy government, Papon was responsible for the Deportation of about 1,600 Jews from Bordeaux to Nazi Extermination Camps, including more than 220 children. Almost all of the deportees were exterminated at Auschwitz. After the war, Papon went on to enjoy an illustrious career: from 1958 to 1967 he served as chief of the Paris police, and during the 1970s he was budget minister of France.

In 1981 Papon was accused of being a war criminal; in April 1988 he was convicted of crimes against humanity and sentenced to 10 years in prison. Throughout the trial, Papon made dubious assertions about his innocence, claiming that he had helped the French Resistance, and that he was no worse than French Jewish leaders of the time. He protested his conviction, and in 1999 he lost his final appeal. At that point, Papon fled to Switzerland, but was found and returned to France to serve his sentence. (For more on Vichy, see also France.)