

MAN WITH AN UNSPOTTED CONSCIENCE

EICHMANN IN JERUSALEM: A Report on the Banality of Evil. By Hannah Arendt. 275 pp. New York: The Viking Press. \$5.50.

By MICHAEL A. MUSMANNO

ADOLF EICHMANN, one of Hitler's principal instruments in the Nazi program to exterminate the Jews of Europe, was hanged on May 31, 1962, but in this book he is very much alive. We see him energetically striding from page to page, we observe him in shining, black-leather boots stamping into governmental, military and diplomatic offices in all parts of Europe. We follow him, his ornamented cap at a sharp angle, storming into hotels, concentration camps, railroad trains, human abattoirs and emerging with neither a dirty spot on his immaculate uniform, nor—according to Eichmann, with Hannah Arendt apparently supporting his boast—a dirty spot on his conscience.

That is what this book is principally about: Adolf Eichmann's conscience. The author covered the trial of Eichmann in Jerusalem for *The New Yorker*, and the series of articles in that magazine, which form the bulk of this book, stirred controversy as a strong wind agitates the waters of a lake. The book, which follows the articles as a gale succeeds a rising wind, will probably evoke a great deal of pensive reflection; Eichmann was no ordinary criminal, and his deeds were not the subject of the ordinary court of assizes.

THERE will be those who will wonder how Miss Arendt, after attending the Eichmann trial and studying the record and pertinent material, could announce, as she solemnly does in this book, that Eichmann was not really a Nazi at heart, that he did not know Hitler's program when he joined the Nazi party, that the Gestapo were helpful to the Jews in Palestinian immigration, that Himmler (Himmler!) had a sense of pity, that the Jewish gas-killing program grew out of Hitler's euthanasia program and that, all in all, Eichmann was really a modest man.

Miss Arendt devotes considerable space to Eichmann's conscience and informs us that one of Eichmann's points in his own defense was "that there were no voices from the outside to arouse his conscience." How abysmally asleep is a conscience when it must be aroused

Justice Musmanno, of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, was a witness at the Eichmann trial. From 1946 to 1948 he was a judge at Nuremberg and presided over the Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing units) trial. He is the author of "Justice Musmanno Dissents," and "The Eichmann Kommandos."

Adolf Eichmann's Role in the Nazi Mania Is Weighed in Hannah Arendt's New Book



Adolf Eichmann, April, 1961, in the courtyard of the Teggart Fortress, Nazareth, where he was held prior to his trial in Jerusalem.

to be told there is something morally wrong about pressing candy upon a little boy to induce him to enter a gas chamber of death?

The author believes that Eichmann was misjudged in Jerusalem and quotes, with astounding credulity, his statement: "I myself had no hatred for the Jews." Sympathizing with Eichmann, she laments: "Alas, nobody believed

him." Should anyone be blamed for lifting an eyebrow to the suggestion that Eichmann loved the Jews? At the end of the war he exclaimed: "I shall laugh when I jump into the grave, because of the feeling that I killed five million Jews. This gives me a lot of satisfaction and pleasure."

Miss Arendt defends Eichmann against his own words here, arguing

that it would be "preposterous" to believe he personally slew five million people. But his guilt did not depend on personal physical annihilation. The District Court of Jerusalem specified: "The legal and moral responsibility of him who delivers the victim to his death is, in our opinion, no smaller, and may even be greater, than the liability of him who does the victim to death." Eichmann headed the incredibly monstrous project to exterminate cold-bloodedly a segment of the human race. He rounded up his victims in cities, villages and the remotest corners of a continent; he had them jammed, herring fashion, into box cars; he had a hand in supplying the gas which eventually killed them.

IF, in recalling the period, one could shut one's eyes to the scenes of brutal massacre and stop one's ears to the screams of horror-stricken women and terrorized children as they saw the tornado of death sweeping toward them, one could almost assume that in some parts of the book the author is being whimsical. For instance, she says that Eichmann was a Zionist and helped Jews to get to Palestine. The facts, as set forth in the judgment handed down by the District Court of Jerusalem, are entirely to the contrary. As far back as November, 1937, after an espionage trip into the Middle East he reported that the plan for emigration of Jews to Palestine "was out of the question," it being "the policy of the Reich to avoid the creation of an independent Jewish State in Palestine."

Then, in 1944, even when Hitler (Hitler!) ordered that a few thousand Hungarian Jews be allowed to emigrate to Palestine (not out of sympathy, of course, but as part of a plan of his own), Eichmann opposed his Fuehrer, expostulating, as reported by Reich Plenipotentiary Veessenmayer, that the Jews are "important biological material, many of them veteran Zionists, whose emigration to Palestine is most undesirable."

Miss Arendt says that the only time Eichmann gave an "order to kill" was in the autumn of 1941 when he "proposed killing by shooting" of 8,000 Serbian Jews. This is quibbling. While heading the "Eichmann Special Operation Unit" in Hungary, he shipped, in less than two months, 434,351 Jews in 147 trains of sealed freight cars to Auschwitz where the gas chambers had to work at full capacity to kill the human cargoes. These 434,351 Jews died as the result of Eichmann's orders as much as if he had personally directed the gassing and the cremating crews.

In mid-summer, 1944, Horthy, regent of Hungary, compelled the return of a train loaded with 1,500 Jews, which Eichmann had dispatched to Auschwitz. Eichmann or- (Continued on Page 4D)

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dered his SS men to reload the Jews after they had detrained in Hungary and, by diabolical cunning, got them back across the Hungarian border and into the ovens of Auschwitz. Miss Arendt says Eichmann did not have the "guts" to kill. Eichmann killed those 1,500 Jews as much as if he had individually strangled them with his own hands.

The author finds in Eichmann's history a solicitude for "young Jews." He was not so solicitous in July, 1942, when 4,000 French-Jewish children, all under 16 and detached from their parents, were held in the concentration camp at Drancy. His representative, Theodor Dannecker, asked Eichmann what should be done. Eichmann's reply was to order transports for the children, and soon they were on their way as appetizers for the ravenous beast of Auschwitz.

THE disparity between what Miss Arendt states, and what the ascertained facts are, occurs with such disturbing frequency in her book that it can hardly be accepted as an authoritative historical work. She says Eichmann never "actually attended a mass execution by shooting" or watched a "gassing process." Eichmann himself spoke of attending a mass shooting and described seeing "marksmen . . . shooting into the pit." The pit was "full of corpses." The Court, in its final judgment, described Eichmann at Treblinka, one of the death camps in the East, watching "the naked Jews being led to the gas chambers along paths surrounded by barbed wire."

According to Miss Arendt, Eichmann never saw "the killing installations" at Auschwitz, although she admits he went to this charnel house "repeatedly." Her observation is like saying that one repeatedly sojourned at Niagara Falls but never noticed the falling water. Eichmann dispatched over two million Jews into the Auschwitz "destruction machinery" of which, Miss Arendt admits, he saw "enough to be fully informed."

The author supports Eichmann's incredible claim that he was ignorant of the *Kristallnacht* or Night of Broken Glass, even though the whole world knew of the conflagration of hatred which burned down synagogues, smashed 7,500 Jewish shop windows and drove 20,000 Jews into concentration camps.

Another unfortunate feature of this book is that the author, an eminent scholar, should reveal so frequently evidences of purely private prejudice. She attacks the State of Israel, its laws and institutions, wholly unrelated to the Eichmann case; she pours scorn on Prime Minister Ben-Gurion. Later she speaks contemptuously of a man whom the Court lauded, with moving appropriateness, as "one of the just men of the world." Miss Arendt apparently did not like this elderly, gentle, snowy-haired pastor of a German Protestant church, Heinrich Grüber, because he described Eichmann, whom he knew in his all-powerful heyday, as a "block of ice" and "like marble." She perhaps saw something warm about Eichmann, because, she said, the evidence showed he was "rather decent toward his subordi-

nates." Pastor Grüber had pleaded with Eichmann in behalf of persecuted Jews, and, for his pains, was thrown into a concentration camp where SS guards knocked out his teeth and inflicted other serious physical damage.

Miss Arendt deals rather intemperately and certainly injudiciously, with Gideon Hausner, the Attorney General of Israel, perhaps because, in cross-examining Eichmann, Mr. Hausner made mincemeat of the previously self-assured defendant. Mr. Hausner was not only an extremely able attorney general, but he is distinguished for his masterful legal ability at the world bar. The judges, who certainly knew more of Mr. Hausner than Miss Arendt, declared in their final judgment that Mr. Hausner "conducted the prosecution in all its stages as a jurist and on a very high professional level. In his brilliant opening speech which was eloquent and broad in perspective, and again in his concluding statement, he gave vent also to the deep feelings which stir the entire nation." President Kennedy complimented Mr. Hausner on "a job well done." People throughout the world, where humanity is felt and justice revered, echo that sentiment.

MISS ARENDT says that Eichmann, "to a truly extraordinary degree," received the "cooperation" of the Jews in their own destruction. This astonishing conclusion is predicated on statements of others that some Jewish leaders dealt with Eichmann, and that, in certain instances, Jews took part in police work. The fact that Eichmann with threats of death coerced occasional Quislings and La-

TO "Eichmann in Jerusalem," Hannah Arendt brings not only her knowledge of Germany, international law and political philosophy, but also a long acquaintance with Jewish affairs. Born in Germany in 1906, Miss Arendt received her Ph.D. from Heidelberg, where she studied under Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger. Since coming to the U. S. in 1941, she has taught at Chicago, Columbia, California, Princeton and Wesleyan, and is the author of four previous books—"The Origins of Totalitarianism," "The Human Condition," "Between Past and Future" and "On Revolution." She is married to Heinrich Bluecher, professor of philosophy at Bard.

"Before I left Germany in 1933," Miss Arendt writes, ". . . the Zionist organization approached me to do some 'illegal' work: to collect data on official anti-Semitism. This could be done only by somebody who was not a member of the organization since otherwise, in case of arrest, the existence of the organization would have been put into jeopardy. I accepted gladly and, alas, was arrested with a beautiful collection. After that, I had to leave Germany illegally and rather in a hurry. I went to Paris. I now began to take part in the Zionist organization as a social worker among Jewish refugees. From 1935 onwards, I was *secrétaire generale* of Youth Aliyah, hence an employee of the Jewish Agency. . . . I came to America in 1941, and during my first two years here, I wrote a column for the German-Jewish newspaper, *Aufbau*, chiefly about the need for a Jewish Army. I left the Zionist organization in 1943. . . . My reason: treatment of the Arab question." In 1948 Miss Arendt helped organize the Judah L. Magnes Foundation to promote the humanitarian ideals of the late president of the Hebrew University in Israel, and from 1949 to 1952 she was executive secretary of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, an American organization that collected and redistributed cultural objects found in Germany.

vals into "cooperation" only adds to the horror of his crimes. And then, Jewish councils of elders, who were required to supply lists of Jews under the false assurances that the lists were intended for "resettlement" purposes, because of war conditions, were themselves taken before the Einsatzgruppen rifles or thrown under the hissing gas "showers." But none of the author's arguments in this respect can dim the luster of martyrdom of the defenseless millions who marched bravely to their doom under the guns of the most satanic force that ever defiled the earth. The Warsaw Ghetto uprising, where 56,000 perished in a last-ditch fight for freedom, shows that the Jews did not lack the stuff of courage.

Miss Arendt declares the Eichmann trial a "failure," specifying that the Court did not give "a valid definition of the 'crime against humanity.'" In point of simple optical arithmetic, the Court validly defined and described crimes against humanity not once but a dozen times, citing the Nuremberg Charter, the basis for the Israeli law. She says that the Nuremberg Charter defines "crimes against humanity" as merely "inhuman acts." She could not be more in error. The Charter, Article 6 (c) defines Crimes Against Humanity, *inter alia*, as: "murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against any civil population, before or during the war. . . ." A mountain of evidence overwhelmingly convicted Eichmann beyond every reasonable doubt of the charges in the indictment of crimes against humanity.

In summing up her long

thesis, Miss Arendt assures the suffering world that it is possible that crimes similar to Eichmann's "may be committed in the future." And with this comforting picture assuaging the apprehensions of the reader, she adds that "no punishment has ever possessed enough power of deterrence to prevent the commission of crimes." This, in effect, says it was a terrible mistake to punish Eichmann at all!

Then, donning judicial robes, she dictates what the judges should have said when they sentenced Eichmann, if they wanted the "justice" of what was done to emerge so as to "be seen by all." They should have said to Eichmann, according to Miss Arendt, "no member of the human race can be expected to want to share the earth with you. That is the reason, and the only reason, you must hang." (Emphasis supplied.) In the first place, this statement would, of course, be false: there were many people who would gladly share the earth with Eichmann. There were his wife and children; there were also the thousands of bloodthirsty accomplices who enthusiastically shared Eichmann's desires to kill off "inferior" peoples. In the second place, the utterance Miss Arendt would put into the mouths of the venerable, distinguished, wise judges who tried Eichmann would make of the eight-month trial an act of sheer vengeance—instead of the meticulously fair and legally accurate proceeding which it has been recognized to be in all responsible circles, where there is a true understanding of the sanctity of law and the conscientious calm of even-handed justice.