

Eichmann in Jerusalem Study Guide

Eichmann in Jerusalem by Hannah Arendt

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Summary

“Eichmann in Jerusalem” by Hanna Arendt is the story of the trial of Adolph Eichmann a mid-ranking SS officer who had been an expert in forced emigration and then later in the more deadly forced evacuation. Evacuation became synonymous with death as the years of the war advanced and the Nazis were determined to fulfill Hitler’s orders for the Final Solution of the Jewish problem.

Unlike the high-ranking Nazis who had been tried right after the war in Nuremberg, Germany, Eichmann’s trial didn’t take place until 1961 after he was hunted down and caught living under a false identity in Argentina by Israel special agents. What was also different about Eichmann’s trial is that he was tried alone and the proceeding took place in Israel. The driving force behind having the trial in Israel was Israeli Premier David Ben-Gurion. He and most Jews felt it was appropriate to try the man who sent millions of Jews to their deaths to be tried by the Jews.

The trial lasted from April 1961 until August 1961 after which the three-judge panel, led by Presiding Judge Moshe Landau, took four months to reach their decision. It was a foregone conclusion by most that Eichmann was guilty and would be hung. But the judges wanted to give the defendant a fair trial so that any criticism would be kept to a minimum. Ben-Gurion wanted a show trial for the world to see. He wanted everyone to know including young Jews, non-Jews, Jews were not impacted by the Holocaust and basically everyone the atrocities that Jews had suffered during the war.

While he wanted a show trial, Judge Landau wanted a normal proceeding and the Attorney General, Gideon Hausner, had to walk a fine line to satisfy both men. There were probably too many prosecution witnesses who just told stories of the suffering that were not directly connected to Eichmann. But, as Hausner put it, he wanted to paint the picture of the times and what was going on in the backdrop of Eichmann’s operations.

In addition to the trial, there is much detail about how the Jews from the European countries were made to wear yellow stars that readily identified them as Jews. The countries, some of which were invaded and taken over by Nazis and others that cooperated with the Nazis were gathered, lied to, evacuated and placed in death camps. They were made to sign over all their property to the Nazis and if they didn’t sign, they might be shot on the spot. The question on everyone’s lips before Eichmann’s trial, during it and to the current day was why the Jews didn’t rebel and why inexplicably they sometimes cooperated in their own demise.

There were volumes of evidence and scores of witnesses who proved Eichmann’s guilt. Eichmann’s main defense was that he was obeying his orders and German law. It was the law of the Third Reich that any order Hitler announced verbally was tantamount to written law. Eichmann claimed he had no choice but to obey. While there are questions raised about the lack of fight on the part of Jews to defend themselves, there is also the question how so many seemingly normal men could come to think that crime, especially murder, was acceptable in any way – no matter who gave the orders.



Chapters I through III

Summary

There were three male justices at the trial of Adolph Eichmann. Moshe Landau, the presiding judge, set a tone of respect toward the defendant and did everything possible to keep the proceeding from turning into a show trial that Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion apparently hoped for.

Ben-Gurion did not attend any of the trial. Gideon Hausner, the Attorney General, represented the voice of Israel. However, Hausner may have fallen short of what Ben-Gurion expected because he had respect for the law and for the judicial process. The questions of outrage – why did the slaughter of Jews occur, what blame do allies have, why the Jews, why the Germans and many others – were not for this proceeding. Eichmann was on trial; not the suffering of the Jews. Hausner did his best to balance between a proper proceeding and the desires of his superior, Ben-Gurion.

In his opening remarks Hausner stressed that crimes against non-Jews would also be included in the prosecution “because we make no ethnic distinctions.” He also added that Adolph Eichmann’s focus had been on the destruction of the Jews. Like most Jews, Hausner believed that Eichmann had to be tried by the Jews. There was no support for an international trial which would have charged Eichmann with trials against mankind.

Ben-Gurion’s hopes of presenting a show trial had several purposes. He wanted the audience to be the world that could understand the suffering of the Jews. He wanted to convince Jews that they were not safe in non-Jewish communities or nations. He wanted Jews in other parts of the world and young Jews to learn about the slaughter of the Jews in Europe by the Nazis.

The prosecution’s inflammatory rhetoric caused the trial at times to degenerate into a “bloody show” despite the presiding judge’s best efforts. The lead defense counsel, Dr. Servatius, rarely objected to the over-the-top rhetoric which essentially tied the hands of the judges who could not “object” to the prosecutor’s words. Ben-Gurion got his way in a sense that the lessons he wanted the trial to teach did come to fruition. In addition to teaching the lessons of the Holocaust to non-Jews, young Jews and unaffected Jews, he wanted to “ferret out” other Nazis. Anti-Semitism had been smothered by Hitler and the Nazis at least for the time being; no one had to be convinced of its evils. The prosecution asked witnesses why they didn’t revolt, why they were compliant – questions on everyone’s lips.

Ben-Gurion wanted to not only to ferret out Nazi war criminals, he wanted to expose the large number of former Nazis who enjoyed official positions in Germany or had achieved successful private careers. Hausner elicited horror stories from witness after witness, stories that were not directly connected to Eichmann, but he would not go beyond that parameter. There were rumors that Eichmann had fingered “several



hundred” high-profile officials who were currently part of the Federal Republic of Germany who had been his accomplices. It was Ben-Gurion’s ultimate goal to not only put Eichmann on trial or the Nazis but anti-Semitism itself. Hausner even hinted at a destiny that the Jews had in fulfilling their destiny on a bloodstained road.

Otto Adolph Eichmann was caught in Buenos Aires on May 11, 1960, and brought to Israel. He was charged with multiple crimes against the Jewish people. He was tried under the Nazis and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Law of 1950. The death penalty was a possible sentence for those convicted under this law. He pleaded not guilty “in the sense of the indictment” to every count. The defense under Dr. Robert Servatius would have preferred that he had pled not guilty based on the Nazi legal system that existed at the time – that it had been his duty to follow the law. Eichmann said he never killed a Jew or any human being. He also claimed he never gave the order to anyone to kill a Jew. His crime, he asserted, was that he aided and abetted in the annihilation of the Jews which he referred to as one of the greatest crimes in the history of mankind.

Eichmann was not perceived as a true believer. He felt swallowed up by the Nazi party and had not made a conscientious decision to join it. He didn’t know the party program and hadn’t read Mein Kampf. He joined the SS to escape from the humdrum life of a vacuum cleaner salesman. Eichmann claimed he had an affinity for Jews who were idealists like he was. Eichmann’s talents lay in his ability to organize and negotiate.

The judges grew weary of his responses feeling that they were empty and feigned. They felt he was covering up his true thoughts with his rehearsed responses. He was blocking out reality, they felt. He claimed that his main desire had been to become a police chief in a small township trying to demonstrate that he had no huge ambitions.

Eichmann was not the typical criminal. His criminality was rooted in self-deception, lies and even stupidity. The lies had been part of him for so long that he believed them. Mendacity had become part of the German fiber after the Nazi defeat and Germany’s worldwide disgrace. In the case of Eichmann and other Germans self-deception convinced them that the war was not really a war, the goings on had been started by others and that Germans had been fighting for their very lives. They had to annihilate the Jews or they would have been annihilated.

Eichmann believed that there was no sin to admit. He wanted to make peace with his enemies. As the war was coming to an end and it was obvious that Germany was losing, many Germans expressed the same hope – the war and Holocaust had just been huge misunderstandings that had to be cleared up. Eichmann’s mind was filled with thoughts of conciliation and learned realities. The judges found him frustrating to interview as they juxtaposed his deeds with the ludicrous man they questioned. He claimed he had a gift of telling the truth. In the memoirs he wrote in Argentina before extradition, he warned historians who would later read his words not to doubt them. Eichmann came across less a monster and more a clown. One thing he learned in life, he offered, was to never take an oath yet he chose to give his testimony under oath. He further contradicted himself by claiming he would never try to escape responsibility for



his actions but submitted a written plea for mercy. To Eichmann, his inconsistencies were signs of mood changes and spur of the moment thoughts that came to mind.

Analysis

The author sets the stage for the trial of SS Officer Adolph Eichmann who was arrested for being a war criminal and murderer. The trial is in Jerusalem although the crimes did not take place there they were perpetrated against Jewish people and it was felt appropriate that he be tried in Israel.

David Ben-Gurion, the Israeli Prime Minister of Israel, wanted the trial tried before the world so that non-Jews, young Jews, and Jews in other regions could learn what happened to the Jews in World War II at the hands of the Nazi regime. Ben-Gurion not only wanted Eichmann and the Nazi's tried; he wanted anti-Semitism to be tried before the world. He wanted to ferret out other Nazis who were in well-placed positions in the new German government or in successful private business in their homeland.

There was a tension between the court and Ben-Gurion. He wanted a show trial and the judges were determined to have a normal proceeding that could not come under criticism for demagoguery or unfair treatment of the defendant. Ben-Gurion, as stated above, had his own agenda. His Attorney General, Hausner, had to strike the balance between the two kinds of trials in order to provide a compromise between both.

The author portrays Eichmann as someone who fell into the Nazi party because he wanted to escape a hum-drum existence. He was not a true believer and had not read Mein Kamp. Eichmann's defense was that he was following orders and the law of Germany. Orders from the Fuhrer were tantamount to law and Eichmann had no choice but to obey them.

In this first portion, the author established the ambience of the courtroom, the conflicts between the principals, the charges against the defendant and his defense. It is a historic moment in history that most readers will enjoy and learn from.

Vocabulary

scrupulous, explication, abstention, iniquitous, rabbinical, atrocities, superfluous, ubiquitous, annihilation, partisan, connivance, rodomontade, veritable, aphasia, mendacity



Chapters IV through VI

Summary

The facts that led to the conclusion that Eichmann should hang had been established beyond reasonable doubt even before the trial started. His actions had been well known to all. His lead defense counsel, Dr. Servatius, chose to ignore some factors that may have been somewhat exculpatory. He had told the judge that his experience with Jews in Vienna had led him to believe that a mutually fair and acceptable solution should be sought to solve the conflict between them. He had nothing but respect for the Jews in Vienna. He had enabled them to escape but did not know about the coming "Final Solution" for the Jewish problem that had been devised by others in the Reich. He had saved hundreds of thousands of Jews. As far as the extermination of the Jews, he told the police that his superior, Heinrich Muller, would have never suggested something so crude. This horrific acts were carried out on orders from the Fuhrer – everyone else was a small cog in the wheel - even Himmler. This claim of innocence was a common one in post-war Germany.

Eichmann could not provide any facts to support his incredible story of saving the Jews. His year in Vienna, Spring 1938 to March 1939, occurred when the Nazis had cast aside their pro-Zionist policy. The Nazi movement kept getting more radical with each passing day. There was a claim that Eichmann had helped get 3,500 Jews out of Europe. Dr. Franz Meyer, a former member of the Executive of Zionist Organization in Germany, testified that in Berlin there was a degree of cooperation between Eichmann and Jews. Meyer stated that Eichmann genuinely listened to the Jews and tried to understand their situation. Eichmann was respectful and polite. He was shocked when Eichmann later gathered the leaders of the German Jewry in Vienna to explain forced emigration to them. He had changed so much. He was insolent, rude and presented himself as their master.

Himmler was over a network of Higher SS and Police Leaders that played a major role in the execution of the Final Solution. These men outranked Eichmann whose position was not particularly high. His position gained importance as the war raged on. The organization under Himmler was so complex, that it was difficult to trace specific responsibilities back to Eichmann. The various organizations under Himmler were in competition to see who could kill the most Jews.

Eichmann's proposed the Madagascar plan to evacuate four million Jews from Europe to Madagascar, the French Island off the coast of Africa. Eichmann would not admit that the Madagascar project was a cover for the extermination, a hoax. Eichmann had also suggested that a police state be established for the Jews which would have required a huge territory.

Heydrich received a letter from Goering commissioning him to begin preparations for the Final Solution. He met with Eichmann and told him that the Fuhrer had ordered the



physical extermination of the Jews. Eichmann was stunned not being able to grasp the words he just heard. That solution had never occurred to him. He lost interest in his job and all initiative. In actuality, this solution had been in the works for years. He was one of the first of lower echelon commanders to be told. Not many documents existed with blatant references to exterminations. Rather, code words like “final solution” and “change of residence” were used to discuss the impending extermination.

The tapes of Eichmann’s police interviews were played in court without objection from defense counsel. The prosecution has made its case and gathered enough evidence for Eichmann to hang. Still there was a legal question as to whether he just ordered the transport of Jews or if he had indeed ordered their execution. The presiding judge asked if the killing of the Jews had bothered his conscience – but that was a question of morals. The legal questions included whether he could be dismissed of all responsibility for the killings under the statute that allowed a person to kill if that person was under threat of death. Secondly, there was the question if he could be released under special circumstances in that he tried to reduce the gravity of the offense.

It was apparent that the death penalty loomed for Eichmann. The only possible mitigation of a death sentence would be that Eichmann was acting on the orders of others. This was no ordinary trial. It allowed irrelevant and immaterial commentary that could allow a look within the psyche of a criminal. How long did it take this person to lose his repugnance for crime and what transformation occurred at that point?

In September 1941 after Eichmann had visited several death camps, he was given orders to prepare for his first mass deportation. The first “shipment” contained 20,000 German Jews and five thousand Gypsies. Eichmann who was always scrupulous in following orders made his own decision for the first time. And it was contrary to his orders. Instead of shipping the people to one of the death camps where they would have been shot he sent them to the Ghetto of Lodz where no preparations were being made for mass exterminations. The Lodz incident was the only provable time that he tried to save Jews.

There was a turning point in the way Eichmann thought about what he was in the midst of. About four weeks after Lodz, he began to think differently. He was aware that all Polish professionals and native Jews were being killed in mass shootings. He made a distinction between native Jews and Jews from the Reich. He claimed he didn’t know that Jews for the Reich were subject to the same treatment as other Jews. This question of class emerged in the trial. Was the slaughter of Jews considered more abhorrent because they were educated and accomplished? Would the same outrage have existed had Gypsies been the main target of the mass executions? A reference is made by the Attorney General at the trial to the movie Dr. Strangelove in which the mad scientist who resembles Hitler planned to save people with the highest IQs from nuclear destruction.

The gas factories created to kill mass numbers at once were the creative idea of Hitler from years before in what was described as his “euthanasia program.” This point was



proof that Eichmann was not involved in developing the gas factory concept but was not mentioned by the defendant.

Although no one protested the killing of millions of Jews, the gassing of the mentally ill was stopped when there was public outcry. These protests occurred at the beginning of the war. By the end of the war, no one spoke up for fear they'd wind up in a death camp, too. The Nazis felt they were objective and scientifically advanced from those who protested about their deadly practices.

Analysis

The author stresses that the conclusion that Eichmann was guilty before the trial began. This is not the way a democracy actually works but Americans and those from other countries can think of many trials in which public opinion declared the defendant guilty before the trial. However, such trials are still conducted in a proper manner and the justice system does not deem the accused guilty before the trial.

In this case, the crimes were so well-known and so egregious that the people of Israel including their Prime Minister found it difficult if not impossible to declare that Eichmann was innocent until proven guilty.

Eichmann offers weak defenses for his actions. He didn't know that there was a Final Solution. He didn't know where those he "evacuated" were really going. He was only following orders. It was the Fuhrer who was at fault who gave the orders. Arendt gets into the responsibility of underlings who are ordered to commit crimes. Where does that responsibility begin and end.

Although Eichmann claimed that he saved Jewish lives, he provided little evidence beyond his own responses. Arendt was focused on when a law-abiding man transforms into a criminal. There is specific evidence of his change by a witness who found him kind and polite. But found him changed to an insolent and rude person the next time he encountered him. Was that evidence of the change that Arendt tried to pin down?

There is a hint of classism among the Nazis who looked at educated and wealthy Jews as worthy of living more than those of more ordinary Jews.

Vocabulary

envisaged, impunity, polemical, virtuosity, protectorate, nonentity, labyrinth, exculpate, chauvinism, milieu



Chapters VII through IX

Summary

January 1942 during the Wannsee Conference, Heydrich invited the head of ministries to Berlin to discuss the final solution. Obviously, since the plan was to encompass all of Europe more than tacit agreement would be necessary. To be successful, there had to be full cooperation. Most of the ministers were loyal Nazis who had been with Hitler over the last nine years during his rise to power. The goal of the meeting was to focus on the successful implementation of the Final Solution. Whether half-Jews should be killed or just sterilized was one topic of discussion. The plan was greeted with great enthusiasm.

Eichmann was among the lowest ranking men at the meeting. He had provided some stats for Heydrich's speech in which he wrote that eleven million Jews must be killed. It was at this meeting that Eichmann's doubts about the impending massacres were dispelled. The prominent members of the party and the government were all in favor of the plan. He felt like Pontius Pilate – who was he to judge?

Eichmann became an expert of forced evacuation just as he had been an expert of forced emigration. The Jews had to register and wear yellow stars and gathered up and sent to extermination centers. After arriving in the centers, healthier Jews were used for labor; some even operated the extermination machinery. The others were all sent directly to the gas chambers. Papers were drawn up making the victims "stateless" so that no nation could inquire about them.

Eichmann's conscience had been clear because he met no one who was against the Final Solution. While he did not expect the Jews to enthusiastically support the Final Solution, he did expect them to cooperate. The Nazis often set up puppet governments in cities and towns run by Jews which made a successful Final Solution go more smoothly.

Eichmann was generally polite and respectful to the German-speaking Jewish functionaries because he felt they were socially his superiors. He was not, as a witness related, a mercenary. Eichmann also felt that he should be subordinate to Hitler because he had raised himself up from being a corporal in the German Army to Fuhrer. He believed in the "good society" and the society he lived in obeyed their superiors. The prosecutor went about trying to prove that there were outside voices he could have listened to that exposed the reality of the Jewish Solution.

As defeat was looming more and more subordinates came to Eichmann asking for exceptions and for the cessation of the Final Solution. He knew that Himmler had ordered the dismantling of the death camps. He had a meeting with Himmler, one of only few, who told him to treat the Jews well now.



Eichmann to the end worked toward carrying out the Final Solution. He frustrated the judges at the trial who tried but were never able to understand him. Were his actions proof of his fanaticism and his hatred of the Jews? Had he lied in court that he always obeyed orders? Hitler was obviously unaware of Himmler's orders to stop the exterminations because he sent word to proceed with the extermination of the Hungarian Jews without further delay. Eichmann had threatened to take the matter directly to the Fuhrer. Eichmann lost his fight against the moderate wing. Kurt Becher was promoted to the position that Eichmann had hoped for. Hungary was liberated and Eichmann was sent back to Berlin in a low-level assignment.

In Jerusalem he was confronted with documentation about his undying loyalty to Hitler and Hitler's orders. Eichmann defended himself by saying that the Fuhrer's words were tantamount to law. He did not ask for a written order from Hitler for just that reason. However, he did ask for written orders from Himmler because his words do not carry the same weight.

In 1944, Eichmann was absorbed with doing his job of organization and administration while dealing with the impending defeat and internal conflicts among those of the Third Reich who were solving the "Jewish problem." He was trying to bring order to what he considered to be chaos. He worked his way to a key position because his office authorized transportation. The orders for deportations came down to Himmler to eventually wind up on Eichmann's desk. Himmler decided how many of the Jewish deportees should be exterminated and how many spared for hard labor.

Eichmann began as an apprentice with duties that fell between his old job of arranging emigrations and his future job of deporting them. His first deportations occurred before the official launching of the Final Solution order from Hitler. Looking back, it appeared as though his early work were experiments. He deported 1,300 German Jews from Stettin. The reason for the deportation that Heydrich gave was that their apartments were needed for the war effort. The next deportation was larger with about 7,500 men, women and children shipped to unoccupied France. Since there was no real arrangement with the French, Eichmann accompanied the train to convince French authorities to take them. These early deportations were far more casual than later ones that required a myriad of documents. In these early deportations the Germans wanted to learn how cooperative the Jews would be in facing their end and how others – individuals and nations – would react to their missing status or demise. The Germans learned a lot and were generally happy with the results of these early test cases.

The Nazis felt that had been persuasive in their campaign to convince the masses that the Jews weren't worthy of anyone's concern. Eichmann tried to switch blame to the rest of the world for what the Germans did. Had other nations been receptive in taking the Jews, the Germans wouldn't have had to exterminate them. Eichmann thought in terms of emigration even though there were strong signs of change. There were orders that all Jews were to wear the yellow ID badges that German Jews not living in another nation could not be considered German and that property belonging to them was to be confiscated. All deportations from west to east were organized by Eichmann who



stressed that he was assisted by the police and various units of security police. Every public or governmental organization in Germany was involved in war crimes.

There were debates about what to do about half-Jews or quarter-Jews and Jews of different nationalities. For Eichmann the answer was simple all Jews had to be deported no matter their nationality or degree of Jewry. The Final Solution was to be applied to all European Jews, about eleven million. To avoid unnecessary political or diplomatic problems, announcements were sent to the nations of the world that they should call their Jews home. On June 30, 1943, the deportations began. Two-hundred sixty-five thousand Jews were deported from the Reich – Germany, Austria and the Protektorat.

Analysis

The Final Solution translated to the extermination of all Jews. At a meeting held by Heydrich he explained to the German ministers in all the European countries what was to take place. All Jews would be taken to death camps and gassed or executed by firing squad. This meeting was about implementing the plan. Eichmann was present but he was a low ranking and did things like take meeting minutes and help prepare Heydrich's speech. This meeting was an integral part of the prosecution because it tied Eichmann directly to plans for the Final Solution.

It was after the meeting that Eichmann abandoned his responsibilities for overseeing forced emigration to taking on the oversight of forced evacuations – which was synonymous with extermination. After this meeting, he claimed in court that his conscience was clear because everyone he met – all Nazis – supported the Final Solution. Therefore, who was he to doubt them? He commented that he felt like Pontius Pilate.

Although Eichmann was facing execution, the judges were thoroughly frustrated that Eichmann insisted he was doing the right thing and being a law-abiding citizen. He stayed loyal to the Fuhrer longer than did his right-hand man, Himmler. When Himmler ordered that the gas houses be dismantled, Eichmann thought of going to Hitler himself to tell him of Himmler's betrayal. He did not seem to understand that no one was going to accept his claim that he was doing the right thing, the lawful thing by following Hitler's orders to exterminate all European Jews. He even tried to blame the rest of the world. Had other nations taken the Jews off their hands, they would not have been killed. This section shows the cracks in Himmler's story and the how far away from reality he had drifted.

Vocabulary

tacit, fervently, ambiguity, totalitarian, attenuation, foreboding, fanaticism, paraphernalia, protectorate



Chapters X through XII

Summary

The Germans aspired to a quality referred to as “ruthless toughness.” Men assigned to Eichmann’s office were sent on diplomatic missions to German officials in other countries. In 1942, recalled these diplomats from France, Belgium and Holland in preparation for deportations from those nations. The deportations from France were to begin with foreign Jews who were stateless. There were 100,000 in the first deportation.

Two incidents occurring during this deportation was of interest to the Jerusalem Court. To the judges, Eichmann demonstrated his power by warning other officials that he would drop France as an evacuation center if they couldn’t round up enough Jews to fill the train. They were appalled that Eichmann negotiated about the fate of 4,000 children whose parents had already been sent to Auschwitz. There was an ongoing debate about the fate of French Jews. Himmler promised to spare them. Many stateless Jews went into hiding and others fled to safe havens. Anti-Semites in France and other countries had no appetite for murder. There were difficulties in processing the stateless Jews from France that the evacuation was dropped. In April 1944, when the Allied forces landed in France; 250,000 Jews in France had survived the war.

Mussolini made promises to comply but always had excuses why he didn’t. Mussolini and his generals had an almost mocking way about their non-compliance which was even more infuriating. They could never have the “ruthless toughness” that the Germans boasted about. The Italians had about 50,000 Jews who had a legacy in the nation that went back to the time of the Roman Empire. When the chips were down, the Italians refused to murder the Jews. Instead they were put in camps where they were safe until the German invasion. After the invasion, seasoned Jew-killers were dispatched to Italy to take the necessary measures. The end of the war was near and the Germans were not able to capture all the Jews in Italy.

There was little mention of the Nazi-controlled areas most of which were located behind the Iron Curtain. The Successor States that were created by the victors of World War I. These states were a blending of many ethnic groups who were at odds with one another. There were many Jews deemed stateless in these nations and were the first to be deported. The Allies had proclaimed the Jews in these states as an officially recognized minority. However, they were the only minority that did not have a homeland. These Jews were not assimilated and most were upper-middle class. Eichmann sent a minister to work with the Croats to arrange the deportation of 30,000 Jews in Croatia to the killing centers. The Croats helped the German officials make the arrangements. The Jews who survived mainly were the upper crust Jews who had the money to buy protection.

In Serbia, the Germans had to contend with civil conflict. There were no deportations as Eichmann testified; however, all male Jews were shot to death and the women and



children were killed in mobile gas units. Emanuel Schafer who was in charge of the gas vans was tried for gassing 6,280 women and children in a German court and was given only a six and a half year sentence. It was an example of German "justice." Those Nazi criminals who were tried in the courts of other nations received much harsher sentences.

Bulgaria benefited from Nazi Germany in that it was given land previously owned by neighboring nations including Rumania, Yugoslavia and Greece. But Bulgaria was not grateful and did not feel beholden to the Nazis. Bulgarians did not understand why the Jews were a problem. They complied and allowed the Jews in their annexed areas be moved but they didn't seem to know what fate awaited them. Bulgaria made special exceptions and granted privileges to the Jews for a variety of reasons. They were excuses to keep the Bulgarians from being murdered. The people of Sofia tried to stop Jews from being taken to the railroad station. King Boris was blamed for Bulgaria's resistance and was murdered probably by German Intelligence officers. But nothing changed. The parliament and the people stood staunchly on the side of the Jews. There were orders to send Bulgaria's six thousand Jews to Treblinka but it never happened. Bulgaria's aggressive stance against Nazi practices was a unique oen during the horrors of WWII.

Greece was occupied in the north by the Germans and the south by the Italians. The Greeks were much more cooperative and offered no resistance. The Jews were moved into a ghetto which would make it easier to gather and transport them later. The only exceptions were made for Jews with foreign passports. Within a few months 13,000 Jews had been shipped off to Auschwitz. Dr. Max Merten who was one of the German officials in the area testified for Eichmann claiming that he had tried to save Jewish lives. Eichmann testified that his organizational skills was helpful in helping the victims to have an easier time with their destiny. Rumania was the most anti-Semitic country in prewar Europe.

For this task, Eichmann called for some of his top ministers to converge on Budapest. Eichmann called on Jewish leaders to set up a Jewish Council through which orders could be issued and deportation could begin. By this time, March 1944, everyone on earth knew what "deportation" meant. In spite of all the signs to the contrary, the Hungarians did not believe that Hungarian Jews would be taken. Eichmann assured everyone that any changes being made were only temporary. Bribes were being offered to spare the Jews. At trial even Eichmann was accused of finally breaking down to the temptation of financial reward.

The Zionist movement was strong in Hungary and was represented by the Relief and Rescue Committee which had helped refugees from Poland and Slovakia and other nations. They prepared fraudulent Christian papers that allowed Jews to go underground more easily. Joel Brand who was to present to the Allies Himmler's proposal of exchanging one million Jews for 1,000 trucks was one of the leaders of the committee. Brand testified in Jerusalem that Eichmann had negotiated with the Zionists.



A Jewish advisor, Dieter Wisliceny, was assigned to assist the Slovaks with the Jewish problem. Wisliceny later provided some damning evidence against Eichmann at the Nuremberg trials.

Eichmann's first experience in Slovakia was in 1941, when he came to negotiate the evacuation of 20,000 strong "labor" Jews. His superior, Heydrich, came afterwards to convince the Slovaks to allow all Jews to be resettled in the east. By June 1942, 52,000 Jews had been deported to the killing centers in Poland.

Analysis

This section underscores how much out of touch the Germans were. They saw themselves as having "ruthless toughness." Now, it's fairly easy to be ruthless and tough when you have all the weapons and the other people are at your mercy. The Germans felt they were strong and tough but weren't in touch with reality. They had death houses; they gassed people and shot them to death.

The court focused on Eichmann's warning to drop France as an evacuation center. If he really made that warning and it had authority behind it, the judges believed that he had more authority than he first admitted. Was it a slip? Or was it boasting – the German's tended to boast to prove that they had "ruthless toughness."

The author writes about the specific experiences that the various European nations had with the Final Solution. How Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, France and Hungary coped with explicit orders to fulfill the requirements of the Final Solution. The most annoying to the Germans was Mussolini of Italy who promised to fulfill the requirements of the Final Solution but always had excuses why he didn't. That he did so in a rather mocking way was even more frustrating to the Nazis.

The prosecution had evidence that Eichmann negotiated with the evacuation of 20,000 Jews in Slovakia early in the war in 1941. By the next year, 52,000 Jews had been deported and killed in death houses in Poland. It was this kind of indisputable evidence that the prosecution used against Eichmann which he could only deny but not disprove.

Vocabulary

chauvinistic, xenophobia, fascism, communism, totalitarian, assimilation, homogenous, manifestation, aggrandizement, crematoria, incongruity, non sequitur

Chapters XIII through XV

Summary

To the Germans, the “East” where most Jews were sent to their death was a vast area that encompassed Poland, the Baltic States and the occupied Russian territory. The countries within that region were the first about which testimony was presented at Eichmann’s trial and the last to be dealt with in the judgment phase. The East was the center of Jewish suffering and had a large concentration of Jewish people prior to the war. The prosecution had a problem because there was little evidence relating to Eichmann’s actions there. Most of the long line of witnesses provided “background” about the events but nothing specific about Eichmann’s involvement. Most mentions of his name during this phase of the trial were hearsay. Weeks were wasted on this testimony that basically proved nothing.

Had the judges cleared Eichmann from all these charges, he would not have escaped the death sentence but they would have destroyed the prosecution’s case.

During the final weeks of the war, the SS concentrated on creating false identity papers and destroying evidence of the last six murderous years. Eichmann’s department burned all their documents; however, messages sent from Eichmann to others still existed. Despite their efforts, there were a sufficient number of documents left to tell the story of the Final Solution. Part of the trial was one-sided in that Germans could not come to Israel to give live testimony and had given depositions for the prosecution. Those witnesses could not, therefore, be questioned by the defense. Dr. Servatius was keenly aware of this disadvantage.

Eichmann’s main defense was his own testimony. He was on the stand from June 20 through July 7 for his defense and was questioned another two weeks by the prosecution. After re-direct by the defense, the judges questioned him directly, finishing with him on July 24. The prosecution which consisted of a hundred witnesses told their tales of horrors. That phases of witness testimony lasted from April 24 through June 12. Eichmann spent the last days of the war in Berlin. He had no duties and was never invited to lunch with other officers.

Eichmann was arrested after the war and placed in a camp for former SS officers. He eventually escaped and made his way to Argentina. On May 11, 1960, Eichmann was seized by three men and shoved into a waiting car. Once in an interrogation house, he immediately stated his real name. He formally agreed to face trial in Israel. He would tell the truth and wanted to be at peace with himself. Although in his declaration he wrote that he was cooperating freely and not under duress, he later claimed that he had given the statement under pressure. There were signs that Eichmann was ready for it to be over. He was careless about some aspects of his identity. He had written that he was tired of his anonymity.



Defense counsel initially tried to have the case against Eichmann thrown about because he claimed the Israelis had committed a crime against international law by kidnapping him. But the judges interpreted the law as an offense against Argentina but not against Eichmann's rights. Eichmann claimed that he could have escaped again because he knew he was being followed. However, he read that German youths were going dealing with devastating guilt over German atrocities. He wanted to come forward and hang himself in public to help ease their minds. Of course, he did not give himself up during all those years which contradicted his later claims.

The trial opened on April 11, 1961; the prosecution closed its case on June 29th. On August 14th, the main proceedings of the trial had been completed. The court adjourned for fourth months returning on December 11th to pronounce judgment. The three judges took turns reading their 244 page judgment document. They dropped the prosecution's charge of conspiracy but found him guilty of fifteen counts on the indictment. The main crimes were the killing of Jews, placing them in potentially deadly positions, causing them serious physical and mental harm and disallowing Jewish women to birth children and forcing abortions. Counts five through twelve were listed as crimes against humanity which were somewhat repetitious of the first four charges.

Eichmann had claimed that he was only guilty of aiding and abetting others in the commissions of these crimes. However, in the broad-reaching and complex crimes that were committed there were many layers of blame to be assigned – Eichmann was among the guilty. After the reading of the judgment, the prosecutor asked for the death penalty. The defense described Eichmann as a scapegoat who was abandoned by his own government. He urged the panel to not consider the death penalty because Eichmann was a German national and Germany had abolished the death penalty.

Eichmann spoke next and expressed his disappointment that his hopes for justice were thwarted. He had told the truth even though the court did not believe him. He had never hated Jews and had never willfully murdered anyone. He was not the monster that he has been described to be. His case was appealed to the Israel Supreme Court and reviewed by five judges. The Supreme Court judges were harsher than those in the lower court. They emphasized that Eichmann was basically working on his own and had received no superior orders. They added that the Final Solution would not have been as devastating without the zeal of Eichmann and his associates. An appeal was sent to Ben-Gurion for clemency but was declined. Eichmann was hanged on May 31st the same day that Ben-Gurion refused to save him.

The actions of the Jewish courts brought the criticism that Eichmann's death did not equate with the death and destruction he had caused. But when a criminal is convicted of killing millions of people, what is the right punishment? The German youth suffered from guilt but were surrounded by men in the government who were responsible for the crimes that were the root cause of that guilt.

Eichmann drank half of the bottle of red wine that he had asked for before he walked to the gallows. He refused a reading of the Bible by a Christian minister. He refused the black hood that was offered to him. He stated that he was not a Christian and did not



believe in an afterlife. His next words contradicted those when he said he'd see everyone again. He would not forget Germany, Argentina and Austria.

Analysis

Eichmann's only defense was his own testimony. The bizarre stance he took that he was merely following orders and that he was a good citizen because he followed German law did not bode well in the Israeli court. It appeared as though the judges were trying to elicit a stronger defense from him than what he offered. They did so probably because they wanted no negative reaction about the proceedings and wanted their judgment to stand up to criticism and scrutiny.

After the war many Germans who participated in the Nazi operations – the gassing and abuse and starvation of the people – had a similar attitude as Eichmann. They blamed others and claimed they were following laws and orders.

The author points out that Eichmann may have been ready to give up his life on the run. The conditions in which he and his wife and children lived in during their time in Argentina was third world – they had no electricity and no running water and lived in what was a self-built hovel. He openly gathered with the large group of Nazis who had escaped to the country. Although he used an alias, his wife used Eichmann as her surname. He claimed he knew he was being followed. He told the court he wanted to make peace.

Despite all the evidence against him and his own weak defense, his reaction to his guilty fee and death sentence was typical Eichmann. He was disappointed because he thought he would receive justice. The question comes to mind what about justice for the five million people he sent to their deaths for committing the sin of being born Jewish.

Vocabulary

unmitigated, impugned, labyrinthine, paradox, predilection, repatriate, pogroms, clandestine, copious, ostensibly, banality



Important People

Adolph Eichmann

Adolph Eichmann was born on March 19, 1906, on Solingen, Germany. He was raised a Christian but had broken with his religious training as a young adult. He refused to take his oath with the Nazi party on a Bible. Eichmann's father was an accountant for the Tramways and Electricity Company in Solingen. He was transferred with the same company to Linz, Austria, where he was promoted to Vice President. Adolph was the eldest of five children and was the only child who did not finish high school or technical school. His father took him from the schools before he failed. Eichmann falsified documents later by indicating he was a construction engineer – which was a complete fabrication. He did work for his father in a business that he began after leaving the Tramway Company.

Eichmann got into the habit of lying about his past. He told some people that he'd been born in Palestine and could speak Yiddish and Hebrew. He also claimed that he was dismissed from his job as a vacuum cleaner salesman because he belonged to the National Socialist Party when in fact he quit his job to join the SS. He found his sales job hum-drum and wanted more challenge and excitement in his life.

Eichmann was a low-ranking SS officer until he was assigned to Vienna where he was put in charge of forced emigration. He made a good impression on his superiors and followed all orders. His position later changed to forced evacuation of Jews who were deported to death camps. He experienced a shift in attitude between the two positions in Vienna. He observed that everyone else in the SS accepted what became known as the Final Solution policy so he did, too. He was self-righteous to the end that he had been right in following German law. He didn't have to agree with it to obey it.

Heinrich Himmler

Heinrich Himmler was one of the leaders in the Nazi Party. He was a very powerful man whose power was arguably only second to that of Adolph Hitler. Himmler was the superior to Reinhardt Heydrich to whom Adolph Eichmann reported. Eichmann had very little direct contact with Himmler because of the disparity of their positions. One witness testified that Himmler told Eichmann directly about the exterminations and the gassings but Eichmann denied it.

It was obvious that Himmler, while ostensibly dedicated to the Nazi Party and Third Reich, also consistently looked out for himself. He was a negotiator and with his power, he devised ways that he thought he could have leverage after it was clear that Germany was losing the war. He had the temerity to think that he would be negotiating directly with General Eisenhower after Germany's surrender. He ordered that Jews be placed in hotels in Austria so that he could use them as hostages in his talks with Eisenhower.



Himmler's plan in 1944 to exchange "a million Jews for ten thousand trucks" which was mentioned at Eichmann's trial and which the defendant swore he had no involvement in.

To position himself as the Allied forces were invading all their strongholds, Himmler ordered that all the gassing houses be shut down and dismantled. Perhaps he thought if these death houses weren't in existence there would be no proof of murder. Like many Nazis at the end of the war Himmler was delusional. During the last days of the war, he issued orders that no Englishman or American was to be shot. Again, it was his own skin he was concerned about.

Eichmann testified that Himmler had issued the orders for the evacuations and extermination of the Jews. He claimed that he required written orders from Himmler because Hitler was the only person who could issue oral orders that were considered the same as written German law.

Adolph Hitler

Adolph Hitler was the Fuhrer of the Third Reich and the leader of the Nazi Party. He had come to power over nine years as a leader in the Nazi Party and became the dictator. He was an anti-Semite at his core and his hatred drove the evil that ultimately slaughtered six million Jews and thousands of others during World War II. Although it seemed to his underlings at the time that the Final Solution (to the Jewish problem) had developed over a relatively short period of time, Hitler had the idea of exterminating the Jews many years before.

Eichmann's defense was that he was following Hitler's orders and German law in sending off millions to their deaths. It was German law at the time that Hitler's oral orders were tantamount to written law. Hitler was without a doubt behind the atrocities but underlings like Eichmann made it possible by not speaking out against the wholesale slaughter of human beings and acquiescing to Hitler's madness.

Moshe Landau

Moshe Landau was the presiding judge in the three-judge panel that heard the trial of Nazi SS officer Adolph Eichmann. He knew that the world was watching and he wanted to make sure that the trial did not become the show trial that Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion hoped for. Landau and the other judges wanted the trial to be fair so that their judgment would not come under undue criticism. Landau set the tone by being polite and respectful to the defendant although he and the other judges became very frustrated with some of the confusing statements that the defendant offered in response to their questions.



David Ben-Gurion

David Ben-Gurion was the Prime Minister of Israel during the Eichmann trial. He was determined that the trial would be a show trial. He wanted the world to be witness to the trial to learn the horrific details of the atrocities that the Jews had suffered at the hands of the Nazis. The judges did not want the trial to be a show trial so there were some tensions between the Prime Minister and the justices.

Ben-Gurion wanted Eichmann and the Nazis to be the focus of the trial but more than anything he wanted anti-Semitism to be on trial. It was his goal that the trial ferret out Nazis who were enjoying cushy positions in the new German government or in private business while they had literally gotten away with murder.

Gideon Hausner

Israeli Attorney General Gideon Hausner was the lead prosecutor in the trial of Adolph Eichmann the Nazi SS Officer who was accused of war crimes including the murder of millions of Jews. The trial was held in Jerusalem and Hausner had his walking orders from Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion who wanted to use the trial as a vehicle to teach the world about the Jewish suffering and to never let anything like the Holocaust happen again. Hausner knew that the judges did not want a show trial. He was able to walk a thin line between the two sides and presented enough evidence to convict Eichmann but called enough prosecution witnesses to “paint the picture” add detail to the horrors of the atrocities that the Jews were subjected to.

Dr. Robert Servatius

At the suggestion of Eichmann’s family, he decided to take on Dr. Robert Servatius as his lead defense counsel. He would have a team of defense attorneys but Servatius would lead the way and determine the bulk of the defense. There was speculation that Servatius could have presented more exculpatory evidence and witnesses than he did. He also did not object to the hundred witnesses that the prosecution called for background. Servatius’s reluctance to object to witnesses or the questions asked of them put the judges in the unusual spot of having to defend the accused. They felt compelled to point out egregious errors made by the prosecution while the defense sat mute. Dr. Servatius in his closing argument referred to Eichmann as a scapegoat that Israeli was using for their anger and revenge. He asked the court not to consider the death penalty because Eichmann had acted properly under German law.

Reinhardt Heydrich

Reinhardt Heydrich was a high-ranking Nazi and was Adolph Eichmann’s superior. He was one of the superior officers who was over the extermination of the Jews. He was given word by Hitler to proceed with the implementation of the Final Solution to the



Jewish problem. Heydrich had been a navy Intelligence officer who was considered the real engineer of the Final Solution. Prior to the mass killings, he had been focused on getting large payments from Jews and getting rid of poor Jews. He wanted to get rid of what he referred to as the “Jewish mob.”

Hans Frank

Dr. Robert Servatius, the lead defense counsel, introduced the diaries of Hans Frank, the former Governor of Poland into the trial as exculpatory evidence. Frank had been one of the major war criminals and had been hung at Nuremberg for his crimes. Servatius tried to make the point to the justices that since Adolph Eichmann’s name was not mentioned in the thirty-eight volume diary it was proof that he had little or no involvement with the upper echelon of the Third Reich. Frank, one of the major criminals convicted at Nuremberg would have mentioned him if he were involved with high-level planning.

Propst Heinrich Gruber

Propst Heinrich Gruber a Protestant minister and the only German to appear at the trial in Jerusalem had been a member of a group opposed to Hitler. He had negotiated with Eichmann several times over the year. He did not recall details of his meetings and was not the splendid witness that the prosecution had anticipated. He attempted to reach a concentration camp in France and was arrested and sent to a camp himself. Gruber characterized Eichmann as cold and as someone who kowtowed to his superiors and was cruel to his subordinates. But he really had nothing to add in support of the criminal charges. Answering a prosecution question, Gruber said that he did not try to counsel Eichmann because words would have meant nothing to him. Eichmann claimed that Gruber came to him and asked for an alleviation of suffering as exemptions from it.

Konrad Adenauer

Konrad Adenauer was the Chancellor of Germany. There was suspicion that Ben-Gurion had agreed not to allow the name of the notorious Hans Globke to emerge at the trial. He was a close advisor to Adenauer and had been in the Nazi Party and had written some of the racist Nuremberg laws. However, Ben-Gurion was not able to control the words of witnesses some of whom did bring up Globke’s name. Adenauer ridded the government of some former Nazis but there was speculation that many Nazis still served in the government.

Otto Bradfisch

Dr. Otto Bradfisch was associated with the mobile killing units of the SS in the East. He was sentenced to ten years hard labor for killing 15,000 Jews in these mobile death units. This light sentence was the type of light sentence that the German courts handed



down to Nazis who had been responsible for mass murder. It was one of the reasons that the Israelis wanted Eichmann tried in Jerusalem.

Martin Fellenz

The trial of Nazi Martin Fellenz took place after the trial and execution of Adolph Eichmann. Fellenz was a former Higher SS and Police Leader and had been a member of Adenauer's Free Democratic Party. He was arrested shortly after Eichmann was tracked down in Argentina. Fellenz was accused of participating in the murder of forty thousand Jews in Poland. The German court found Fellenz guilty and sentenced him to only four years, two and a half of years of which he had already served. It was not much more than a slap on the hand for killing 40,000 people.

Herschel Grynszpan

When Herschel Grynszpan was only seventeen years old he rushed up to the German embassy in Paris and assassinated the third secretary, Ernst vom Rath. This assassination had sparked massacres in Germany and Austria. It was a precursor to the Final solution. The motive for the murder was never clear. Herschel Grynszpan was known to be a psychopath who was unable to function normally.



Objects/Places

Beth Ha'am, the House of the People

The trial of Adolph Eichmann was held in the Beth Ha'am, the House of the People, in Jerusalem, Israel. It is reminiscent of a theater with its proscenium and stage and side doors for the exits and entrances of the actors. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion wanted a "show trial." The House of the People seemed to set the stage for the trial that he hoped for.

The Final Solution

It was Adolph Hitler's long-time plan to rid Europe of all Jews. After the Nazis and Hitler rose to power, it initially appeared that Hitler's plan was to have them immigrate to other countries. However, it was soon apparent that all along he had planned to slaughter them. He ordered Heydrich and Himmler to implement the Final Solution to once and for all solve the Jewish problem. The gassing and executions of all Jews was their goal. They didn't exterminate them all but they did kill more than six million.

Gas Chambers

Eichmann along with many Germans termed the "death whirl" – the slaughter of Jews in death houses and in firing squads – that occurred after the defeat at Stalingrad and the bombing of other German cities as the reason for the killing of civilians. But the truth was that the death camps and machines of death had been developed, constructed and maintained many years before. Most of the gas chambers were in the East. Auschwitz and Treblinka are two of the most notorious mentioned in this book. The conscience of many high ranking Nazis only emerged when defeat was certain. Himmler ordered that the camps and machinery be disassembled so that the Allied forces would recognize his largess and negotiate a peace settlement with him.

Theresienstadt

Eichmann was sent to Theresienstadt and found that it was far too small for the police state he envisioned. He felt it could only be used as a transfer station. However, Heydrich believed it could be established as a ghetto for certain privileged Jews who were not penciled in for extermination. When Theresienstadt became overcrowded Jews were sent to Auschwitz regardless of their perceived status. Theresienstadt remained under Eichmann's command until the war ended. Theresienstadt remained a model and was the only camp that the Red Cross was admitted into.



The Nuremberg Trials

The Nuremberg Trials are referenced a number of times throughout the story of Eichmann's trial. Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion envisioned Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem being as sensational as the Nuremberg Trials that were held in Nuremberg, Germany. Top Nazi leaders were tried for war crimes in Nuremberg beginning in 1945. The big difference between those trials in which multiple men were tried, convicted and executed was that the Eichmann was the only defendant in his trial and the trial took place so many years after the fact that it did not have the same dramatic impact that the trial in Nuremberg had. Eichmann's name was mentioned in testimony during those trials. He was incarcerated when he heard about the trials and figured he might be next. He escaped from the camp he was in and stayed free over fourteen years.

The Central Agency for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes

The Central Agency for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes was founded in 1958 and by the West German state and was headed by Prosecutor Erwin Schiile. Presumably it had good intentions and wanted to track down Nazis who had fled but it ran into difficulties on the home front. There were very few Germans who wanted to cooperate. Local courts were reluctant to prosecute an individual based on the material supplied by the Agency. For these reasons, the Agency was not successful in its mission of finding Nazis who were on the lam.

Death Commandos

In Auschwitz, Greek Jews were actually hired to work as death commands, the unit that operated the gas chambers and crematoria. Also at Auschwitz the number of death commandos was increased from 224 to 860 to accommodate the planned killing of between 6,000 and 12,000 Jews a day. Near the end of the war when gassing was terminated on Himmler's orders, a revolt broke out in the Lodz ghetto in Hungary. The death commandos were terrified that it was now their turn to die. It was a bloody disaster and only one person survived the massacre to tell about it.

The Nuremberg Laws

The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 were German laws that prohibited inter-marriage and sexual intercourse between Germans and Jews. Dr. Hans Globke, one of Adenauer's advisors was a co-author of the laws. He recommended that German Jews take the middle name of "Israel" or "Sarah" to identify them as Jews. The Nuremberg Laws deprived Jews of any political rights but they maintained their civil rights even though they were stripped of their citizenship. The Nuremberg Laws was the first step toward the anti-Semitism that swept Europe. The Laws made the discrimination of Jews legal.



Eichmann's Vienna Project

Eichmann was assigned to Vienna in March 1938. He was named head of the Center for Emigration of Austrian Jews. His task was "forced emigration." It was responsibility to force Jews to leave Austria and relocate elsewhere. In court he recalled this job with fond memories. It was his first important job and he became an expert in his duties. While he was in Vienna, 45,000 Jews left Austria. In less than 18 months after being in the post, Austria was "cleansed" of 150,000 Jews. In claimed he saved a large number of Jews during this time; however, the defense offered no proof to support the claim. In fact he was quoted as saying that he would jump in his grave laughing because of all the Jews he sent to their death.

The Lodz Ghetto

Lodz was located in Poland. It was the first Jewish ghetto that was established and it was the last to be dismantled. Over 300,000 Jews from all over Europe had been resettled in the Lodz Ghetto and were all sent on to the camp in Kulm, Poland, where they were put to death.

The July Conspiracy

There was an anti-Hitler plot known as the conspiracy of July 20, 1944. Participants in the July 1944 plot suffered from troubled consciences because they rarely mentioned the horrific massacres in the East in any correspondence or in any statements they prepared in case they were successful in assassinating Hitler. The conspiracy came up in the trial. There was no evidence that Eichmann was part of this conspiracy.

SS

The Nazi regime became openly criminal with the outbreak of the war on September 1, 1939. Himmler signed a decree that the SS which Eichmann belonged to would be merged with the Secret State Police which was also over the Gestapo. The SS was a much-feared enforcement arm of the Nazis who would terrorize towns and communities after they were occupied by the military. The SS mentality viewed concentration camps as an administrative issue and extermination camps as an economic one. Himmler often called upon the SS and in Holland chose to work through the SS and Police leaders who knew the country well.

Eichmann was a low-ranking officer in the SS. He was not considered to be a true believer and had not aspired to be in the SS. He was a door-to-door salesman and wanted a more exciting life and applied for and was accepted into the SS.



Themes

The Jewish Role in Their Own Demise

The same question was on the minds of many of those attending the trial of Adolph Eichmann for trials against Jews. As the 100 prosecution witnesses who were called to around the emotions of the world with their stories of terror, heartache and pain, many wondered why the Jews rarely fought back. Isn't it a natural reaction when an individual is attacked to fight back? Did they believe the lies of the Nazis who misled them about where they were being sent and what would happen to them? Even if they were fooled initially, they had to catch on and realize what was really taking place and the destiny that awaited them.

Despite the fact that many of the Jewish witnesses knew that some Jews cooperated with the Nazis there was not a mention of it. No one broached the subject of some Jews even being explicit in the death of other Jews or inexplicably their very own demise. The role of the Jewish Councils that were set up by Eichmann and others that provided a level of cooperation to the Nazis was apparently a taboo subject for the witnesses. If there was a slight reference to this "functionary" Jews were casually referred to as "ghetto police" or "Nazi helpers."

There was mention of Jewish resistance groups but in reality these groups were small and weak and ineffective. Some members of resistance organizations testified at the trial. Their testimony was welcomed by the Israelis as a source of national pride. Jews who had been slaughtered had often been depicted as too cooperative and even complicit in their own demise. These witnesses countered Eichmann's claims of general cooperation from what he termed as Jewish functionaries. Eichmann testified that the cooperation of the Jews was the "cornerstone" of their Jewish policy.

The prosecutor did ask the Jewish witnesses, except those in the resistance, why they didn't rebel. Their defense was that the Jewish people at the time had no country, no military, no support and no armory. However, there was Jewish leadership and many of these leaders did cooperate with the Nazis. And what happened to the human spirit to fight back when attacked.

The Defense

Eichmann's main defense was that he was a good law-abiding citizen and that he was following orders and that he was following the law because when Hitler spoke it was the same as written law. He claimed he had no choice but to comply with orders from Hitler and written orders from Himmler and Heydrich. In court all he would admit to, even though he knowingly sent millions to their deaths in "evacuations," was that he aided and abetted others in the murder of the Jews.



Eichmann had been desensitized to death. It had become part of his life. All his superiors and colleagues were in favor of the Final Solution. Who was he to object? He felt like Pontius Pilate. Eichmann lost feeling. He was like a robot that just followed directions. He didn't have to think and therefore he didn't have to feel guilty. He didn't have to deal with a conscience. Hitler put out the orders and all Eichmann had to do was obey. He made the distinction that he not only followed orders, he followed the law as though the latter would be exculpatory. It seemed to dawn on Eichmann on when he was on trial that an individual following an order to commit a crime had some responsibility in the process.

Eichmann pointed out that he had followed Kant's moral precepts about duty his entire life. One of the judges upset that he connected Kant with crime, questioned him about his statement. Eichmann responded that he evoked Kant in the sense that one's will must be compatible with general laws. After the Final Solution was in process, he no longer could follow Kantian principle recognizing that he was no longer "master of his own deeds." He referred to the new Germany as the "period of crimes legalized by the state." Eichmann had replaced Kant's practical reason with the will of the Fuhrer. Eichmann followed Kant's precept that a law is a law and therefore there could be no exceptions. Eichmann's insistence that he had done his duty in carrying out his murderous acts was what doomed him more than anything.

The Judges of the House of the People

At the beginning of the trial, the prosecution impugned the integrity of the Jewish judges – how could they be neutral? The judges assured the defense that they were stirred by the Holocaust as any Jew was; however, they took their responsibilities quite seriously to preside over a fair trial. The judges tried to limit the number of the witnesses that provided testimony that was considered "painting general pictures." The "kidnapping" of Eichmann was justified by the court in that his participation was not in doubt.

The judges had to walk a fine line with exaggerations of the witnesses. There were wild accusations about Eichmann not supported by evidence. They knew that Eichmann was a mid-level SS officer and that he was neither influenced by Himmler nor inspired by Hitler. The overzealous prosecutor placed the judges in a tenuous position, one of having to defend the accused. The judges did all they could; they were forced to resort to compromise. They "redesigned" the prosecution's case by starting the judgment phase with Eichmann's activities in Germany and ending in the East since the stronger case against Eichmann was in the west. The prosecution had started in the East which, in the judges' view was the weaker case. The heart of the case was not what was done to the Jews overall it was what Eichmann's part had been in their suffering and of that what was provable.

But the judges had to find a way to connect Eichmann to the crimes of the East since they were included in the indictment. There were four points of contention. 1) Did Eichmann participate in the mass slaughter carried out in the East? The judges concluded that Eichmann did have actual participation in the slaughter because there



was evidence that he was aware of them. 2) What involvement did he have in the deportation of Jews from the Polish ghettos? Himmler conducted many of these negotiations himself. The judges concluded that there was no evidence to prove Eichmann had liability for these acts. 3) Was Eichmann responsible for what occurred in the concentration camps? It was determined that he had no authority to say who lived and who died in the camps. 4) What was the extent of Eichmann's general authority in the East? Eichmann admitted in court that he had to make decisions from time to time. Heydrich, Eichmann's superior, had been given authority to carry out the Final Solution. Therefore, his chief deputy in the field was equally responsible.

After four months of deliberation, the judges found Eichmann guilty of all the charges against him, save one count of conspiracy which the judges dropped. He was sentenced to death by hanging.

The Prosecution

There was a difference of opinion on how the prosecution should be run -- show Trial v. normal proceeding. The differing opinions were held by the panel of judges who were determined to hear a normal proceeding at the Israeli Prime Minister who wanted a show trial. He wanted everyone in the world to learn how the Jews had suffering at the hands of Nazis like Adolph Eichmann.

One point of contention was the one-hundred witnesses that the prosecutor, Attorney General Gideon Hausner, called. The vast majority of these witnesses had nothing to tie directly to Eichmann. They shared their stories of horror and pain and fear. Their testimony was not relevant to the trial although Hausner insisted that he needed to "paint the general picture" of what was taking place when Eichmann was in charge of "evacuations."

Although the judges tried to ensure that the testimony was within the framework of the indictment, it was a losing battle. The prosecution would ask a question or two and let the witnesses ramble in any direction they pleased. The witnesses were more like speakers in that they did their best to arouse and inspire the spectators and the world.

The prosecution would have had more credibility had they chosen witnesses who were not so eager to testify. Many of the witnesses volunteered. The judges deemed that the prosecution should have sought witnesses who were less zealous about the prosecution of Eichmann and had relevant testimony that would convict him. The Attorney General used up a good deal of time reading documents into the record. Prosecution witnesses were retelling events that happened ten to twenty years before. Some recited passages from books they'd written about their experiences. The majority of the "background witnesses" were from regions that Eichmann had no authority over.

A man who had been a soldier with the Jewish Brigade told of his attempts to repatriate surviving Jews. The sick and old could not be moved. Many survivors only wanted to go to a spot where they would never encounter a non-Jew again. Everyone was on the



edges of their seats when Zindel Grynspan took the stand. He was a frail and elderly man who wore a skullcap. He told the story of his son who at seventeen had shot the German third secretary, Ernst vom Rath.

The incident triggered the massacres in Germany and Austria which ultimately led to the Final Solution. Abba Kovner, a poet and author caused a stir in court. He had been a member of the Jewish underground. One day he and his group encountered Anton Schmidt, a German who was in charge of transporting German soldiers who had been separated from their units. He helped the Jewish underground by providing them with false documents and military trucks. He had helped for five months and never asked for money. He was found out, arrested and executed. Witnesses testified to other actions of mercy and kindness. There was a sadness in the courtroom. Everyone was thinking the same thing – if only there had been more stories like this one.

The prosecutor knew that he was presenting testimony that was not relevant to the prosecution of Eichmann. But he also knew that he was pleasing Ben-Gurion. While these witnesses provided “color” to the trial as Ben-Gurion had hoped, the prosecution was wise enough to present enough evidence that Eichmann was guilty of the crimes that he was charged with in the indictment. It was the prosecution’s argument that he had sent literally millions off to their deaths and he did so knowing what fate awaited them.

The Escape

After the war Eichmann was captured and placed in a camp for SS men. After numerous interrogations by the Americans, he had not revealed his identity. He let his family assume he was killed. In 1945, the major war criminals were being tried in Nuremburg. Eichmann decided to disappear. With the help of inmates he escaped and found work as a lumberjack under the assumed name, Otto Heninger. He remained in that position for four years.

In 1950, he made contact with ODESSA, an underground organization for SS veterans. He was processed through Austria to Italy and was given a refugee passport by a Franciscan priest who knew his true identity. He traveled to Buenos Aires where he obtained identification papers and a work permit. He used the name of Ricardo Klement who was depicted as a Catholic, bachelor without a state. His identification showed his age as being seven years younger than his actual age.

Eichmann found employment in a number of odd jobs. He wrote his wife in a coded message that told her he was alive. A few years later his wife and three children joined him in Argentina. They had another child and built a crude house without running water or electricity. He was friendly with a large group of Nazis who had also fled to Argentina. Eichmann had an interview with a German newspaper. His story was told in a series of articles in Life Magazine without using his real name. It almost seemed that Eichmann wanted to be discovered. It was surprising that it took years for the Israeli agents to find him.

Styles

Structure

Hannah Arendt's "Eichmann in Jerusalem" is separated into fifteen chapters. The structure of the book is somewhat loose and disorganized. The author often included several topics, people and time frames within the same paragraph. Her use of information contained within parentheses in the middle of another topic is distracting and confusing. This information would have better served the reader had they been listed as notes.

There is no chronological order to the story. It tends to go back and forth from recent times to years before and then onto another time. Once becoming accustomed to this rather disjointed structure, it is easier to follow when knowing to expect quick changes in topics and timeframes. In a series of chapters, the author provides a more orderly description of how the various European countries dealt with the orders of the Fuhrer to implement the Final Solution.

It is obvious that the author had done extensive research and has an intimate knowledge of the Holocaust and the suffering of the Jews during World War II. Although the story is missing a solid structure and chronological order, in the end the author tied the loose ends together and provided a clear and satisfying ending.

There is an introduction that provides background information about Hannah Arendt, the author.

Perspective

"Eichmann in Jerusalem" is written in the first person and is narrated by the author. Hannah Arendt was a German Jew who escaped the Holocaust and eventually became an American citizen. She was the author of many books including "Eichmann in Jerusalem." It was a controversial book that even three years after its publication, debate among intellectuals in the U.S. and Europe about its conclusions was still raging. Not many books have sparked the passion that Arendt's book aroused. Her background was in political science and being German Jew, Arendt was more than qualified to tackle the huge challenge of writing this book. Arendt goes beyond just the story of the trial. She takes an in-depth look at what made Eichmann tick. She asks, when does a man no longer find a crime repugnant and turn into a criminal? She wants to know about his conscience and therefore the conscience of the Nazis in general. She concludes that they could only live with themselves if they no longer considered a crime a crime.

This mindset was common among the Nazis after the war and even among all Germans who felt devastating guilt and shame after the war. Arendt points out how even in 1961 when Eichmann was tried, the German youth still were aghast at what early generations had done and felt the sting of guilt and shame themselves.



“Eichmann in Jerusalem” is just not a tick-tock of a court trial. It is a look beyond the questions and answers, the defense and the prosecution and in between the lines. Writing from the perspective of Hannah Arendt provides a unique look at one of the criminals of the century. She looks beyond the man and into why he did what he did. She sought understanding. It would be difficult to find someone more qualified to write the story of Eichmann’s trial from the unique perspective that she enjoyed.

Tone

The overall tone of “Eichmann in Jerusalem” is one that is highly respectful of democracy and the judicial process. The author, Hannah Arendt, goes to great lengths to provide a detailed account of the trial of Adolph Eichmann who was accused and convicted of war crimes including the murder of millions of Jews during World War II. Arendt was a political scientist who shows her interest in the political aspects of the story with the many details she provides about how the various nations interacted with Germany and with Nazi demands that they gather their Jews and send them off to their deaths.

Arendt was a German Jew who was able to escape the Holocaust and eventually became an American citizen. Although she provides a straight forward account of the trial, just as the judges at the trial admitted, the stories of the atrocities surely stirred her. The most compelling element of her account of the trial and the plethora of details about the camps and deaths and other atrocities was her enduring curiosity. She wanted to know why the Nazis did what they did; why the Jews didn’t fight back; and how, a man like Eichmann who was a normal man and not insane, came to view mass murder as acceptable. Many believed that Eichmann and his lot were not worth the time it would take to delve into their psyche. However, it was important to Arendt. By understanding people like Hitler, Himmler and Eichmann perhaps the world could prevent anyone repeating this kind of horror.



Quotes

Clearly, the courtroom is not a bad place for the show trial David Ben-Gurion, Prime Minister of Israel, had in mind when he decided to have Eichmann kidnapped in Argentina and brought to the District Court of Jerusalem to stand trial for his role in the ‘final solution of the Jewish question.’”

-- Hannah Arendt (I paragraph 3)

Importance: The three justices at Eichmann’s trial were determined to treat the defendant with respect and not allow the trial to turn into a circus which was apparently what the prime minister had hoped for. The judges wanted to go down in history as having run a fair trial to show the world the Israeli was nothing like Nazi Germany and that a fair trial was possible in their country.

We want to establish before the nations of the world how millions of people, because they happened to be Jews, and one million babies, because they happened to be Jewish babies, were murdered by the Nazis.”

-- David Ben-Gurion (I paragraph 9)

Importance: This captures Israeli Prime Minister’s hope for the Eichmann trial. He wanted the world to understand the suffering of the Jews and wanted young Jews or Jews in different areas of the world to learn the true story of the ordeal.

We will go down in history as the greatest statesmen of all times or as their greatest criminals.”

-- Joseph Goebbels (II paragraph 2)

Importance: Goebbels saw the balancing act that the Nazis would have with their destiny and their legacy. He was a proud Nazi but saw the reality of how their actions could be perceived in a look-back by history.

As for the base motives, he was perfectly sure that he was not what he called an innerer Schweinehund, a dirty bastard in the depths of his heart; and as for his conscience, he remembered perfectly well that he would have had a bad conscience only if he had not done what he had been ordered to do – to ship millions of men, women, and children to their death with great zeal and the most meticulous care.”

-- Hannah Arendt (II paragraph 7)

Importance: Eichmann’s defense was that what he had done was according to Nazi law at the time. He was a good citizen and was obeying the law. He would have had a bad conscience had he disobeyed the law. He claimed he never killed anyone; he only aided and abetted others who had killed people.

Life is possible under every law. However, in complete ignorance of what is permitted and what is not one cannot live. A useful and respected citizen one can also be as a member of a minority in the midst of a great people.”



-- Radical Zionist (III paragraph 5)

Importance: The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 were issued by Germany to provide guidelines for the peaceful cohabitation of German Christians and Jewish people. Prior to this law, there were little official guidelines. The Jews were treated shabbily and felt threatened. After the Nuremberg Laws were passed they felt protected.

We two would rather die than burden our conscience with such terrible things. We know what the SS must carry out.”

-- Two Peasant German Boys (VI paragraph 25)

Importance: Two peasant German boys were recruited to join the SS near the end of the war. They refused to sign the oath and join the SS and were sentenced to death. They wrote their last letter which contained these words on the day of their execution. They represent hundreds of thousands of Germans who despised Hitler and the Nazis but most remained silent for obvious reasons.

When asked at Nuremberg, ‘How was it possible that all of you honorable generals could continue to serve a murderer with such unquestioning loyalty,” he [General Alfred Jodl] replied that it was ‘not the task of a soldier to act as judge over his supreme commander. Let history do that or God in heaven.”

-- General Alfred Jodl (VII paragraph 20)

Importance: Eichmann’s main defense was that he acted on orders from Hitler whose words were the law of the land. General Jodl believed the same; he was hanged at Nuremberg for his crimes.

That the idea of ‘toughness,’ except, perhaps, for a few half-demented brutes, was nothing but a myth of self-deception, concealing a ruthless desire for conformity at any price, was clearly revealed at the Nuremberg Trials, where the defendants accused and betrayed each other and assured the world that they ‘had always been against it’ or claimed, as Eichmann was to do, that their best qualities had been ‘abused’ by their superiors.”

-- Hannah Arendt (X paragraph 15)

Importance: The Nazis boasted that they possessed “ruthless toughness.” However, the Germans were exposed as followers who strived to conform. Instead of owning up to their actions and being tough, when sitting as the accused in a court of law they blamed each other.

The East was the central scene of Jewish suffering, the gruesome terminal of all deportations, the place from which there was hardly ever any escape and where the number of survivors rarely reached more than five percent.”

-- Hannah Arendt (XIII paragraph 2)

Importance: When Eichmann and the others who “evacuated” Jews to the East, it soon became known among the Jews that it was their death sentence. The East was where



the vast number of death camps were located and was where the majority of gassings and executions took place.

But just as he [Eichmann] had collected some hundred more or less unfit men, most of whom had never seen a rifle, and had taken possession of an arsenal of abandoned weapons of all sorts, he received the latest Himmler order: 'No fire is to be opened on English and Americans.' This was the end."

-- Author/Himmler (XV paragraph 1)

Importance: Although he had not been involved in actual combat during the war, during the last days of the war when he knew the Allies were coming, Eichmann gathered a small group of men and weapons to fight them off. His plans were halted when Himmler issued orders not to fight.

I shall try to write down the facts of my last years of public activities in Germany, without any embellishments, in order that future generations will have a true picture. This declaration I declare out of my own free will, not for promises given and not because of threats. I wish to be at peace with myself at last."

-- Adolph Eichmann (XV paragraph 9)

Importance: These words were some of the only ones in which Eichmann hinted at regret and remorse. He wrote this declaration out in his own handwriting after he was captured in Argentina by Israeli agents.

For these crimes were committed en masse, not only in regard to the number of victims, but also in regard to the numbers of those who perpetrated the crime, and the extent to which any one of the many criminals was close to or remote from the actual killer of the victim means nothing as far as the measure of his responsibility is concerned. ON the contrary, in general the degree of responsibility increases as we draw further away from the man who uses the fatal instrument with his own hands."

-- Final Judgment – Israel Court (1q paragraph 13)

Importance: Eichmann's main defense was that he was obeying orders that he had only aided and abetted others in the slaughters. However, the three Israeli judges in their final judgment decree pointed out that with such a massive crime that many people were involved in its perpetration. Those who gave the orders were further from the physical levers of the crime; however, without the orders the crimes would have been committed.

Topics for Discussion

1

What controversy at the trial involved language and translation? What are the possible explanations why the State of Israel made the choices they made about language?

2

What is the difference between a normal proceeding and a show trial? Why did Ben-Gurion want the Eichmann proceeding to be a show trial? Describe the type of trial that the Eichmann proceeding became.

3

What question did defense counsel Dr. Servatius pose to Professor Salo W. Baron of Columbia University? What was the “newest anti-Semitic notion” that the author refers to relative to the Nazis and their slaughter of the Jews?

4

Eichmann claimed that Pastor Gruber came to him asking for an “alleviation of suffering” based on exemptions. What exemptions had the German Jews and the Nazis come to agreement upon before the war? How did the Germans really feel about these exemptions and about the Jews?

5

Why didn't the Jews fight back, rebel more than they did? How were some Jews complicit in the demise of other Jews? What excuses did they offer and was their classism among the Jews?

6

What experience did the Nazis have with Holland relative to their Final Solution plans? What factors led to Denmark being able to save most of its Jews?



7

What were the four points of dispute in the prosecution of Adolph Eichmann? Why did the judges choose to begin the judgment phase of the trial on the accusations against him that occurred in Germany as opposed in the eastern death camps?

8

What were the circumstances of Eichmann's capture and arrest after the war? Where was he incarcerated, how did he escape and what became of him after?

9

How was Eichmann tracked down? What happened after he was apprehended and what did he agree to do?

10

What was Eichmann convicted of? What charge by the prosecution did the judges drop from the indictment?