

***The Eichmann Case
in the American Press***

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"Eichmann's trial... served a constructive purpose," declared the Duluth, Minn., News-Tribune (June 2, 1962); "his death can serve none." The Albany, N. Y., Knickerbocker News (June 4, 1962) emphasized that the execution did not "diminish by one jot the hatred of man for man that persists in the world."

According to several papers, Israel had thrown away the chance to set a great moral example. The Nowata, Okla., Star (Dec. 19, 1961) accused "Jewish authorities" of failing to overcome evil with good, and upbraided them for making "perhaps their greatest blunder since the crucifixion of Jesus Christ." Elsewhere the point was made in moderate language. The Chicago News (Dec. 16) declared that many people had expected the Jerusalem court to sharpen the contrast between nazism and civilization by some "spectacular gesture of mercy," while the Franklin, Va., Tidewater News (Dec. 21) said that:

Israel has an opportunity to show that, morally, it stands for something. Nobody will blame them if they hang Eichmann. But many will respect them all the more if they don't.

After the execution, the Boston Herald (June 3, 1962) wished another outcome had been possible:

Commutation... would have been a dramatic, a magnificent gesture... It would have proclaimed that Israel, speaking in this case for Jewry everywhere, carried reverence for human life to its ultimate end.

A few papers deplored the sentence or execution as Mosaic "eye-for-eye" justice, sometimes pointing out at the same time that Jewish ethics had progressed beyond this concept long ago:

Israel has been among the modern states that has [sic] frowned upon capital punishment. This is not strange. The learned men and the Talmudic rabbis of ancient days also spoke out against the death penalty for crime. . . . There has been and still is enough killing by men of men in the world. . . . (Wilmington, Del., Journal—Every Evening, Dec. 18.)

Others explicitly contradicted these views:

There is no application of the Mosaic law of an eye-for-an-eye in Eichmann's hanging. (Paducah, Ky., Sun-Democrat, June 3, 1962.)

We cannot imagine any judge deciding that this man should have any clemency. We cannot imagine any judge giving it to him even if he was tempted through misplaced charity and a sense of "forgive your enemies." (Kingsport, Tenn., Times, June 1, 1962.)

Only a very few papers—among them the Portland, Ore., Journal (Dec. 18, 1961)—cited the dubious legality of the proceedings as possibly militating against execution. Another argument, likewise infrequent, stressed that mankind was merely "salving its conscience" by killing "a petty and, by all appearances, demented individual" (Roanoke, Va., Times, Dec. 14), as if his death could wipe that slate clean (Franklin, N. H., Journal-Transcript, Dec. 28). This act, according to the Lincoln, Nebr., Star (Dec. 14), would

tend to balance the books on the unequal proposition that the punishment of one man is equal to the murder of millions. It would accept genocide as a human crime that could be bargained.

Perhaps the most curious objection came from the Ann Arbor, Mich., Daily (Jan 6, 1962), whose editor termed the sentence "the latest crime against the Jewish people" because it implied that every murdered Jew was "only one six-millionth of a human being." Asserting that the victims had gained "a kind of dignity" through their sufferings, the editorial concluded that now "the Israelis have robbed them of that dignity by seeking to contain the crimes of Adolf Eichmann within legal definition."

The speed with which Eichmann was put to death after his appeal for clemency had been denied was commented upon in about a dozen papers—for the most part favorably:

There was no waiting for the condemned man such as has been the case in other countries, including our own... Any delay was [sic] cruelty which could not be justified even for Eich-

The Sacramento, Calif., Union (June 4, 1962), for example, pointed out that the Nazis killed

as many men, women, children and infants as there would be in 25 cities the size of Sacramento . . . enough to span our entire continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific standing nearly shoulder to shoulder.

Others turned to works of literature; thus, the Durango, Colo., Herald (Jan. 16, 1962) devoted an editorial to a summary of *Mila 18*, Leon Uris' novel of the Warsaw ghetto.

But the attempts to relate Eichmann and his deeds to some measurable magnitude of horror were not very numerous. Throughout, the majority of editorials were concerned with what larger meaning the case might hold for the world, and particularly for Americans.

An Era on Trial

As the trial progressed, Eichmann himself began, in the words of one editor, to "fade away." Comment after comment referred to him as too "puny and insignificant" in himself to matter, except as the embodiment of "totalitarianism," "prejudice" or "man's inhumanity." He is seen "by everybody," said the Steubenville, Ohio, Herald-Star (June 12, 1961) "as only the symbolic defendant." An editorial in the Auburn, N. Y., Citizen-Advertiser (Apr. 8, 1961), which also appeared in at least 25 other papers across the country, opened with the announcement that "a whole era goes on trial."

Yet even though the Nazi era was seen in the prisoner's dock, there was little direct discussion of nazism itself. True, one of the most widely distributed editorials, published by Editorial Research Reports in December 1961 and printed in more than 40 papers, emphasized that Eichmann had been tried as a symbol, or representative, of the Nazi system; and the same thought was echoed in dozens of papers at the

By the time of the verdict, this concern had ebbed. But even then, only a few papers directly coupled nazism with Germany. The Orangeburg, S. C., Times and Democrat (Dec. 24, 1961) predicted the disclosures would help curb German neo-nazism and any posthumous glorification of Hitler; the Chattanooga, Tenn., Times (Dec. 12) and the York, Pa., Gazette and Daily (Dec. 14) took a less sanguine view, the latter citing a revival of German nazism as a possible danger. Subsequently, about half a dozen papers—including the Charlotte, N. C., News (June 7, 1962)—deplored the execution because it removed a much-needed living reminder of the Nazi past. Germany's present frame of mind was the subject of some speculation. The Huntsville, Ala., Times (June 1) and the Portland Oregonian (June 2) held that the present generation had virtually buried the memory and guilt of the Nazi era; the Jacksonville, Fla., Journal (June 23) and a few other papers noted the German Lutheran church's "Operation Penance"—a youth movement to recruit volunteers for work projects in Israel and the formerly Nazi-occupied countries. In most newspapers, however, nazism was referred to, not as a specifically German phenomenon, but simply as "totalitarianism"—as one instance of a potentially universal threat.

Similarly detached and imprecise were most of the references to anti-Semitism. In the early editorials, the word itself appeared probably no more than two dozen times, and in these few instances it was used as a synonym for all forms of prejudice and persecution. No less than 300 papers used Robert Burns' phrase, "man's inhumanity to man." An editorial appearing in the Lebanon, Pa., News, and other papers (June 6, 1961) was representative, both in language and spirit, of the closest approach to the subject:

Not only is Adolf Eichmann, the fiendish Nazi, on trial for murdering six million Jews, but humanity itself is at the bar of justice in Jerusalem on charges of genocide, bigotry, and inhumanity.

In contrast, only a small number of papers saw an analogy between nazism and present-day racial oppression in South Africa:

Hendrik Verwoerd is pursuing a course that can only end in disaster. . . . Then Verwoerd will take his place in history with the Hitlers and the Eichmanns. (Passaic, N. J., *Haledon Record*, May 30, 1962.)

What the Trial Accomplished

At the start, a good deal of attention turned to Premier Ben-Gurion's pronouncement that Israel hoped to remind the present generation of the horrors which mankind had once allowed to happen, and must never again permit. About four-fifths of the editorials approved the revival of these memories as beneficial, particularly to youth. Opinion was overwhelmingly with the Janesville, Wis., *Gazette* (June 11, 1960):

. . . [the trial] will help to prevent a recurrence of such barbarism, will give young people reason to shudder in horror at the blandishments of pro-Nazis and pro-Fascists.

Among those who disagreed, many did so on the grounds that the recollection would appeal to a certain sensationalism:

Millions in the free countries will follow the sordid details as recorded and pictured, just as they did the Finch-Tregoff murder case. . . . (Henderson, N. C., *Dispatch*, Apr. 11, 1961.)

Others feared the public would lose sight of today's enemy:

So the horror tale will be told again, pointlessly to shock a world whose attention should not be diverted from another tyranny that was not recognized when Eichmann was doing his evil deeds. (Lawrence, Mass., *Eagle-Tribune*, Apr. 17, 1961.)

As the case proceeded, these anxieties proved groundless; in fact, the documentary aspects of the trial became the subject of a great deal of praise. After the courtroom proceedings apparently no more than two or three papers—one of them the Montgomery, Ala., *Advertiser* (Nov. 19, 1961)—

nounced the trial of immeasurable value as a reminder and warning to all free men. In the words of one of the most widely repeated editorials, printed in two dozen newspapers:*

It is that darkness, that negation of all that is good and wholesome in the human spirit, against which mankind must guard. That is the central message of the Eichmann trial.

SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATION OF REACTIONS

Our survey reveals that beyond the variations of emphasis and outlook to be expected among some 2,000 American newspapers, a certain unified response was operating. Editors everywhere seemed to feel themselves charged with three mandates: First, to find the proper moral and legal perspectives in which to appraise an unprecedented case; second, to render comprehensible the crimes that were committed; and third, to determine the nature and meaning of the forces that permitted them. Judging by the extraordinary amount of space devoted to those subjects, they were not easy to handle. Yet we find throughout the editorials a very substantial consensus.

In a sense, Eichmann became a piety—although a negative one. That is, he very quickly became a subject about which one should not temporize. Apart from certain minor obeisances to contemporary politics, the language of the discussion was overwhelmingly a language of high conviction. The intensity of tone indicated that Eichmann was viewed in much the way Israel had determined to offer him to the countries of the West: as a call to the reconsideration of humane and democratic first principles.

*Among them, the Southbridge, Mass., News (Aug. 17); Salamanca, N. Y., Republican-Press (Aug. 18); Minot, N. Dak., News (Aug. 18); Springdale, Ark., News (Aug. 18); Bridgeton, N. J., News (Aug. 21); Westerly, R. I., Sun (Aug. 22); Northampton, Mass., Hampshire Gazette (Aug. 23).

Significance of the Jurisdictional Discussion

The question of jurisdiction proved to be a touchstone of themes and attitudes prevailing throughout the entire consideration of the trial. Though the question itself was set aside once the courtroom sessions began, the terms in which it had been discussed provided, so to speak, the framework for the American confrontation of Eichmann. An examination of these terms is therefore to the point.

No public discussion within memory has provided such convincing evidence that, for all but extremist groups, an appeal to principle in America means an appeal to those principles embodied in the liberal, rationalistic, democratic tradition. The central pillar of that tradition is protection of the individual against arbitrary impositions, and it is therefore not surprising that the first concern of the American press was for the trial's legal validity. No editor doubted the defendant's guilt; yet few argued that the unprecedented magnitude of his crime might justify the suspension of normal procedures. On the contrary, it was clearly felt that Eichmann on trial must be the living proof that Western democracy could sustain the rule of law in the very teeth of such men as Eichmann himself. Whether challenging or supporting Israel's jurisdiction, all papers tended to debate in the same terms—often, as we have seen, in virtually the same words—both sides declaring, "This trial is not for vengeance, but for justice."

Implicit in much of the discussion was the assumption, apparently widely shared though not explicitly stated and perhaps not consciously recognized, that upholding the rule of law means upholding American legal traditions. Certainly this was the major premise on which the opposition—comprising about one half of the nation's press—seemed to stand. Not that editors were aggressively asserting the superiority of Anglo-Saxon law; they simply took for granted,

with very few exceptions, that its principles must naturally apply to every situation, regardless of the circumstances.

For example, the propositions that Eichmann be tried before a world court because his crimes were international, or before a German court because they were committed in Germany, were equivalent to saying that a man must be tried in the state of Connecticut because his crimes were committed there. Almost no one referred to such matters as witnesses and the corpus delicti, which are integral to the concept that a crime must be prosecuted by the community in which it was committed.

The charge of impropriety on ex-post-facto grounds reflected the same instinctive adherence to accustomed patterns without examining their relevance to the case at hand. For it is hardly conceivable that the principle here invoked, barring prosecution for acts not expressly outlawed before their commission, was intended to apply to acts so depraved that they were never envisaged by any criminal code.

Again, according to Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence, a fair trial is one in which none of the issues has been prejudged; the accused is arraigned before a jury of his peers, all of whom have sworn to have no personal interest in the matter, no prior connection with the defendant, no adverse impression of him. But none of these conditions could possibly obtain in the case of a man whose guilt had been documented and universally acknowledged years before his capture.

These baffling inconsistencies and problems of legal definition were taken up explicitly by very few newspapers, namely by the major organs of liberal opinion. It was precisely the avoidance of these questions that led many editors into an unmanageable contradiction between their demands for objectivity and their own unanimous condemnation of the prisoner.

Occasional complaints on the score that Judge Halevi or Premier Ben-Gurion had said prejudicial things about the

prisoner were quickly countered with the question: Who in the civilized world is *not* prejudiced against him? Nevertheless, this complaint reflected a significant discomfort about the proceedings—expressed with bitterness by the Washington Post (Apr. 10, 1961), perhaps the trial's most acid opponent, when it pointed to "a tableau set in the courtroom."

In light of the tendency to stand on traditional ground, it is interesting that the one act of undisguised and avowed lawlessness, namely, the kidnaping, provoked little adverse comment. There were, as we have seen, some misgivings about the possible unpleasant repercussions of this act, particularly for the United States and the United Nations; but by and large, even this concern gave way to sympathy for the passions that led Israel to hunt down Eichmann. It may well be that some editors, for this very reason, considered Israel an improper place for this trial.

The identification of Israel with Eichmann's victims was actually the main source of disquiet. In Anglo-Saxon law, the victim does not prosecute; a criminal act is an offense against the community—in this case, the community of mankind. Perhaps the most forceful statement of this point, and certainly the most influential, was Telford Taylor's article in the New York Times Magazine. As previously noted, the crux of his argument was that, according to the principle established at Nuremberg, deliberate programs "to exterminate a race or decimate a nation . . . should no longer be regarded as crimes against a particular country or people"; thus, in judging and punishing crimes against Jews which were in fact crimes against humanity, Israel was impeding the hard-won moral and legal progress of Western civilization.

Mr. Taylor's position is wholly consonant with the character of Anglo-Saxon law which, for the protection of the individual, is blind to color, religion and nationality. But neither his views nor those of like-minded editors took into account the character of Nazi "law." Far from being blind

to group distinctions, it explicitly established them. Definitions "in terms of the religion or nationality of the victim, instead of the nature of the criminal act" (in Mr. Taylor's words) were laid down beforehand by the criminals themselves—not by Israel. Of course, no one who defends Western democratic principles can accept Nazi terms. But their adoption by the Nazis is a historical fact clearly relevant to any attempt to understand nazism.

The reduction of Europe to rubble that proved the only effective answer to nazism was chastening evidence that it represented no ordinary challenge to Western values. Yet the discussion of legal issues surrounding the Eichmann case was conducted almost entirely without reference to the proven vulnerability of democratic institutions and of the rational, humane laws that sustain them. Rare indeed was the suggestion by the Waterbury, Conn., Republican (Apr. 11, 1961) that our traditional concepts and modes of justice might be unequal to the burden imposed upon them by nazism:

Would we feel better about the world if the Nazi authors of mass atrocity had been left to their own hardened consciences, if we simply professed an inability to do anything about them because we had no law and no courts big enough to fit their gigantic offenses? And, more tellingly, would the world be a better place for our international confessions of helplessness to requite such a crime as genocide in all the appalling proportions given it by Hitler's butchers?

This was precisely the feeling expressed by Justice Robert H. Jackson in his opening statement at Nuremberg:

The refuge of the defendants can be only their hope that International Law will lag so far behind the moral sense of mankind that conduct which is crime in the moral sense must be regarded as innocent in law.

Civilization asks whether law is so laggard as to be utterly helpless to deal with crimes of this magnitude.

Eichmann the Symbol

Once the trial began, as has been noted, the issue of jurisdiction was set aside. Nevertheless, the cast of thought displayed in discussing it—what may be termed the Anglo-Saxon legal outlook or the rational-democratic spirit—tended to determine the interpretations of the case.

The coupling of the defendant with commonplace criminals, such as Caryl Chessman and Fred Thompson, could not withstand the disclosures of the trial. It was plainly found "difficult for the civilized mind," as the Aledo, Ill., Times-Record had predicted (June 15, 1960) "to comprehend the bestial malignancy embodied in Adolf Eichmann." Thus the Nazi system came to be generally regarded as the real defendant, with the prisoner at the bar merely standing as a symbol. But what lay behind the symbol proved no easier to comprehend than what lay within the man.

Eichmann, it was said almost invariably, symbolized "totalitarianism." That word, insofar as it denotes a common denominator between nazism and communism, bespeaks a significant degree of political perception: totalitarianism may indeed turn out to be the final hazard of a hazardous century. But Eichmann was not on trial for being a totalitarian. He was on trial for being responsibly involved in a unique state policy of mass murder.

No other state in history—feudal, oligarchic, totalitarian—has made the destruction of human life an end in itself. In order to take hold of this phenomenon, one must examine its genesis; one must consider the Third Reich, the political reality that produced Eichmann and others like him; one must acknowledge that at a certain juncture in history, there was generated in Germany the kind of social fury that leads to mechanized mass murder. Yet, as we have noted, whether out of foreign-policy considerations or feelings of sympathy for the painful regeneration of a former enemy, the press rarely mentioned Germany as the seat of Eichmann's crimes.

A similar process of abstraction was applied to Eichmann's victims. In a valiant attempt to rescue the nightmare of six million deaths from incomprehensibility, the Peoria Journal Star remarked (Apr. 11, 1961): "But the millions who died are not a faceless mass. They were living, breathing humans, each with friends and family who loved him. . . ." Certainly the facts cannot be grasped in their full reality by anyone sheltered from them by thousands of miles, a free and prosperous society, and a lapse of 16 or 17 years. Probably they cannot be grasped in all truth by anyone, anywhere. Inadequacy in this regard is beyond reproach. What bears consideration are the *attempts* to understand.

As nazism had become "totalitarianism," so the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe became everyone who had experienced hatred, persecution or political disability, from the Christians of ancient Rome to the victims of apartheid in South Africa. Despite the facts documented so painstakingly in the courtroom, there was almost complete failure to editorialize on *why* the Nazis behaved as they did; or the more painful and delicate question of how they were permitted to carry out their clearly announced intention from the beginning. Even so impersonal a term as "anti-Semitism" was almost universally avoided. Of all the editorials embraced in this survey, only a few dozen used the term at all, and no more than a small handful discussed the subject directly.*

This seeming avoidance of an issue clearly central to the case doubtless had its source in something deeper than simple distaste for the subject. For one thing, there has been no actual social experience in this country which gives Americans a key to understanding Nazi anti-Semitism. True, Jews in America have suffered discrimination in social and economic life, as have other religious or ethnic minority groups to

*In addition, H. R. Trevor-Roper, in an article in the New York Times Magazine (Sept. 17, 1961) entitled "Eichmann Is Not Unique," discussed anti-Semitism in the context of European history.

greater or lesser degree. But never in this country has anti-Semitism been used as an instrument of national policy. The sporadic attempts of professional bigots and "lunatic-fringe" groups to incite anti-Semitism for their own political ends have invariably met with defeat. America has no history, no world of values in which Eichmann could have happened.

Furthermore, enlightened social thought in America, strengthened by the findings of social-science research in the field of prejudice, has come to regard the hatred of groups as the end result of socio-psychological forces at work within and around the haters themselves. In some cases, prejudice in its virulent form has been found to be a psychological outlet for inner fears and frustrations. Thus, to call hostility or violence directed against a given group by a name that identifies it with that group—in this case, the Jews—would appear to contravene the modern view that aggressive forms of bigotry have no rational causation attributable to specific target groups.

Such factors may explain why the daily press bypassed certain painful specifics which the trial sought to bring to the fore—the specific nature of nazism, and the specific fact that six million European Jews were marked for death by the Nazi state and were then permitted to die by the whole of the civilized Western world.

The Lessons for America

The Saturday Review (Apr. 8, 1961) expressed the fear that "Eichmann's trial will keep us from seeing our share in this catastrophe because, by comparison, our share must look infinitesimal." But the American press proved, if anything, only too willing to take on a rather more than fair share of guilt. An overwhelmingly large number of papers exhorted their readers to learn the depths of depravity to which ugly feelings or carelessness with the institutions of

As long as the aggressors now dominant in the world will not and cannot be brought to trial, can we speak of punishment in the true sense?

Only two or three comments endorsed the proceedings, either directly or by implication, as legally proper. In the Providence Visitor (Apr. 21, 1961), a lawyer reviewed supporting precedents dating back to the Versailles Treaty. The same paper, arguing that Eichmann's guilt rested on a foundation of natural law, twice expressed editorial approval:

... the Eichmann Court in Jerusalem may be seen to represent the human conscience, against which Adolf Eichmann has sinned. It has no choice, therefore, but to bring to justice this man who placed the will of his Fuehrer over his moral conscience by sending millions of his fellow men to death... (Apr. 14, 1961.)

Our concept of law holds that Civil law derives from the natural moral law and can never remain in conflict with it. Hence there is no choice for the Israeli court but to condemn Eichmann... It would have been better had Eichmann been tried by an international court, but there is still no provision for this... There is no choice now but to accept the *de facto* disposition of the case. Any other course would result in a gross frustration of justice. (June 30, 1961.)

The New Mexico Register (May 5, 1961) also supported the trial on the grounds of natural law, "which must be upheld whether or not a man-made law covers the case."

Subsequently, the United Church Herald (June 15, 1961), the organ of the United Church of Christ, noted the "impeccably correct" behavior of the judge (sic) and attorneys.

These exceptions aside, the comments which were addressed primarily to legal considerations nearly always questioned Israel's right to try Eichmann.* This virtual unanimity did not reflect the division of opinion in the legal profession, where experts were found in approximately equal numbers on both sides of the question.

*In several instances, letters from readers took issue with editorial policy, defending the trial on legal or moral grounds.

In the Catholic press, assistance given to Jews by the Church or by individual Christians became a dominant theme. Five of the seven news stories and articles relating to the Eichmann case which the News Service of the National Catholic Welfare Conference released to Catholic papers dealt with this subject (Mar. 6, 27; June 12; two items on July 3, 1961).*

Among diocesan papers, the Providence Visitor, whose numerous articles and editorials on the trial probably set a record among religious publications, touched on the topic at least seven times during 1961.† The New World (Chicago, Mar. 10, 1961) ran a major article under the headline, "Rome Clerics Aided Jews, Risked Death." A similar feature appeared in the Tidings (May 26, 1961), headlined "How Christians Saved Jews. . . ."

At least three of the articles on Eichmann published in the Catholic Standard and Times (Philadelphia) cited Christian aid to Jews.‡ One of these, also published in several other diocesan papers, recounted the efforts of a relief organization set up by the late Konrad Cardinal von Preysing, Catholic Bishop of Berlin—a reminder "that the Christian churches were in the forefront of the few groups in the country that opposed the Nazi effort to exterminate the Jewish people." In similar vein, America (May 27, 1961) pointed to the "continuing evidence that effective concern for the safety of Jews was widespread in non-Jewish circles."

In the Protestant press, Christian aid to Jews received less emphasis. Still, of all the courtroom evidence, the item most widely reported in Protestant news columns was the testimony of Dean Heinrich Grueber, a Lutheran pastor

*The only matter to which the NCWC News Service devoted comparable attention was a rumor that Eichmann had used a passport issued by the Vatican for his escape from Italy. Three denials were issued (June 27, 1960; Mar. 6 and 27, 1961); the most widely cited was a vigorous repudiation originally published in the Italian Jesuit biweekly, *Civiltà Cattolica*.

†Mar. 17; May 19, 26; June 9, 16; Aug. 25 (two items).

‡May 26, 1961; two on July 7.

to seek to build a bridge of friendship between new Israel and a new Germany.

The only criticism of Germany appeared in the Commonweal's editorial on the possible impact of the trial (Mar. 24, 1961); and here, too, the distinction between the German people and the Nazis was stressed. Commenting on Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's fears of renewed anti-German feeling, the editor wrote:

... certainly no one can take lightly the possibility of an outbreak of national hatred and prejudice.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that few Germans seem willing to understand the feelings of the world in regard to Hitler and Nazism. . . . All too often, it appears, the German people fail to maintain any distinction between Nazis and themselves, and persist in taking anti-Nazi utterances to be simply anti-German. . . .

Until Chancellor Adenauer and other Germans who are worried about "anti-German" feeling come to terms with the problem of Nazism in Germany's history, we are afraid that world opinion will remain troubled and uneasy about the vestiges of Nazism in Germany's present.

Though careful not to charge the German people as a whole with responsibility for nazism, Protestant and Catholic publications alike took notice of statements from Germany in which religious spokesmen or groups accepted that responsibility for themselves. These pronouncements usually were either reported as news items or picked up for approving editorial comment.

The first such utterance, briefly quoted as part of a news report in the Christian Century (Mar. 22, 1961), was a resolution unanimously adopted in mid-February by the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church in Germany (EKD), the country's leading Protestant body. The full text was later reprinted in the Watchman-Examiner, a Baptist publication (Apr. 27). The resolution urged the German people not to "shut our eyes and ears to the crime for which we, as a nation, are responsible," and continued:

political failures on the part of specific groups throughout the Western world. The Christian Century (Apr. 19, 1961) cited particular sins of omission:

On trial with Adolf Eichmann is, obviously, the German generation which with him followed at nearer or greater distance the leadership of Hitler... the state of Israel and its system of justice... the United Nations and the world court, which have provided no way to try a criminal like Eichmann. And each one of us is on trial, for we share in collective evil of many kinds yet refuse to acknowledge our guilt or to set up adequate means of judging it or dealing with it... Six million Jews would not have died under Eichmann if our doors had not been held fast shut against their immigration in the '30's.

= US Klan
in 1945

The United Church Herald (May 4, 1961) recalled the same historic failures and emphasized that

... it is not Adolf Eichmann alone who is on trial in the bullet-proof witness box in Jerusalem. Such ghastly evil is a collective crime... More specifically, all people are guilty who watched the bureaucratic and militaristic Nazi system carry on its incomparable inhumanities with little or no protest. The sickness of soul embodied in the Nazis did not vanish with the military defeat of Hitler. It flourishes today wherever there is complacent self-righteousness and wherever violent hate poisons human relations.

In a later issue of the same magazine (Jan. 25, 1962), William Robert Miller, of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, expanded on the irresponsibility of present-day citizens:

In thinking about the Nazis we like to forget that there are Americans who share in Eichmann's dream of a world rid of Jews, Communists, Negroes, Catholics or others they do not like—the Ku Klux Klan is an obvious example, but not the only one...

We are always the righteous ones; our sins are minor and pardonable—even when they take such forms as the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki...

Sin is not the sole property of others. There is that of Eichmann in every one of us. He got caught. We are still at large—we Americans, we Israelis, we Russians, we Germans...

issues, virtually all religious journalists have grappled with the underlying problems posed to the conscientious Christian, searching beyond the technical or legal pros and cons to single out basic moral questions. When, for example, the subject at hand has involved civil-rights legislation, the religious editors, even while examining the legal aspects, have generally kept the underlying moral issue of racial justice centrally in focus.

Thus it seems fitting to consider how this dual commitment—to uphold traditional American values, and clarify basic moral and religious questions—found expression in religious-press discussions of the Eichmann trial.

Questions of Procedure and Motivation

Before the trial and at its outset, the religious press did not exhibit the almost universal interest manifested by the general daily newspapers. Most of the early comments in the religious press were directed to the legal issues. The Protestant press, even at this time, showed marked preoccupation with what sentence the court should pronounce—a subject which evoked very little interest in the Catholic press at any time, and virtually none in the secular press until the end of the trial.

The initial question of whether Eichmann should be tried by Israel embraced many related questions, such as Israel's right to jurisdiction and the fairness of the procedure; and fundamental considerations, such as Eichmann's personal responsibility for the crimes he had committed, and the need to bring such criminals to justice.

The argument advanced in many secular papers that the trial was necessary in the interests of a higher justice was found in only two or three instances in the Catholic press and not at all in the Protestant journals. When the trial's

validity was discussed, it was largely in terms of the procedural or jurisdictional questions, with less emphasis on moral goals. No one, of course, recommended that Eichmann go free; yet some who bitterly attacked Israel's jurisdiction suggested no alternative venue. Others mentioned an international tribunal or a German court, but gave little or no explanation of how these alternatives might have been effectuated, instead enlarging upon the impropriety of a trial in Israel.

Preoccupation with the legal arguments and concern about the ultimate punishment combined to shift the focus of attention from "What did Eichmann do?" to "What is Israel going to do to Eichmann?" The emphasis on Israel was further heightened by anxiety, frequently expressed, regarding Israel's assumption of the role of prosecutor.

As noted, this issue aroused discomfort in the general press as well. But where secular writers were troubled by departures from established procedures of Anglo-Saxon law, notably Israel's dual role as prosecutor and judge, the Christian press introduced another theme. Some comments implied that Eichmann's capture and trial were prompted by vengeful impulses derived from Jewish religious concepts.

Allusions to the "eye-for-an-eye" code of Mosaic times and to Judaism's "ancient God of retribution" suggested the persistence of a long-standing caricature which contrasts Christianity's emphasis on God's love and Judaism's supposed emphasis on God's wrath. Implicit in some of these comments was a polemical view of Judaism, bearing little relation to the realities of Jewish ethical thought or the traditionally humane interpretation of the Mosaic code.

Such reactions, as well as the preposterous analogy drawn by several writers between the trial of Eichmann and of Jesus (see pp. 63-64), raised the inescapable question: Had Eichmann's trial been conducted by any other nation, would it have called forth similar references?

Moral Abstractions

As the trial progressed, some religious publications began to examine and interpret the horrendous evidence disclosed in the courtroom. Their reactions were much the same as those of the secular press. All, understandably, acknowledged a kind of helplessness in attempting to assimilate the overwhelming fact that a group of men, in the heart of civilized Europe, could draw up a plan to wipe an entire people from the earth by methodically rounding them up, transporting them through an intricate network of trains, buses and trucks to designated death factories, and murdering them to the last man, woman and child. Behind much of the editorial comment was the unspoken question: "How could it have happened?"

In efforts to answer this question, a few religious-press commentators examined the historical realities of the Nazi period, trying to assess the breakdown of moral responsibility among particular individuals, leaders and institutions—religious groups not excepted. For the most part, however, these realities and Eichmann himself were abstracted into concepts too broad to serve as a key to historical specifics.

Time and again, Eichmann was pictured as a man "not taught to obey God," and the moral issues raised by the trial were frequently interpreted as "obedience to God versus obedience to secular authority." Implicit in this formulation was the suggestion that a genuine religious commitment would necessarily have led all devout individuals to be anti-Nazi—despite the fact that, profoundly anti-Christian though nazism was, many church people and institutions did become involved with it to a greater or lesser degree.

While obedience to God versus obedience to secular authority may indeed have posed the ultimate question of choice to the religious conscience, this vital question tended in retrospect to lose its meaning when raised without examination of the specific circumstances.

There was evident throughout the religious press a conscientious desire not to let Eichmann become a scapegoat on whom a whole generation might self-righteously unload its sins. Thus, he was often seen as a symbol of man's inhumanity or sinfulness throughout the ages. Yet, Eichmann the symbol sometimes eclipsed Eichmann the man, and with him, the man-made actuality of genocide. In effect, while rejecting one scapegoat, some writers simply replaced him with another: an innately sinful and unregenerate mankind, leaving unaccounted-for the distinction between those who cooperated with the Nazis and those who opposed them—and between the victims and perpetrators of mass-murder.

Many writers related Eichmann and nazism to examples of present-day injustice, both within the United States and elsewhere. But sometimes the examples themselves, rather than Eichmann and his era, were the center of attention. Thus, when some journals mentioned the trial only to bring out the point that Communist crimes remain unpunished, or when another responded to questions concerning Protestant responsibilities and attitudes in Hitler's time by directing attention to the plight of South Africa's Negroes, these problems served to supersede, rather than illustrate, the case at hand.

There was, however, plentiful and critical self-examination, and its sincerity was beyond doubt. There were widespread and profound declarations of conscience, confessions of prior indifference, and reminders of the possible link between "polite" discrimination and the bigotry that leads to mass murder. Again and again, readers were called upon to combat racial and religious prejudice in any form, to stand up for the rights of others, and to ensure that "it shall not happen again." Guidelines for future conduct were generally forthright and explicit; references to past failures were more often abstract or remote. Few writers delineated, in terms of the actual choices made by Christian individuals and institutions, what *did* happen that must not happen again.

Anti-Semitism

It would seem axiomatic that the events of the Hitler era—in particular, the crimes for which Adolf Eichmann had special responsibility—could not be considered without acknowledging the centrality of anti-Semitism to Nazi ideology and policies. Moreover, without a long tradition of anti-Semitism in European culture, implemented through persistent measures of discrimination and exclusion, it is improbable that the anti-Jewish legislation, roundups and deportations that preceded and paved the way for the mass murders could have been carried out with so little popular resistance. It was therefore to be anticipated that both the secular and religious press would explore, each from its own perspective, the question of anti-Semitism in some depth. The religious publications might reasonably be expected to examine, among other things, the distinctively Christian factors, historic and religious, which have influenced the attitudes of Christians toward Jews.

Yet the religious press, with a few notable exceptions, tended to avoid the subject, treating it for the most part, as did the majority of the secular press, only in highly generalized terms. "Racism" or "brutality," appropriate though they are as over-all rubrics, too often served to gloss over the identity of anti-Semitism as a distinct form of racism with a unique history which included religious roots.

When mentioned in the religious press, anti-Semitism was generally treated as if it had sprung full-blown from the twisted minds of Nazi propagandists who played upon the pagan element in man's nature—"the barbarian hiding in the human race," whom "only the Lord Christ can shackle," as the Watchman-Examiner phrased it (June 1, 1961). That this barbaric urge, stimulated by nazism, resulted in the murder of six million Jews was seen as hardly different from the Nazis' general brutality toward subject peoples and political

opponents. Rarely was it noted that a deliberate national policy of mass annihilation distinguished the Nazi crimes against the Jews from the Nazi crimes against others; even though they suffered at Nazi hands by the hundreds of thousands, Christians were never selected for extinction as a group. The religious writers, scrupulous as they were in differentiating between the Nazis and the German people, drew no similarly clear differentiation among those who suffered at the hands of nazism, all being viewed as if they were victims of a terror directed in equal measure against Jews and Christians, opposed in equal measure by both.

Still, any attempt to interpret this failure to probe the roots of anti-Semitism or acknowledge its fundamental role in Nazi public philosophy must once again take into account the dual identity of American Christian-press journalists. It may be argued that, as religious spokesmen, they inherit a share in Christianity's long, ambiguous relationship with the Jews, and should therefore have brought an awareness of that history to the discussion of a case in which anti-Semitism was so patently central. But it is nonetheless understandable that as citizens of a nation in which the use of anti-Semitism as an instrument of state policy is unknown, they could not have identified themselves with happenings totally outside America's experience and should have felt no obligation to search for some connection between anti-Jewish religious traditions and the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

This point was explicitly made by America magazine (Mar. 24, 1962):

Christians in this country do not look upon anti-Semitism as anything essentially different from the discrimination practiced on the many other minority groups here. . . . This, many Americans believe, is a far cry from the anti-Semitism endemic in the Central and Eastern European countries. . . . It is only natural that they do not associate the two anti-Semitisms. They see no kinship between the two and, hence, no connection between themselves and Eichmann.