

December 10, 1963

Dr. Bernard Heller
425 Riverside Drive
New York City

Dear Dr. Heller:

Thank you for the photocopy of the article about Arendt which you sent me.

I quite agree with you that the calumnies which she is spreading on campuses throughout the country are scandalous. Certainly, as you suggest, a group should get together to do something about it.

I sympathize with your aims and want to help -- although, because of my forthcoming trip to South Africa in February, please God, I shall be unable to take an active part in the foreseeable future.

May God be with you in your endeavors to salvage the honor of the martyrs of our people against the onslaught of this embittered person.

Sincerely,

RABBI NORMAN LAMM

NL:ff



500 hear Arendt discuss book

by Sharon Goldman

Eichmann in Jerusalem is a report of what happened and the issues which were considered during the Eichmann trial, according to the book's author Hannah Arendt. The book

vidual as an individual, rather than as a member of a system.

Since an individual and not a system was on trial in Jerusalem, many have asked what the use of the Eichmann trial was. "It rendered justice, which was most important," stated Miss Arendt.

"Eichmann was not only a cog, but he was a somebody, an individual, who had made certain decisions on his own, who had had certain motivations of a personal nature," she said.

It was crucially important, according to Miss Arendt, that Eichmann knew the extent of his wrongs when he was performing the acts.

Eichmann was no common criminal, and his crime was no ordinary crime. The innermost essence of his crime was not that against the Jewish people, but against the human race—*hostis humani generis*.

There is a widespread theory that crimes committed by the Nazis defy judgment because they were committed by sovereign states and because of the immensity of the crimes.

Such crimes, she continued, fall under the rubric of political justice with all its uncertainties. Since the crimes can't be adequately punished, some feel that they should not be punished at all.

According to Miss Arendt, the rendering of justice in such cases requires us to bring up the question of guilt and responsibility. If one takes the attitude that there is such a thing as collective guilt, no individual guilt, as such, can exist. One can judge any person working under such a system only if one assumes that collective guilt does not exist.

There is also, stated Miss Arendt, no such thing as collective inno-

For the benefit of those persons who were not able to get into Breasted Hall, the tape of Miss Arendt's talk will be played at Hillel House, Tuesday at 8 pm.

cence. If the court were to concern itself with sins of omission, "who of my generation can say that he was free of it?" Eichmann can only be judged if we assume that neither one nor the other exists.

The possibility of his non-participation in the Nazi crimes thus had to be proved in order to indict Eichmann. Miss Arendt pointed out that the court discovered a certain number of SS men who asked to be relieved of their duties. Eichmann, too, could have asked, but he never thought of it.

Miss Arendt noted that Eichmann typifies the moral confusion in Germany today. The guilty,

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Hannah Arendt at Breasted

meant neither as a theoretical treatise on any system nor as a historical description of Jewish suffering.

Miss Arendt, professor on the Committee on Social Thought, discussed her book and answered questions before an audience of about 500, who crammed Breasted Hall and the lobby of the Oriental Institute. The program was sponsored by the Hillel Foundation.

According to Miss Arendt, her object in attending the trial was the study of one man. The courtroom procedure provided the best opportunity to examine an indi-

In order to render justice, the circumstances surrounding this crime and criminal had to be taken into consideration and because of this, the organized bureaucratic system has also to be taken into account.

Miss Arendt noted that some methods were used in the trial which did not strictly belong there. However, this was by no means a new situation. The object of the Nuremberg trials was to "make a record of the Hitler regime which would withstand the test of history," and many non-legal methods were used. However, Miss Arendt noted, the judges of the Jerusalem District Court were much better and clearer in withstanding this enticement.

Miss Arendt repudiated the remark attributed her that Eichmann was merely a cog in the machinery. "While the system had to be taken into account, the trial had to focus on Eichmann," she said. Even Eichmann was not convinced that he was a cog, according to Miss Arendt. "He didn't want to be too big or too little, just middle-sized (in the organization)," Miss Arendt continued.

Dear Abby, Laura,
 Hannah's account is proper and giving her charges on the campuses of Unwarranted! (are yourself, with a munificence's heart, I believe a few gifted habits & languages?) are yourself, and consider
 Abby's journey, Jacob's journey, Norman's journey, right to confer and consider
 a course to follow to nullify her disbursement of the six million martyrs.
 Forward still,

Arendt talks on Eichmann, banality of evil

(Continued from page one)

years ago. All faculty members of the College math staff are part of the department and participate fully in departmental decisions."

Irving Kaplansky, chairman of the mathematics department, emphasized that an informal agreement united the departmental and College staffs.

screened by numbers, have clear consciences, but the completely innocent feel guilty of the sin of omission.

Miss Arendt stated that during the war she had written an article for a Labor Zionist monthly, explaining the madman actions on the basis of organized guilt. However, she wrote under the assumption that the guilty would be punished, not foreseeing the number who went unpunished and the very number who were implicated.

Those involved, according to Miss Arendt, were in most part not even SS party members. It was extraordinarily easy to enlist the participation of almost everyone around. In fact, the Nazis were taken aback by the ease with which they could involve people.

Miss Arendt stated that she also overestimated the impact of ideology on the individual. Eichmann had a contempt for ideology that could be seen in his conversations with the Israeli interrogation officer. Eichmann repeatedly expressed his contempt for such "propaganda—what you need to

justify what you do in the eyes of other people." He spoke contemptuously of Himmler because he actually believed in certain ideological tenets of Nazism.

Eichmann believed only in "The Führer," because he had risen through the ranks from a lance-corporal to chancellor. In Eichmann's eyes, the rise of Hitler proved that he was right and that the Germans should subject themselves to him.

Miss Arendt also explained her concept of the banality of evil, which goes against the belief in the daemonic nature of evil. According to Miss Arendt, that evil is banal does not mean that it is commonplace, for commonplace implies frequency. Her definition of banality implies a "hair-raising superficiality."

Evil, said Miss Arendt, is not radical—that is, it does not have roots. Evil is rather a surface phenomenon. It is evil precisely because it has no roots, and spreads so easily. The fact that evil is rootless also makes it difficult to think and to speak about it. Thought attempts a coverage in depth, which banal evil defies.

"To render justice," Miss Arendt concluded, "is a way to master the past. We as Jews and as human beings, haven't yet mastered it emotionally or intellectually." The immensity of the tragedy frightens us more each time we hear about it. Yet, it is an experience which must be understood.

Miss Arendt concluded her lecture by declaring that human beings must master the past unemotionally by rendering of justice.

In a question-and-answer period after her lecture, Miss Arendt was asked, "How did Israel have the right to try Eichmann when the country didn't even exist at the time of his crimes?"

As successors to the Nuremberg trials, criminals were handed over to the countries where the crimes were committed, Miss Arendt stated. The fact that the Jews never forgot about the land of Israel created a "space" between them—a very real territory. In this "space," language, religion, memories of the past, culture and traditions have gathered. When the state of Israel was created, this complex that is their territory was planted in the land of Israel.

"It would be a grave injustice that we shouldn't have the right to sit in judgment on crimes against our people just because we didn't have the paraphernalia of material territory," Miss Arendt said.

To the question "Why didn't the many rebel against the few when they were being led to their slaughter?" Miss Arendt answered with a quotation from Miraboux, "Ten organized men can make 100,000 tremble apart." In addition, Miss Arendt explained that the fate Nazis offered to rebels was far worse than death. "Only the very young had the courage to choose

a hard death and take someone with them, rather than choose an easy death alone."

The Jews in Europe were people, not heroes, she said, and behaved no better and no worse than all the other Europeans caught in the Nazi machine. In a discussion at the Hillel House following the lecture at Breasted Hall, Miss Arendt disassociated herself from any concept of "ghetto mentality" and Jewish cowardice. She described the accusation of Jewish cowardice as a traditional canard of anti-Semites.

Even though there were few opportunities for resistance under the Nazis, she indicated that there were examples of courageous revolt. Also, Jews who knew the language of the country could become partisans and many did.

Miss Arendt was also asked what role the Jewish leadership played during World War II, and her opinions on how they acted. Focusing on the Jewish experience in central and western Europe, she described the cooperation which the Nazis obtained from their appointed Jewish community leaders. Though these leaders may have acted with the intention of saving Jews, Miss Arendt said that she cannot morally justify any Jew who would participate in the selection of his fellow Jews for life or for death. We can see now, she stated, that non-cooperation and chaos would have resulted in the saving of many Jewish lives in the West.