

Analysing genocide

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THE HOLOCAUST IN HISTORY

by Michael R. Marrus. Hanover and London, University Press of New England. 264 pp. \$16.50.

THE PROBLEM of placing the Holocaust in history has particular significance today. As an historian, Professor Marrus is deeply concerned that the Holocaust should be recognized as an important part of the general modern historical experience and not regarded as just a tragic episode in the history of the Jewish people or one of the many grim stories of World War II, as Le Pen and other Holocaust apologists wish today.

Marrus perceives the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem as a turning point in the rather late process of placing the Holocaust in its proper and wider historical perspective. The trial brought in its wake a considerable number of major historical studies and important conferences, activities which eventually prompted intensive intellectual disputes, theatre and TV plays and a spate of autobiographical personal accounts. A recent, select bibliography lists close to 2,000 books in many languages and over 10,000 publications on Auschwitz alone.

Such a historical process necessitates an orderly, scholarly approach. Marrus, professor of history at the University of Toronto, analyses the various aspects of the Nazis' popula-

tion policy and the Final Solution, examining the attitudes of Germany's allies, collaborationist governments and public attitudes pre-

many's times, collaborationist governments and public attitudes prevailing in Nazi Europe. He visits the East European ghettos and the concentration and extermination camps and observes the various forms of Jewish resistance.

A special chapter is devoted to the plight of the Jewish refugees. The question of Allied knowledge of the Nazi mass murders is also raised, as well as the attitude of the Soviet Union, the Catholic Church and neutral countries. The last tragic days of war and the painful aftermath of the liberation closes this historical analysis. All in all, it is a well-written, well-arranged, highly disciplined and annotated study.

I read the book with great interest, but am undecided about the date which marks the end of the Holo-

caust period. Was it the end of World War II – or the creation of the State of Israel, which solved the problem of the Jewish survivors who wished to settle there? Few Jewish historians – and Marrus is no exception – dare to ask themselves this pertinent question.

Did the Holocaust end with the opening up of the Nazi camps, or with the 1946 pogrom in Polish Kielce? The Holocaust casts a much longer shadow than generally accepted reaching far beyond Auschwitz. Can we say it is really over, with a man like Alois Brunner sitting in Damascus like a bird of prey?