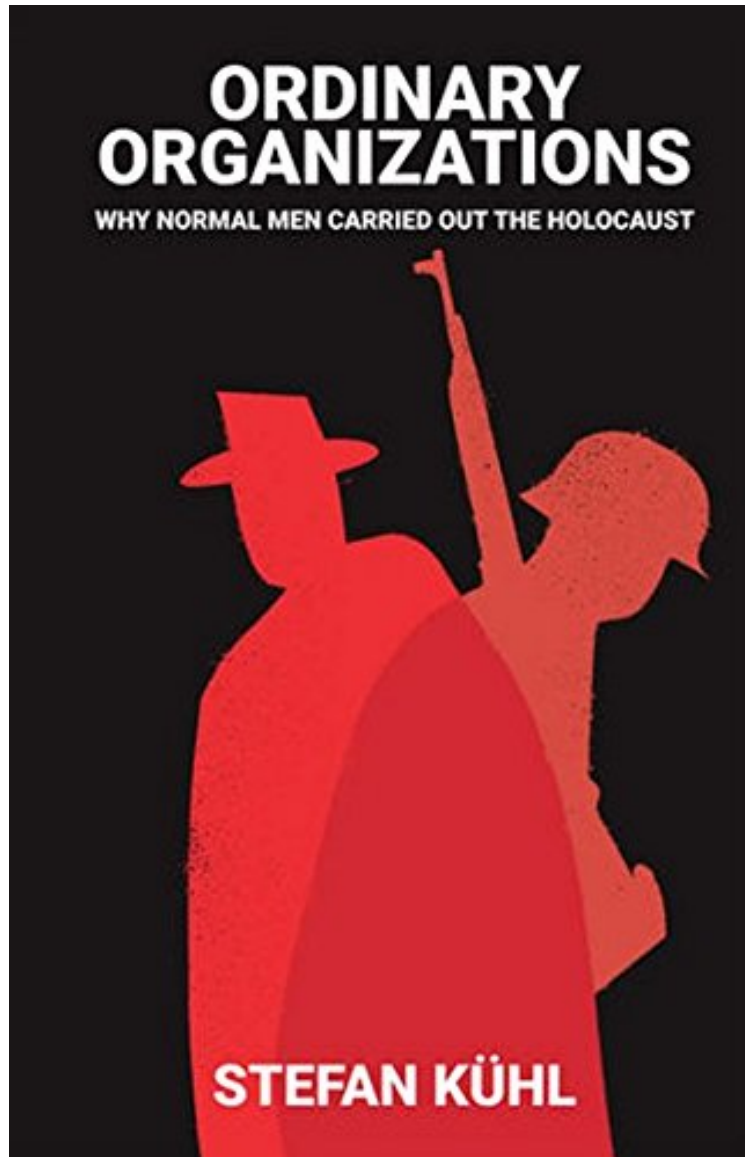


[Download free pdf] Ordinary Organisations: Why Normal Men Carried Out the Holocaust

Ordinary Organisations: Why Normal Men Carried Out the Holocaust

Stefan Khl

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Stefan Khl : Ordinary Organisations: Why Normal Men Carried Out the Holocaust before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ordinary Organisations: Why Normal Men Carried Out the Holocaust:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. How Organizations, Due to Their Very Nature, Were Critical in

Making Ordinary People Into Killers. By mirasreviews "Ordinary Organizations" is a discussion by Stefan Kuhl, Professor of Sociology at the University of Bielefeld, of the role that ordinary organizations played in making ordinary people willing to carry out mass murder and other heinous crimes against their fellow humans that constituted the Holocaust in Nazi Germany. By "ordinary organizations", he means those that exist normally, not those created by a totalitarian state for a specific purpose. In this case, Kuhl is discussing ordinary state organizations of force, such as police or military. He specifically uses Hamburg Reserve Police Battalion 101, stationed in Poland during the War, to illustrate his ideas, as there is a relative abundance of information about its activities. Kuhl brings sociological systems theory to the question of why ordinary people acted so abominably but were loving parents, good neighbors, and returned to everyday life after the War. Kuhl presents "an analysis that is informed by sociology but applicable to a wider discussion of the Holocaust." For that reason, he is light on the sociological jargon. His ideas are presented clearly so that scholars in other fields as well as laypeople can understand them. He feels that Holocaust researchers have generally had an "insufficiently complex view of the organizations involved in the Holocaust," and that is the void he intends to fill. Kuhl asserts that it was their membership in organizations that explains why and how "ordinary men" and "ordinary Germans" participated in the Holocaust. Hamburg Reserve Police Battalion 101 included over 500 men who had previously held civilian jobs. The men were middle-aged family men of working- and lower-middle class background. 32.5% were Nazi party members during the War but not necessarily before it. Their average age was just under 40 years. For two years, Battalion 101 participated in ghetto clearances, liquidations, deportations, and mass shootings of Jews in Poland. In July 1942, Battalion 101 executed 1200-1500 Jewish residents of the village of Jzefw. Kuhl often refers to this incident as an example of how the organization functioned, because it is well-documented. It is the men's motives that Kuhl is trying to pin down, and he begins by explaining why that is so difficult. Kuhl briefly addresses other proposed explanations for the behavior of "ordinary men" in the Holocaust fanaticism, sadism, indoctrination, Germanness, hatred of Jews- and explains why these are either inapplicable or inadequate. "While it is not possible for sociology to say anything about a person's true motives," he says, "it is possible to examine the organizations to which a person belongs to see what means of motivations the organization employs." Those potential means of motivation are: identification with a goal, coercion, collegiality, money, and attractive activities. Organizations use a combination of methods, but, in the end, motives are incidental. Organizations just want people to do what is expected of them. Chapters two through six examine each of the above-mentioned means of motivation as it applied to Police Battalions in Germany and specifically to Battalion 101. This isn't as straightforward as it may seem. For example, the police need not have identified with genocidal Nazi goals so much as placed those acts within their "zone of indifference," a concept that Kuhl returns to repeatedly. And, although Kuhl considers the Police Battalions to have been coercive organizations, there were enough "opportunities for evasion" to make the actions attributable to individuals, not only to the organization. After addressing the means of motivation, Kuhl moves on to elucidating the difference between the various motives to join an organization and its expectations of its membership. Kuhl dedicates one chapter to the legality of what the men of Battalion 101 did not if the acts were legal, though he touches on that, but if the men could have reasonably believed they were legal. On this issue, Kuhl takes an unusually soft position. His "gray zone theory" is that, although some acts of barbarity were explicitly legal at the time, the men could not have known whether something like the massacre at Jzefw was legal or not, though they didn't give it much thought. Kuhl concludes that, while external conditions were also necessary, "the Holocaust as we know it could only be carried out because the Nazi state was able to rely on organizations. Organizations compel their members to do things they would not do outside the organization." 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Sociological Perspective to try to understand man's inhumanity against man By bronx book nerd One of the major questions that emerged from the Holocaust was how could ordinary men commit such atrocities. Reasons and motives have been offered extreme anti-Semitism; opportunism for sociopaths; etc. The reasons have been compartmentalized generally into those resulting from external forces structuralism and those resulting from internal forces voluntarism. The former can perhaps be captured in the stereotype of the well-oiled German machine that was put in place to enable the Holocaust, making participants mere order-following cogs in machine; the latter can perhaps be captured in the personas that have been highlighted as particularly brutal or indifferent to human suffering; e.g. the man who ran Auschwitz or perhaps the brutal guards at the concentration camps. In this work, author Kuhl offers a hybrid explanation from the perspective of sociology. The cause can be attributed to characteristics of organizations that can potentially enable acts of atrocity. For example, he presents the concept of zones of indifference in organizations, where the members of any organization can be expected to conduct a potentially wide variety of act, not all of which would have been explicitly recruited for or advertised (a salesman for example who is asked to be the MC at an awards presentation). This zone can expand over time include acts that are more extreme, as they did in for the police battalion from Hamburg, which was the subject of this study. At the other end are the influences on the person from others. One of the big factors in the type of acts carried out by the battalion was the role of peer pressure and camaraderie as there was a cost to be paid in not carrying ones weight, if it can be called that. In sum, Kuhl combines these two aspects of existence in an organization to conclude that these factors played a significant role in determining how otherwise ordinary men in an ordinary organization could commit such extreme acts against other humans. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

An academic attempts to understand why ordinary men murder innocent men, women and children
By Jerry Saperstein
This is a book by an academic for an academic audience. As may be expected, the writing style is convoluted, laden with the jargon of academic sociology, draws heavily on the obscure work of obscure academics and is highly speculative. Yet it is not without use. Ultimately Daniel Goldhagens 1996 *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* will be far more informative for the typical reader on the role of ordinary Germans in the mass murders of Jews and others. Kuhl relies heavily on this work. Kuhl posits that being in an organization played a major role in conditioning these ordinary men to brutalize and murder innocent people. This is, of course, obvious and true. Ordinary people do not ordinarily murder innocent people. Make them members of an organization with freedom from punishment for engaging in otherwise impermissible behavior and they will engage in it. Anyway, Kuhl is a difficult read and often dry as a desert, but it does lend a somewhat different perspective on the participation of ordinary people in mass slaughter. However, I doubt that people who possess only a passing interest in the subject will get past the first few pages. To understand Kuhl, you'll also need familiarity with many of the works he cites and relies upon. Approach with caution.
Jerry

During the Holocaust, 99 percent of all Jewish killings were carried out by members of state organizations. In this groundbreaking book, Stefan Khl offers a new analysis of the integral role that membership in organizations played in facilitating the annihilation of European Jews under the Nazis. Drawing on the well-researched case of the mass killings of Jews by a Hamburg reserve police battalion, Khl shows how ordinary men from ordinary professions were induced to carry out massacres. It may have been that coercion, money, identification with the end goal, the enjoyment of brutality, or the expectations of their comrades impelled the members of the police battalion to join the police units and participate in ghetto liquidations, deportations, and mass shootings. But ultimately, argues Khl, the question of immediate motives, or indeed whether members carried out tasks with enthusiasm or reluctance, is of secondary importance. The crucial factor in explaining what they did was the integration of individuals into an organizational framework that prompted them to perform their roles. This book makes a major contribution to our understanding of the Holocaust by demonstrating the fundamental role played by organizations in persuading ordinary Germans to participate in the annihilation of the Jews. It will be an invaluable resource for students and scholars of organizations, violence, and modern German history, as well as for anyone interested in genocide and the Holocaust.

In this masterly researched and subtly conceptualized in-depth analysis of the infamous Police Battalion 101, Stefan Khl shows hauntingly how the normality of constraints, enrichment, comradeship, routine, and legality enabled Nazi perpetrators to achieve the ultimate abnormality. Ordinary Organizations will soon be considered as one of the key inquiries into the Holocaust. Thomas Khne, Clark University
An extremely interesting book, engaging with theoretical approaches to understanding the Holocaust. Khl makes a strong case for the explanatory power of organizational sociology in understanding how ordinary men could be brought to engage in acts of killing without seeing themselves as perpetrators. A controversial and stimulating read. Mary Fulbrook, University College London
About the Author
Stefan Khl is Professor of Sociology at the University of Bielefeld.