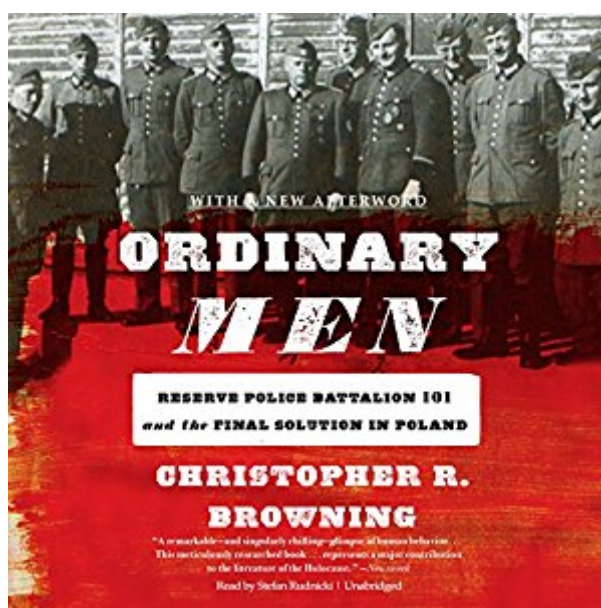


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Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 And The Final Solution In Poland



Synopsis

Ordinary Men is the true story of Reserve Police Battalion 101 of the German Order Police, which was responsible for mass shootings as well as roundups of Jewish people for deportation to Nazi death camps in Poland in 1942. Browning argues that most of the men of RPB 101 were not fanatical Nazis but, rather, ordinary middle-aged working-class men who committed these atrocities out of a mixture of motives, including the group dynamics of conformity, deference to authority, role adaptation, and the altering of moral norms to justify their actions. Very quickly three groups emerged within the battalion: a core of eager killers, a plurality who carried out their duties reliably but without initiative, and a small minority who evaded participation in the acts of killing without diminishing the murderous efficiency of the battalion whatsoever. While this book discusses a specific Reserve Unit during WWII, the general argument Browning makes is that most people succumb to the pressures of a group setting and commit actions they would never do of their own volition. Ordinary Men is a powerful, chilling, and important work with themes and arguments that continue to resonate today.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 9 hours and 26 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Blackstone Audio, Inc.

Audible.com Release Date: February 28, 2017

Language: English

ASIN: B01N39UT7U

Best Sellers Rank: #28 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Europe #38 in Books > History > Europe > Germany #61 in Books > History > World > Jewish > Holocaust

Customer Reviews

Do you think people are inherently good or bad. Perhaps our desire to adapt and survive in even dire cultures or circumstances is a better way to understand how an individual's civil roles can decay into barbarism. This book touches on that, how a man could abstain from killing unarmed people under orders and then later enjoy the process of hunting defenseless people for the purposes of genocide.

This book is amazing. Don't get me wrong, it's not a happy story or anything. It's actual history. You just learn so much about another side of the Holocaust! This was a reading assignment for class, and sometimes it would make me sick to my stomach but I loved it anyway. And it's the kind of book that you need to read more than once. Will definitely re-read it to grasp what I missed the first time, there's just so much! Loved it. I recommend it to anyone who wants to know more about what was going on in Poland in 1942. This book is perfect.

This is the story of a group of "ordinary men" -- German reserve police. They weren't SS or even, for the most part, Nazis. Many weren't especially anti-semitic. Just a cross-section of German men. And they killed -- murdered, to be exact -- thousands of Jewish civilians, from infants to octogenarians. Some of them wept as they killed, some tried to avoid the killing, a tiny number flatly refused. But the great majority did their duty to the Fatherland and the Aryan race, leaving behind them villages, fields and woodlands stacked with thousands of corpses...and a question: How could they do it? They did it because they were told to, because the others were doing it, because they didn't want to look weak or let their comrades down. It's as simple -- and horrible -- as that.

Christopher Browning's investigative study, "Ordinary Men", lays out the research compiled on the Reserve Police Battalion 101. Battalion 101, a group of 500, ordinary middle-aged men, are assigned to commit atrocities upon civilian populations. The subject matter reveals that ordinary people can be brought to commit terrible, horrendous crimes. Riveting. Recommended.

Chilling report on how a killer is within us all - even within ordinary men. Browning shows how war really lowers the mental echelon of using extreme violence towards people who are totally defenseless. This, by the way, applies even today.

Carefully written. Insightful. Not overly judgmental or political. A straightforward presentation of the facts with well considered commentary. This is truly one of those books everyone needs to read.

Recommended for anyone interested in how "ordinary people" became the perpetrators of the Holocaust. The level of the denial of personal responsibility is remarkable.

This was a sobering read that detailed the activities of Reserve Police Battalion 101 (as the sub-title

to the book states). In short, I would recommend it to anyone who is interested in the activities around the holocaust during World War II outside of the concentration camps themselves. The content can be difficult to read at times, something that should go without saying. And by the author's own admission it tries to analyze possible motivations behind the members of the battalion which means it can appear to be "sympathizing" with them. This could certainly turn some readers off. I personally didn't get that impression but would warn any potential reader that the perspective of the author as a researcher into the motivations of the subjects could be off-putting. It by no means made light of the activities of the battalion and you are reminded of their horrible actions time and time again. It was considerably detailed without being too long. The final chapter (prior to the afterward) is entirely devoted to discussing why a group of "ordinary men" would do what this battalion did. It includes research, some of which is very well known, that has been done regarding following the masses and obeying authority. I would put it in the category of psychology as much as history so keep that in mind if you're considering reading it. That element of the book is essential to the overall picture that it leaves you with. Overall, I felt it was an excellent book although one that left me with serious concerns about humanity and in fact left me with a more complicated perspective of what drives "ordinary men" to horrendous activities than I went in with.

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