

Maayan Armelin

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Armelin examines the dynamics of violent behavior in the context of intergroup relations and conflicts. For her dissertation, she explores how the Einsatzgruppen (EG) became instrumental for the Nazi regime to promote genocide against the Jews and mass crimes against other victim groups. The units' inner social hierarchies and the officers' leadership styles are central elements of the project. Armelin looks at the Einsatz- and Sonderkommandos, the battalions to which members were assigned, and at the Teilkommandos, the small operating platoons within them. These groups formed the perpetrators' immediate social environment and were comprised of members of the various security police institutions including from the SD, general SS, Gestapo, Kripo, and Waffen-SS. Conceptual frameworks of social psychology and sociology such as intergroup relations, leadership, military psychology, and conformity in novel groups reveal how the Teilkommandos' social structure and composition enhanced members' willingness to participate in mass executions. Armelin also examines how concepts like comradeship, Ian Kershaw's principal of "working towards the Führer, German military traditions, and the culture within the Nazi institutions interacted to promote genocide.

Two EG units that operated in the Nazi occupied Soviet Union are the focus of her research. Einsatzkommando 3 (Einsatzgruppe A), operated in Lithuania, and Sonderkommando 7a (EG B) advanced through southern Lithuania and Belarus. Studying both of these battalions helps to establish the nature of social relations and leadership styles across EG units, as well as differences and similarities between them. Her main sources are testimonies provided by former EG members during trials conducted in West Germany during the 1960s and 1970s. Armelin assembled much of the relevant protocols in the German national archive in Ludwigsburg, and at the main German state archive of Hessen in Wiesbaden. She plans another research visit to Wiesbaden and a visit to the German national archive in Koblenz, in order to review files containing demographic data and career information on the units' officers.

In July, Armelin presented her work at two international conferences. The first was the annual conference of the International Society of Political Psychology (ISPP) held in Lisbon, Portugal titled Empowering Citizens in Illeberal Times: The Political Psychology of Oppression and Resistance. She presented "Social Hierarchies and Leadership Styles in the SS-Einsatzgruppen - Coercion and Conformity

in Dictatorial Groups.” At the 14th Conference of the International Association of Genocide Scholars in Phnom Penh, Cambodia titled “The Missing Picture”: Rethinking Genocide Studies & Prevention, Armelin presented “The Einsatzgruppen institution as instrumental for the Nazi genocide”.