Medical War Crimes: Nazis Murdered the Mentally, Physically Disabled

By Alex Berezow, PhD — July 9, 2018

Credit: US [1]

One of my best friends recently commented that it's disturbing how many Nazis, communists, and terrorists he's friends with on Facebook.

His point, of course, was sarcastic. Labeling people in the harshest of terms is one of the features of our hyperpartisan society. Anyone we disagree with on the Left is a socialist or communist; anyone we disagree with on the Right is a Nazi. Everybody else is a terrorist sympathizer. Such is the condition of our national discourse in 2018.

The Nazi analogy is particularly odious. Really, nothing in history compares to the crimes against humanity committed by the Nazis. While the Communists racked up a far larger body count, Nazi ideology was unique in its evil.

Adolf Hitler and the madmen with whom he surrounded himself were among the most ruthlessly effective propagandists in world history. Using a potent combination of political demagoguery, racism, religious symbolism, national mythology, and pseudoscience, the Nazis created a cult-like following that justified the slaughter of anyone who was not a member of their tribe, that is, the Aryan race.

Jewish people were the highest profile victims of the Nazi killing machine, but they weren't the only ones. Anybody who was "impure" was potentially targeted for extermination. Thus, the Nazis also persecuted and murdered Slavs, Roma, Catholics, gay people, and the mentally and physically handicapped. This latter group was the subject of a moving essay in *The Lancet Psychiatry*.

Medical War Crimes: The Nazis Murdered Hundreds of Thousands of Disabled People

Instead of eliciting compassion and empathy, the mentally and physically handicapped were thought to be "useless eaters [2]." According to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum [1], Hitler believed wartime "was the best time for the elimination of the incurably ill."

Unbelievably, medical doctors collaborated with the Nazis to identify and euthanize any person who they deemed "unfit" or "unworthy of life." These souls were starved to death, given a lethal injection, or placed into gas chambers. In fact, these gas chambers later served as the model for those used in concentration camps.

The number of disabled people who were murdered by the Nazis is unknown. Dr. Thomas Müller, author of the aforementioned essay, cites more than 300,000 people, but that does not include the disabled who were murdered in the occupied lands of central and eastern Europe. As Dr. Müller writes, the "Einsatzgruppen systematically murdered patients in psychiatric institutions," and "Gas buses were used as mobile gas chambers... in an area that stretched from the Baltic States to the Crimea."

Nazi Comparisons Are an Obscenity

For writers in the early 21st Century, being called a Nazi is one of the main hazards of the job. I've been called a Nazi [3] for supporting the use of biotechnology to allow women with mitochondrial disease the chance to have healthy children. I've also been called a Nazi [4] for saying that allowing homeless people to suffer and die on the street is inhumane, and they should be involuntarily hospitalized to prevent this.

However, in our postmodern society, truth is indistinguishable from lies [5] and good and evil are morally equivalent. Keep this in mind any time a person casually smears somebody with the word "Nazi." Such an utterance is an obscenity, and a desecration [6] to the memory of those lives extinguished in the Holocaust.

Source [7]: Thomas Müller. "Remembering psychiatric patients murdered by the Nazi regime in Germany." *Lancet Psychiatry*. Published online: May 24, 2018. DOI: 10.1016/S2215-0366(18)30213-X

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Links
[1] https://www.ushmm.org/outreach/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007683
[2] https://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/online-exhibitions/special-focus/nazi-persecution-of-the-disabled
[3] https://www.realclearscience.com/blog/2014/03/do_catholics_think_im_a_nazi.html
[4] https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/after-14-years-ive-had-it-im-leaving-seattle/
[5] https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/07/05/casual-lies-postmodernism-hallmark-societal-decline-13158
[6] https://www.wsj.com/articles/trumps-critics-desecrate-the-holocaust-1529623337

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