

# AmeriNazification: The Doubling of the American Soul

Dr. Marjorie L. Coppock  
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Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, in his book, *The Gulag Archipelago*, describes the atrocities of the Soviet prison system. In discussing the men and women responsible for the torture and execution of political prisoners, he asks,

“Where did this wolf-tribe appear from among our people? Does it really stem from our own roots? Our own blood? It is our own.”

Solzhenitsyn concludes “If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1961, Hannah Arendt reported on the trial of Otto Adolf Eichmann. She describes the banality of evil, noting that while the deeds Eichmann committed were monstrous, Eichmann, himself, was quite ordinary, neither demonic nor monstrous. What Arendt noticed was thoughtlessness, an inability to think. His responses were clichés, stock phrases, and standardized codes of expression.<sup>2</sup>

We revolt in horror when we consider what was done in Nazi Germany by medical doctors. In his book, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*, Robert Jay Lifton details the systematic genocide in Auschwitz and elsewhere. He argues “that the medicalization of killing – the imagery of killing in the name of healing was crucial to that terrible step.” He notes that the Nazi motivation of “killing as a therapeutic imperative” for the good of the Volk compelled medical doctors to participate in the Nazi eugenic vision.<sup>3</sup>

In his research Lifton interviewed three groups of people. The central group consisted of twenty-eight physicians and one pharmacist who had been involved at high levels in Nazi medicine. The second group consisted of twelve former Nazi nonmedical professionals of prominence; including lawyers, judges, economists, teachers, administrators and Party officials. The third group consisted of eighty former Auschwitz prisoners who had worked on medical blocks, more than half of them doctors, the majority Jewish.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr. *The Gulag Archipelago*. In *Literary Cavalcade*. January 1976. Vol.28. No. 4. Pg. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Assy, Bethania. “Eichmann, the Banality of Evil, and Thinking in Arendt’s Thought”. Pg. 1  
<http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Cont/ContAssy.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Lifton, Robert Jay. *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*. Basic Books. 1986, 2000. Pgs. 14-15.

<sup>4</sup> Lifton, pg. 7.

Lifton contends, “while ideological fanatics are crucial to setting up the structures and the dynamics of mass killing, very ordinary people, holding only bits and pieces of that ideology can be effectively absorbed into these draconian structures.”<sup>5</sup>

## **Nazi Atrocities and their Justifications**<sup>6</sup>

The **biomedical vision**, strengthening the race and relieving suffering by preserving the most valuable genetic stock, was the overarching principle of the Nazi regime. **Killing to heal** became a therapeutic imperative for social well being. **Mercy killing** and **euthanasia** were seen as responsible medical practices. ‘**Life unworthy of life**’ was destroyed.

The universities **attacked** concepts of **liberty, equality**, autonomy and freedom of the teacher. Academia required troop like cooperation in support of National Socialism. Christian **compassion for the weak** was attacked.

Doctors were disciplined into the ‘**ice cold logic of the necessary**’. Physicians were identified as **servants of the state**. Personal responsibility for decisions was taken away from the individual.

**Hitler** became Chancellor of the Third Reich on January 30, **1933**. **Sterilization** of the ‘**hereditarily sick**’ was the first application of the biomedical vision, including the feeble-minded, mentally ill and those with hereditary physical deformities. Number estimates of those sterilized range between 200,000-350,000.

**Mercy killing** became the ‘responsible medical practice’ in 1939. First **children under 3** with **hereditary diseases** were killed, using luminal tablets or starvation. The dead children were autopsied and **specimens taken for research**. Killing proceeded to **children under 16**. By October of 1939 the T4 Program called for the killing of ‘**unworthy**’ **adults**. Patients in the entire German psychiatric community were transferred to killing stations.

Hitler decided on the use of **carbon monoxide** as the most humane and quick method. People were led naked into a fake shower room and within 5 minutes the room was ventilated.

In 1941, **Special Treatment**, the euphemism for killing in general, was extended to the **concentration camps**. The selection formula assigned the debilitated, children, and women with children to be **killed**. Intact young adults were sent to **labor camps** or to medical centers to be used for **medical research**.

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<sup>5</sup> Lifton, Preface X.

<sup>6</sup> Lifton, Part 1.

## Actual number of atrocities

The international Jewish community has preserved the memory of the tragic genocide of the 6 million Jews by the Nazi regime. However, the actual number of atrocities far exceeds this number. In his book, *Democide: Nazi Genocide and Mass Murder*, R. J. Rummel documents that **21 million** is closer to the actual number of people killed in this holocaust, which included the handicapped, aged, sick, homosexuals, Slavs, Serbs, Czechs, Italians, Poles, French Ukrainians and many others.

Those who opposed the Nazis, including Germans, were also slain, including critics, pacifists, conscientious objectors, and campus rebels.<sup>7</sup> The Jehovah's Witnesses, numbering about 25,000 in Germany, were the only religious group to take a consistent organized stand against the Nazi regime. They spoke out boldly against the evils of Nazism. Thousands suffered in Nazi prisons and about 2,000 died.<sup>8</sup>

## The Six-Step Attitudinal Change Plan<sup>9</sup>

Hitler's propaganda machine prepared the German people to agree that the government should take over life and death decisions for the good of the country. Millions of people were drawn into Hitler's killing machine either through participation or acquiescence. When Hitler took over power in 1933 only a minority of doctors and nurses held to the practice of euthanasia.

Changes in personal values are necessary for individuals to come to the point where they will either sanction, or participate in, mass killing. Hitler cleverly used a six-step attitudinal change plan whereby a person's attitude about a subject is changed without the person being aware of being manipulated.

**Step 1:** An unacceptable, offensive behavior is advocated by a respected expert in a respected forum.

\*In 1920 two respected German professors, Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche, published their work, "*The Permission to Destroy Life Unworthy of Life*".

**Step 2:** The public is initially shocked and outraged.

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<sup>7</sup> Rummel, R. J. 1992. *Democide: Nazi Genocide and Mass Murder*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Pub. <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/NAZIS.CHAP1.HTM>.

<sup>8</sup> *Jehovah's Witnesses Stand Firm Against Nazi Assault*. Teaching Guide for the Documentary Video. 1996. Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, Inc. pg. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Compassionate Doctors – or- Nazi Doctors?. 2004. <http://www.cuttingedge.org/News/n2025.cfm>. 2/23/2009.

\* The majority of German medical professionals strongly opposed this tragic idea.

**Step 3:** The behavior becomes a subject of public debate.

\* It was considered a positive good that the subject was out in the open and being debated.

**Step 4:** The process of repetition and talking about the subject gradually dulls the effect of shock.

\* Many people drifted away from their position against euthanasia toward the deadly center, persuaded by arguments of ‘respected’ authorities.

**Step 5.** No longer shocked by the former taboo, many are drawn toward it and become ‘more open’ toward the behavior.

**The stage is now set for :**

**Step 6.** People, no longer outraged, either seek ways to moderate extremes or actively pursue ways to achieve the acceptance of the behavior.

## **Doubling**<sup>10</sup>

Lifton notes that most Nazi doctors were not beasts, they were very ordinary people with families and children. However, the whole society failed to exercise the faculty of thinking critically.

In outlining the psychological principle he calls “doubling”, Lifton explains how Nazi doctors could not only kill but organize in behalf of that project. Doubling involves the formation of a second, relatively autonomous self, which enables one to participate in evil, while maintaining a prior self that continues as a family person and humane member of society.

**Explanatory principle** - The Nazi project was a vision of absolute control over the evolutionary process, over the biological human future, including that of **assembling and preserving the most valuable stocks** of basic racial elements. Doctors were called forth to become biological activists.

**Communal ethos** - Lifton notes that “every discipline courts illusions of understanding that which is not understood” This communal understanding acts as a replacement for individual moral judgment. The life of the nation was to take precedence over conflicts of conscience. ‘**Gemeinschaft**’ was the vision of absolute unity of the community. ‘**Gleichschaltung**’ was the coordination and synchronization of all social institutions, totally ideologized and controlled by trusted Nazis.

**Professional indoctrination** - includes the psychological process of adapting to the expectations of the discipline. The expected **pattern is established under duress**. If the environment is extreme, and

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<sup>10</sup> Lifton, Pgs 12-17, 33-35, 422-426, 442-450.

the individual wishes to remain in it, doubling is necessary. The process is akin to entering a religious order. The past is left behind and the person is reborn into a new order.

**Confirmation and Baptism** – When confirmed by someone in authority, the Nazi doctor becomes ‘baptized’ when **he conducts his first selection** (placed in the position to decide who among incoming patients or prisoners will live and who will die).

**Euphemisms describe the process.** – Different words were used to cover the reality of what was happening. ‘Killing’ became Ramp duty, Final Solution, Evacuation, Transfer, Selection, Sorting healthy from the sick, Special Treatment.

**Physic numbing/ Derealization/ Disavowal/ Heavy Drinking** - It is probably not possible to kill another human being without numbing oneself to the reality of what is happening. To **avoid feelings of guilt**, physic numbing diminishes the capacity or inclination to feel. The act is defined in a way that divests oneself from the reality of what is happening. Heavy drinking and alcohol were central to the pattern of bonding and creating an altered state in which conflicts need not be viewed as serious

**A shared process, a group norm** – “A claim to virtue was maintained by clinging to a sense of ‘**status honor**’... of good standing within the mores of one’s group.”

**Diffusion of responsibility** - The wielder of Nazi leadership was Hitler. Doctors held no freedom of conscience in deciding whether or not to obey orders. They were powerless cogs in a vast machine, a **faceless detached bureaucracy**. “I just have to make the best of it” was a way to renounce responsibility.

## **Doubling in America – How do we line up?**

This paper encourages the reader to examine the concept of ‘doubling’ (described above) as it is represented in the United States in various social behaviors related to processes of violence and killing, including: **abortion**, **euthanasia**, the **death penalty**, and **torture**. A separate paper is included discussing each of these subjects. (References for each subject are included at the end of the section.)

- \* Abortion Divides the Nation
- \* Euthanasia Comes to the United States
- \* Bias and Error in the Death Penalty
- \* Torture – A Matter of Habit

The social arguments, justifications and practices related to these behaviors are examined. The reader is invited to compare their reality with the Nazi justifications of “killing in the name of healing”, “killing as a therapeutic imperative” and “life unworthy of life”.

Our present day ‘indoctrinations of political correctness’ come dangerously close to careless and thoughtless cliques, stock phrases, and standardized codes of expression. We mindlessly ‘buy into’ the

going explanations for behavior without examination or serious consideration of the consequences to our personal and social well-being. ‘Liberal’ and ‘conservative’ activists intimidate us into accepting behaviors that render atrocious consequences.

Lifton concludes his discussion on ‘doubling’ by saying,

**“In light of the recent record of professionals engaged in mass killing, can this be the century of doubling? Or, given the ever greater potential for professionalization of genocide, will that distinction belong to the twenty-first century? Or, may one ask a little more softly, can we interrupt the process – first, by naming it.” Pg. 465.**

# **AmeriNazification: The Doubling of the American Soul**

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April 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Denver, Colorado

We revolt in horror when we consider what was done in Nazi Germany by medical doctors.

In his book, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*, Robert Jay Lifton details the genocide in Germany. He argues that the imagery of killing in the name of healing was crucial to that terrible step. He notes that the Nazi motivation of “killing as a therapeutic imperative” for the good of the Volk compelled medical doctors to participate in the Nazi eugenic vision.<sup>11</sup>

In his research Lifton interviewed three groups of people. The central group consisted of twenty-eight physicians who were involved at high levels in Nazi medicine. The second group consisted of twelve former Nazi nonmedical professionals : including lawyers, judges, teachers, and administrators . The third group consisted of eighty former Auschwitz prisoners who had worked on medical blocks, more than half of them doctors, the majority Jewish.<sup>12</sup>

Along with Hannah Arendt, Lifton noted the banality of the people involved.

In 1961, Hannah Arendt reported on the trial of Otto Adolf Eichmann. She describes the banality of evil, noting that while the deeds Eichmann committed were monstrous, Eichmann, himself, was quite ordinary, neither demonic nor monstrous. What Arendt noticed was thoughtlessness, an inability to think. His responses were clichés, stock phrases, and standardized codes of expression.<sup>13</sup>

### **Nazi Atrocities and their Justifications**<sup>14</sup>

The overarching principle of the Nazi regime was the **biomedical vision to** strengthen the race and relieve suffering by preserving the most valuable genetic

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stock. **Killing to heal, Mercy killing and euthanasia** were seen as responsible medical practices. **'Life unworthy of life'** was destroyed.

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**Hitler** became Chancellor of the Third Reich in January of **1933**. **Sterilization** of the **'hereditarily sick'** was the first application of the biomedical vision, including the feeble-minded, mentally ill and those with hereditary physical deformities. 300,000 is a number estimate of those sterilized.

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**Communal ethos** -Communal understanding acted as a replacement for individual moral judgment. The life of the nation was to take precedence over conflicts of conscience. '**Gemeinschaft**' was the vision of absolute unity of the community.

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**Diffusion of responsibility** - Doctors held no freedom of conscience in deciding whether or not to obey orders. They were powerless cogs in a vast machine, a **faceless detached bureaucracy**.

### **The Six-Step Attitudinal Change Plan<sup>18</sup>**

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**Step 2:** The public is initially shocked and outraged.

\* The majority of German medical professionals strongly opposed this tragic idea.

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This paper encourages the reader to examine the concept of ‘doubling’ as it is represented in the United States in various social behaviors related to processes of

violence and killing, including: **abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, and torture.**

I'm discussing two behaviors advocated by liberals and two advocated by conservatives so no one feels left out or 'holier than the rest of us'.

A separate paper is included discussing each of these subjects. (References for each subject are included at the end of the section.)

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