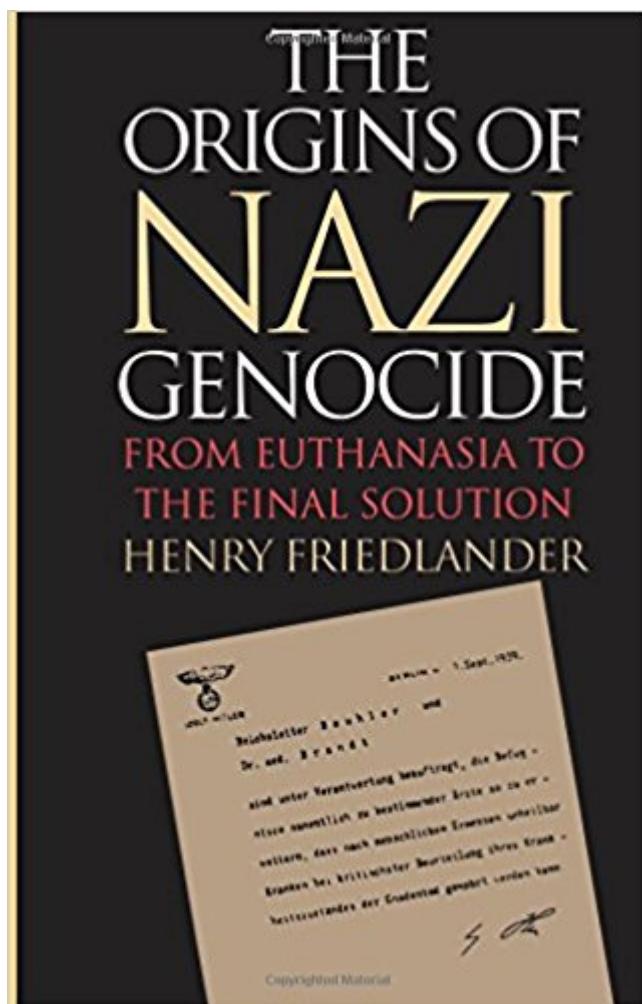


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# The Origins Of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia To The Final Solution



## **Synopsis**

Tracing the rise of racist and eugenic ideologies, Henry Friedlander explores in chilling detail how the Nazi program of secretly exterminating the handicapped and disabled evolved into the systematic destruction of Jews and Gypsies. He describes how the so-called euthanasia of the handicapped provided a practical model for the later mass murder, thereby initiating the Holocaust. The Nazi regime pursued the extermination of Jews, Gypsies, and the handicapped based on a belief in the biological, and thus absolute, inferiority of those groups. To document the connection between the assault on the handicapped and the Final Solution, Friedlander shows how the legal restrictions and exclusionary policies of the 1930s, including mass sterilization, led to mass murder during the war. He also makes clear that the killing centers where the handicapped were gassed and cremated served as the models for the extermination camps. Based on extensive archival research, the book also analyzes the involvement of the German bureaucracy and judiciary, the participation of physicians and scientists, and the nature of popular opposition.

## **Book Information**

Series: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution

Paperback: 448 pages

Publisher: The University of North Carolina Press (September 22, 1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0807846759

ISBN-13: 978-0807846759

Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 1.1 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 12 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #740,183 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #7 in Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Euthanasia #1461 in Books > History > World > Jewish > Holocaust #2427 in Books > History > Europe > Germany

## **Customer Reviews**

Friedlander's study tracks the Nazi program of genocide back to 1940 with the murder of some 5000 handicapped children, euthanasia that was subsequently expanded to include disabled Jews and Gypsies. The targeting of these three groups was based on the Nazis' belief in human inequality and their determination to ``cleanse the gene pool of the German nation.'' Thus began the euthanasia program in which debate over the most efficient method of mass murder led to the

construction of killing centers where crippled children were gassed and cremated. Friedlander shows that the success of the program convinced the Nazis that mass murder was technically workable, that ordinary citizens were willing to slaughter large numbers of innocent people. The killing centers became models for the extermination camps of the Final Solution. ``When all is said and done, we are still unable to grasp the reasons that seemingly normal men and women were able to commit such extraordinary crimes," concludes Friedlander, a history professor at Brooklyn College. Copyright 1995 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Never is a speculation presented without masses of material to back it up. It is a substantial book."Holocaust and Genocide Studies""If one has time to read only one book among the recent works on Nazi euthanasia, this is it. Christopher R. Browning, "Times Literary Supplement""Friedlander has written an excellent piece of historical research which establishes the similarities of the fates of three victim groups."Jewish History""Well researched, remarkably balanced in its judgments, and full of fresh insights. It deserves the widest possible readership."Journal of Modern History""One of the distinguishing features of this study is the meticulous description of the administration of the euthanasia program.Gordon A. Craig, "New York Review of Books""If one has time to read only one book among the recent works on Nazi euthanasia, this is it. Christopher R. Browning, "Times Literary Supplement" Well researched, remarkably balanced in its judgments, and full of fresh insights. It deserves the widest possible readership."Journal of Modern History" One of the distinguishing features of this study is the meticulous description of the administration of the euthanasia program.Gordon A. Craig, "New York Review of Books"

From Euthanasia to Genocide is a very very small step. This book is the best and wisest on the subject. It illustrates exactly how easy it was for Nazis to use the American psuedo-science of "eugenics" to aclimate Germany to "life unworthy of life." How simple to use the idea of "mercy death" to rid society of "useless eaters." The members of T4 were ruthless in their quest to define and rid Nazi Germany of deformed infants, the mentally ill, the deaf, the old, the young, the indigent, the DIFFERENT. No marginalised group was safe.Of the killing centers, Hadamar is the best known -- a hub, so to speak. Nobody really knows how many people were gassed there. The buses arrived like clockwork, on schedule... Day in; day out.Significantly, there was little civilian protest until T4 moved on to private Christian instutions. The "euthanasia" program was halted "officially" after

several churches protested the gassings of institutionalised patients. (Unofficially, the program went on until AFTER the end of the war!) The members of T4 were absorbed into the killing machine known as the Final Solution. Which, of course, was the goal all along....I reread The Origins of Nazi Genocide periodically just to remind myself that ANYONE can be marginalised -- including me and thee.

Probably the most in depth book on this often overlooked part of the Holocaust. The fact is the euthanasia T4 programme that existed in Germany before WW2 paved the way for the mass exterminations in Poland. Many of the personnel and equipment used in the T4 programme was and were moved from Germany and installed in the murder centres in Poland. Through tweaking this insidious system the Holocaust became the highly industrialized murder machine it eventually did. The writing is precise and backed up by numerous references. The whole ghastly system slowly becomes clear as you read through the book. A very unsettling read that questions human nature and how far people will descend. You still are left with the question " How could anyone be involved in something so utterly monstrous?"

As a Deaf person and an activist for the rights of the disabled in education and medical care, I was appalled to find out that the disabled were singled out for sterilization and euthanasia long before the Jews had been. I was even more upset that prior to medical school, I had never even heard of the willing collaboration of doctors and scientists in Germany with the Nazi political machine to rid their race of defective people (it didn't seem to matter when impairment began or how, or these people were educable and able to work). Not to ever dismiss the horror of the Jewish Holocaust and the amount of lives taken, but it is imperative that we remember and we teach that the slope leading to extermination of races began with the ideas of Social Darwinism, natural selection, and survival of the fittest, which were the scientific theories/beliefs used to justify the removal of anyone with a difference. This belief system still pervades society today, when someone like Kervorkian (who only worked with dead bodies) could take it upon himself to decide whether someone's life was of any worth, on the basis of 'normalcy'. Henry Friedlander does an excellent job of writing and researching into the lives and minds of the doctors and administrators who ran the secret programs that killed first, German children who were born with disabilities, then led to the removal from schools and homes of older children with disabilities to meet their deaths through starvation and drugs, and finally to include adults with disabilities in mass murders. It was on these people that the Nazis perfected their instruments of genocide, and yet, even at Nuremberg their suffering was dismissed

as "lives unworthy of life" just because of their disabilities. This can happen again, especially with the completion of the human genome. NO laws have been suggested to curtail the use of information gleaned from the genome to prevent discrimination of any kind against the disabled. It is of great concern that the disabled community watch opponents of the Americans with Disabilities Act try to get this civil rights act revoked as being expensive, especially since it serves those who many (including Clint Eastwood apparently) feel are not productive members of society. The slippery slope begins at this point, and with these mindsets. It is imperative that students of medicine and students of science be made to read this book. It is only through education and remembering the children and families whose lives were destroyed that we can avoid allowing this Medical Holocaust from ever happening again. Karen Sadler, Science Education, University of Pittsburgh

The t 4 program was very informational but it played down the murder of the mentally ill. Possibly the author does not believe mental illness is a handicap. Very good sources and explores how death/genocide of all handicap and eugenics was accepted by the highest care takers of the vulnerable. But humans have jumped from the time of killing an injured kin to now just killing whoever is not worthy of life. The paper clip project tells the USA taking scientist world war 11 from Germany to USA. Some were criminals from the war.

Many are unaware that the mass murder of Jews in World World Two was preceeded by killing of the disabled and handicapped, considered useless mouths by the nazis. Many of the techniques perfected later originated here. Gassing, for instance, was first used on the disabled. The last victim was actually killed three weeks after Germany surrendered. Friedlander dismisses the popular notion that public protest ended this program, pointing out that the killing continued even after the initial cancellation in 1941. Officials simply changed the manner of death (lethal injection) and moved killing centers for reasons of secrecy. The church did not succeed in saving anyone. He also emphasizes the importance of connections in saving lives. Family members could save relations by removing them from state or private institutions. Those with no one to care for them perished. Everyone has a handicap of some kind, sadly a relative few were forced to pay the ultimate price.

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