

The True Face of Fascism

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The Murder of Jews, Communists and Gypsies In Gas Chambers was originally an AMERICAN idea!

Hitler and his henchmen victimized an entire continent and exterminated millions in his quest for a so-called Master Race. But the concept of a white, blond-haired, blue-eyed master Nordic race didn't originate with Hitler. The idea was created in the United States, and cultivated in California, decades before Hitler came to power. California eugenicists played an important, although little-known, role in the American eugenics movement's campaign for ethnic cleansing.

Eugenics was the pseudoscience aimed at "improving" the human race. In its extreme, racist form, this meant wiping away all human beings deemed "unfit," preserving only those who conformed to a Nordic stereotype. Elements of the philosophy were enshrined as national policy by forced sterilization and segregation laws, as well as marriage restrictions, enacted in 27 states. In 1909, California became the third state to adopt such laws. Ultimately, eugenics practitioners coercively sterilized some 60,000 Americans, barred the marriage of thousands, forcibly segregated thousands in "colonies," and persecuted untold numbers in ways we are just learning. Before World War II, nearly half of coercive sterilizations were done in California, and even after the war, the state accounted for a third of all such surgeries.

California was considered an epicenter of the American eugenics movement. During the 20th century's first decades, California's eugenicists included potent but little-known race scientists, such as Army venereal disease specialist Dr. Paul Popenoe, citrus magnate Paul Gosney, Sacramento banker Charles Goethe, as well as members of the California state Board of Charities and Corrections and the University of California Board of Regents.

Eugenics would have been so much bizarre parlor talk had it not been for extensive financing by corporate philanthropies, specifically the Carnegie Institution, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Harriman railroad fortune. They were all in league with some of America's most respected scientists from such prestigious universities as Stanford, Yale, Harvard and Princeton. These academicians espoused race theory and race science, and then faked and twisted data to serve eugenics' racist aims.

Stanford President David Starr Jordan originated the notion of "race and blood" in his 1902 racial epistle "Blood of a Nation," in which the university scholar declared that human qualities and conditions such as talent and poverty were passed through the blood.

In 1904, the Carnegie Institution established a laboratory complex at Cold Spring Harbor on Long Island that stockpiled millions of index cards on ordinary Americans, as researchers carefully plotted the removal of families, bloodlines and whole peoples. From Cold Spring Harbor, eugenics advocates agitated in the legislatures of America, as well as the nation's social service agencies and associations.

The Harriman railroad fortune paid local charities, such as the New York Bureau of Industries and

Immigration, to seek out Jewish, Italian and other immigrants in New York and other crowded cities and subject them to deportation, confinement or forced sterilization.

The Rockefeller Foundation helped found the German eugenics program and even funded the program that Josef Mengele worked in before he went to Auschwitz.

Much of the spiritual guidance and political agitation for the American eugenics movement came from California's quasi-autonomous eugenic societies, such as Pasadena's Human Betterment Foundation and the California branch of the American Eugenics Society, which coordinated much of their activity with the Eugenics Research Society in Long Island. These organizations -- which functioned as part of a closely-knit network -- published racist eugenic newsletters and pseudoscientific journals, such as *Eugenical News* and *Eugenics*, and propagandized for the Nazis.

The most commonly suggested method of eugenicide in the United States was a "lethal chamber" or public, locally operated gas chambers. In 1918, Popenoe, the Army venereal disease specialist during World War I, co-wrote the widely used textbook, *Applied Eugenics*, which argued, "From an historical point of view, the first method which presents itself is execution . . . Its value in keeping up the standard of the race should not be underestimated." *Applied Eugenics* also devoted a chapter to "Lethal Selection," which operated "through the destruction of the individual by some adverse feature of the environment, such as excessive cold, or bacteria, or by bodily deficiency."

Eugenic breeders believed American society was not ready to implement an organized lethal solution. But many mental institutions and doctors practiced improvised medical lethality and passive euthanasia on their own. One institution in Lincoln, Ill., fed its incoming patients milk from tubercular cows believing a eugenically strong individual would be immune. Thirty to 40 percent annual death rates resulted at Lincoln. Some doctors practiced passive eugenicide one newborn infant at a time. Others doctors at mental institutions engaged in lethal neglect.

Even the U.S. Supreme Court endorsed aspects of eugenics. In its infamous 1927 decision, Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, "It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind . . . Three generations of imbeciles are enough." This decision opened the floodgates for thousands to be coercively sterilized or otherwise persecuted as subhuman. Years later, the Nazis at the Nuremberg trials quoted Holmes' words in their own defense.

Only after eugenics became entrenched in the United States was the campaign transplanted into Germany, in no small measure through the efforts of California eugenicists, who published booklets idealizing sterilization and circulated them to German officials and scientists.

Hitler studied American eugenics laws. He tried to legitimize his anti-Semitism by medicalizing it, and wrapping it in the more palatable pseudoscientific facade of eugenics. Hitler was able to recruit more followers among reasonable Germans by claiming that science was on his side. Hitler's race hatred sprung from his own mind, but the intellectual outlines of the eugenics Hitler adopted in 1924 were made in America.

During the '20s, Carnegie Institution eugenic scientists cultivated deep personal and professional relationships with Germany's fascist eugenicists. In *Mein Kampf*, published in 1924, Hitler quoted American eugenic ideology and openly displayed a thorough knowledge of American eugenics. "There is today one state," wrote Hitler, "in which at least weak beginnings toward a better conception (of immigration) are noticeable. Of course, it is not our model German Republic, but the

United States."

During the Reich's early years, eugenicists across America welcomed Hitler's plans as the logical fulfillment of their own decades of research and effort. California eugenicists republished Nazi propaganda for American consumption. They also arranged for Nazi scientific exhibits, such as an August 1934 display at the L.A. County Museum, for the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association.

In 1934, as Germany's sterilizations were accelerating beyond 5,000 per month, the California eugenics leader C. M. Goethe, upon returning from Germany, ebulliently bragged to a colleague, "You will be interested to know that your work has played a powerful part in shaping the opinions of the group of intellectuals who are behind Hitler in this epoch-making program. Everywhere I sensed that their opinions have been tremendously stimulated by American thought . . . I want you, my dear friend, to carry this thought with you for the rest of your life, that you have really jolted into action a great government of 60 million people."

More than just providing the scientific roadmap, America funded Germany's eugenic institutions.

By 1926, Rockefeller had donated some \$410,000 -- almost \$4 million in today's money -- to hundreds of German researchers. In May 1926, Rockefeller awarded \$250,000 toward creation of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Psychiatry. Among the leading psychiatrists at the German Psychiatric Institute was Ernst Rüdin, who became director and eventually an architect of Hitler's systematic medical repression.

Another in the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute's complex of eugenics institutions was the Institute for Brain Research. Since 1915, it had operated out of a single room. Everything changed when Rockefeller money arrived in 1929. A grant of \$317,000 allowed the institute to construct a major building and take center stage in German race biology. The institute received additional grants from the Rockefeller Foundation during the next several years. Leading the institute, once again, was Hitler's medical henchman Ernst Rüdin. Rüdin's organization became a prime director and recipient of the murderous experimentation and research conducted on Jews, Gypsies and others.

Beginning in 1940, thousands of Germans taken from old age homes, mental institutions and other custodial facilities were systematically gassed. Between 50,000 and 100,000 were eventually killed.

Leon Whitney, executive secretary of the American Eugenics Society, declared of Nazism, "While we were pussy-footing around ... the Germans were calling a spade a spade."

A special recipient of Rockefeller funding was the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics in Berlin. For decades,

American eugenicists had craved twins to advance their research into heredity.

The Institute was now prepared to undertake such research on an unprecedented level. On May 13, 1932, the Rockefeller Foundation in New York dispatched a radiogram to its Paris office: JUNE MEETING EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NINE THOUSAND DOLLARS OVER THREE YEAR PERIOD TO KWG INSTITUTE ANTHROPOLOGY FOR RESEARCH ON TWINS AND EFFECTS ON LATER GENERATIONS OF SUBSTANCES TOXIC FOR GERM PLASM.

At the time of Rockefeller's endowment, Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer, a hero in American eugenics circles, functioned as a head of the Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics.

Rockefeller funding of that institute continued both directly and through other research conduits during Verschuer's early tenure. In 1935, Verschuer left the institute to form a rival eugenics facility in Frankfurt that was much heralded in the American eugenics press. Research on twins in the Third Reich exploded, backed by government decrees. Verschuer wrote in *Der Erbarzt*, a eugenics doctor's journal he edited, that Germany's war would yield a "total solution to the Jewish problem."

Verschuer had a longtime assistant. His name was Josef Mengele.

Rockefeller executives never knew of Mengele. With few exceptions, the foundation had ceased all eugenics studies in Nazi-occupied Europe before the war erupted in 1939. But by that time the die had been cast. The talented men Rockefeller and Carnegie financed, the great institutions they helped found, and the science they helped create took on a scientific momentum of their own.

As Michel Crichton wrote in 2004:

Its supporters included Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Winston Churchill. It was approved by Supreme Court justices Oliver Wendell Holmes and Louis Brandeis, who ruled in its favor. The famous names who supported it included Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone; activist Margaret Sanger; botanist Luther Burbank; Leland Stanford, founder of Stanford University; the novelist H. G. Wells; the playwright George Bernard Shaw; and hundreds of others. Nobel Prize winners gave support. Research was backed by the Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations. The Cold Springs Harbor Institute was built to carry out this research, but important work was also done at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Stanford and Johns Hopkins. Legislation to address the crisis was passed in states from New York to California.

These efforts had the support of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Medical Association, and the National Research Council. It was said that if Jesus were alive, he would have supported this effort.

All in all, the research, legislation and molding of public opinion surrounding the theory went on for almost half a century. Those who opposed the theory were shouted down and called reactionary, blind to reality, or just plain ignorant. But in hindsight, what is surprising is that so few people objected.

The plan was to identify individuals who were feeble-minded --- Jews were agreed to be largely feeble-minded, but so were many foreigners, as well as blacks --- and stop them from breeding by isolation in institutions or by sterilization.

Such views were widely shared. H.G. Wells spoke against "ill-trained swarms of inferior citizens." Theodore Roosevelt said that "Society has no business to permit degenerates to reproduce their kind." Luther Burbank "Stop permitting criminals and weaklings to reproduce." George Bernard Shaw said that only eugenics could save mankind.

Eugenics research was funded by the Carnegie Foundation, and later by the Rockefeller Foundation. The latter was so enthusiastic that even after the center of the eugenics effort moved to Germany, and involved the gassing of individuals from mental institutions, the Rockefeller Foundation continued to finance German researchers at a very high level. (The foundation was quiet about it, but they were still funding research in 1939, only months before the onset of World War II.)

Since the 1920s, American eugenicists had been jealous because the Germans had taken leadership of the movement away from them. The Germans were admirably progressive. They set up ordinary-

looking houses where "mental defectives" were brought and interviewed one at a time, before being led into a back room, which was, in fact, a gas chamber. There, they were gassed with carbon monoxide, and their bodies disposed of in a crematorium located on the property.

Eventually, this program was expanded into a vast network of concentration camps located near railroad lines, enabling the efficient transport and of killing ten million undesirables.

After World War II, nobody was a eugenicist, and nobody had ever been a eugenicist. Biographers of the celebrated and the powerful did not dwell on the attractions of this philosophy to their subjects, and sometimes did not mention it at all. Eugenics ceased to be a subject for college classrooms, although some argue that its ideas continue to have currency in disguised form.

The scientific establishment in both the United States and Germany did not mount any sustained protest. Quite the contrary. In Germany scientists quickly fell into line with the program. Modern German researchers have gone back to review Nazi documents from the 1930s. They expected to find directives telling scientists what research should be done. But none were necessary. In the words of Ute Deichman, "Scientists, including those who were not members of the [Nazi] party, helped to get funding for their work through their modified behavior and direct cooperation with the state." Deichman speaks of the "active role of scientists themselves in regard to Nazi race policy ... where [research] was aimed at confirming the racial doctrine ... no external pressure can be documented." German scientists adjusted their research interests to the new policies. And those few who did not adjust disappeared.

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