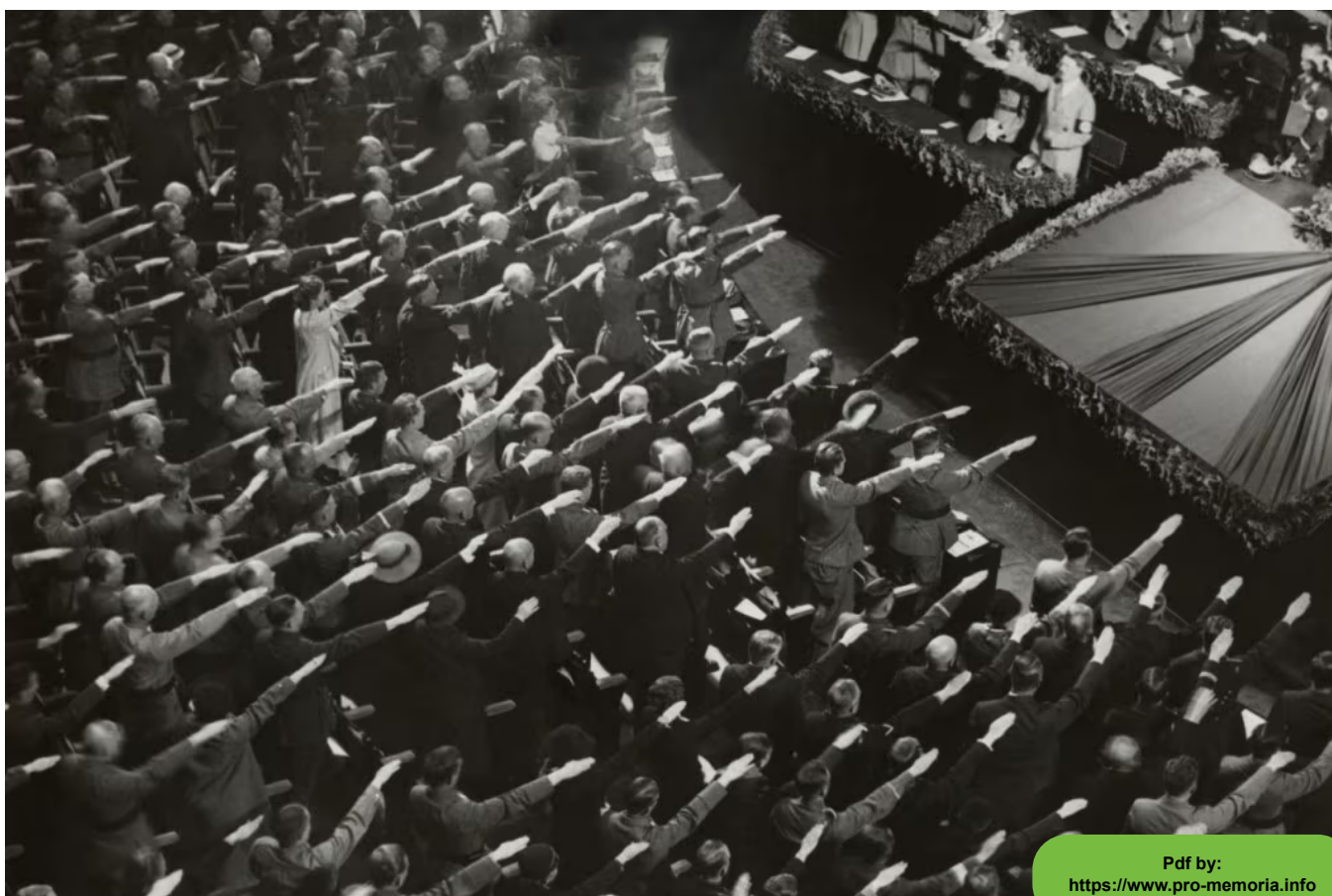


Euthanasia, sterilizations and macabre experiments: more than half of German doctors adhered to Nazi ideology, contributing decisively to the Holocaust.



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Eugenetics, forced sterilizations, mass murders masquerading as "euthanasia," these are just some of the most terrible [crimes committed by the Nazis](#) between the 1930s and the end of World War II. In the health sector, the Hitler regime was full of unspeakable atrocities, but it would be a mistake to think that this violence was carried out only by a small minority. A new study published in [The Lancet](#) in fact tells a very different (and disturbing) story about the work of doctors at that time.

COMPROMISES. The research started with the initiative of Richard Horton, editor-in-chief of the prestigious English medical journal, who created a commission made up of twenty researchers from various international universities, with the task of studying the relationship between medicine, Nazism and [the Holocaust](#) through a rigorous examination of historical sources. This group of researchers has drawn up a document in which the role played by health workers in formulating, supporting and implementing the genocide policies of the Nazi dictatorship is highlighted.

MASS MEMBERSHIP. The numbers that emerged are eloquent and point out that a good part of the health professionals of the time were conniving with the regime: in 1945, the German (non-Jewish) doctors enrolled in the party were between 50% and 65% of the total, a much higher percentage than that of all the other major academic professions.

FALSE MYTHS. Examining the documents of the time, the Commission disavowed a number of clichés, first of all the one that the only culprits for medical crimes were few "etremists" (such as Josef Mengele in [Auschwitz](#)), or doctors forced by force to violate elementary ethical standards. In fact, many of them accepted without too much protest the new "code of conduct" of Nazism, developed in such a way as to advance a racist program in favor of "Arians" at the expense of ethnic groups or categories considered inferior (including [Jews](#), [Roma](#), homosexuals or people with disabilities) against which practices such as euthanasia, sterilizations and brutal experiments were promoted that turned them, in fact, into human guinea pigs.

THE PRICE OF SCIENCE. The bodies of the victims were used for research and teaching, and even decades after the war some remains were sometimes preserved in scientific collections. According to The Lancet's study, the total absence of morality did not prevent Nazi research from making significant progress, so much so that today's

understanding of different subjects, from hypothermia to the effects of tobacco and alcohol consumption, is due to the work done at the time by Nazi scientists.

ETHICS. The goal of the scholars is to highlight the need to combine professional ethics and scientific research. The idea is that providing resources and information about that historical period to today's medical schools, research institutes and associations operating in the sector, all over the world, will make them more aware of their responsibility to the next generations.

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