

What Hitler could not do, New Jersey did

by Linda Everett

By honoring a family's request to starve to death a brain-damaged 32-year-old patient from Boonton, New Jersey, the United States' courts and legal machinery have accomplished in a few weeks, in full public view, what Hitler had elaborately guarded as secret—a system for mass destruction of lives deemed not worthy to be lived. German citizens then would not have tolerated what Americans today accept as a daily occurrence—the legalization of euthanasia by our laws and courts.

In fact, on July 29, the Constitutional Court of West Germany ruled that euthanasia could not be revived under any pretense, in the most recent case brought by neo-Nazi doctor Julius Hackethal. Hackethal had attempted to carry out the poisoning of a cancer victim, allegedly at the patient's request. But he was stopped by public protest, including that by the Club of Life, and forced to go into the courts to challenge the laws against euthanasia. Fortunately, the courts upheld the Judeo-Christian ethic and said no.

But at the end of June, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that patients whose relatives claimed that they would want to die, could be starved to death. And, despite appeals to several different courts, all the way up to the Supreme Court of the United States, that decision has been upheld.

The most flagrant demonstration that the decision to allow removal of food and water from a patient is nothing but Nazi-style murder, is evident in the case of Nancy Ellen Jobes. Jobes is currently under death sentence, thanks to the court decision, and could be killed any day.

The Jobes case

In 1980, Nancy Ellen Jobes suffered brain damage during surgery. Since then, the Lincoln Park Nursing Home in Morris County, N.J. has cared for her. The home and its medical staff adamantly refused the family's request to remove the small plastic feeding tube in Mrs. Jobes's small intestine providing her sustenance.

Although the family gave its permission in June 1985 to reinsert the dislodged tube, the legal right to remove it was a major battle of the euthanasia lobby and the family from May

1985. Their intentions to change the law became clear by that October, when Jobes's father announced that 100,000 comatose patients nationally are being held in limbo because the law did not address the starvation issue.

In April 1986, claiming that Jobes was an irreversible vegetable, the Morris County Superior Court ruled to stop her food and water. Judge Stein ignored the fact that Mrs. Jobes was not terminally ill, not in pain, and never asked to die. He labeled the substantial testimony of nationally known neurologists and medical personnel, who described the patient's considerable responses, as "tainted" because, he said, they were biased in favor of saving the patient!

What was, and is, the condition of Nancy Jobes? She is not brain dead, not in a vegetative state, nor even in a coma. In fact, she responds immediately to over 50% of the commands to move her toes, stick out her tongue, lift her right leg, and more. Not only does she follow nurses with her eyes, lifting her head when they are out of view, but she cries after family visits, responds to the slightest sound, smiles when touched, and helps the staff when they wash her hair.

Lincoln Park appealed Stein's appalling decision. The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled June 24 that families have the right to snuff out the lives of healthy, unconscious, or disabled patients like Jobes.

Court-ordered murder

U.S. courts have supported the murderous decision in a ghastly chorus one after another, each time the nursing home's attorney, Richard Traynor, appealed to save Jobes's life. The N.J. Supreme Court and N.J. Supreme Court Justice Robert Clifford, in separate decisions, refused to reconsider the June 24 ruling. Clifford also ruled the patient be moved to the Morristown Memorial Hospital, which is set to remove the life-sustaining tube.

U.S. Supreme Court Justice White refused to grant a stay on the state court order. In a separate decision, the full U.S. Supreme Court, without comment or recorded dissent, also refused to grant a stay. A federal district judge, and lastly, a three-judge panel of the U.S. 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia unanimously refused to intervene with a stay of the murder ruling.

The direction in which these decisions are going is evident in the national debate and discussion about AIDS patients. There is no question but that the health establishment of the United States has decided that it is not willing to pay for the treatment of AIDS patients, any more than it will willingly pay to prevent the disease from spreading. Euthanasia is thus being promoted, not only for the elderly, but also for young people who are considered "beyond help."

Starvation, once a crime of genocide in Nazi camps and Stalin's targeted hinterlands, has now become, through the nation's courts, a respectable tool and a simple medical procedure, to be wielded against lives the United States deems not worthy to be saved.