

Vatican is right: Dutch euthanasia law is Nazi

by Mark Burdman

The normally taciturn nation of Holland, where deeds, moral or immoral, are usually carried out with a minimum of words being spoken, was suddenly thrown into a complete tizzy over the Feb. 19-22 period, in reaction to charges by Vatican spokesmen that a Feb. 9 decision by the Dutch House of Commons to legalize euthanasia was reminiscent of the policies of the Nazis. On Feb. 22, the papal nuncio in The Hague, Msgr. Henri Lemaître, was summoned to the Dutch Foreign Ministry, and was delivered a formal protest by Foreign Minister Peter Kooijmans against the Vatican statements. Kooijmans said he would be sending the Holy See a copy of the new legislation, to clear up what he is claiming to be a misunderstanding.

There is no misunderstanding at all. The Vatican's warnings are entirely appropriate and carefully thought-out. On Feb. 18, the influential Msgr. Elio Sgreccia, who is secretary of the Pontifical Council of the Family and director of the Catholic Center for Bio-Ethics in Rome, told Vatican Radio that what is happening in Holland "is the logic which is implied in legalized euthanasia and the philosophy behind it: Once you overcome the border of respect of human life, you pass from the voluntary euthanasia to imposed euthanasia, according to a criterion of utilitarianism. You eliminate all lives which are an economic weight for the society. This, obviously, has to make us recoil in horror before a society and a kind of culture which is embedded in this logic."

Asked by Vatican Radio whether he was referring to the precedent of Adolf Hitler, Sgreccia responded: "Effectively, supporters of euthanasia, as those who support selective abortion of deformed fetuses, become offended if one evokes Hitler. In reality, the conclusion is the same, and that is, that you eliminate human lives that are considered not functional to that kind of society. For Hitler, Jews, or mentally ill people, were not functional. And for our society, which is more hedonistic than Hitler's, which was fanatically nazistic, there is the same way of thinking: We are always in the context of

utilitarianism."

His declarations brought an immediate denunciation from Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers, who is himself (at least nominally) a Catholic. "This is going too far," stated Lubbers. He criticized what he characterized as "incorrect and careless" statements by Sgreccia. Dutch Justice Minister Hirsch Ballin and Social Health Minister Simons attacked Sgreccia's comments as "alarming." One Dutch influential proclaimed shrilly to the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* on Feb. 23, "We are not the empire of evil."

In his Feb. 22 meeting with Kooijmans, Monsignor Lemaître said that Sgreccia's statement only represented the latter's "personal opinion," and did not reflect the official views of the Holy See. The European press immediately portrayed this as a "retraction from the Vatican," but the reality is undoubtedly more complicated. Whatever motivated Lemaître's comment, the fact is that on the same day, the official Vatican daily *Osservatore Romano* echoed Sgreccia in substance, warning that the Netherlands was "moving toward a culture of death." The paper stressed that the policies being adopted by the Dutch state for euthanasia and abortion could lead to a policy of "race selection," and could further lead to a collapse into barbarism "with mortal effects." Stressing that the preconditions were being created for, one day, leaving alive only the "efficient and productive men and women," *Osservatore Romano* stated that Dutch politics "are already in the abyss."

Trend-setter for the cost-cutters

In response to the Vatican attacks, Dutch officialdom is throwing out all sorts of confetti, including lying to European journalists that there never was any legalization of euthanasia by the Dutch Parliament's lower chamber (the law still has to pass the Dutch Senate). But whatever denials and obfuscations are issued from Dutch officialdom, the fact is that a monstrous, *state-authorized* process is being unleashed in

Holland, with historical impact on both the past and on the future, and with the potential of negatively influencing developments far beyond Holland. Historically, Holland has become the first nation to break with the 2,000 year-plus tradition of the Hippocratic Oath in medicine, and to formally legalize the practice of euthanasia, otherwise known as murder. From a more recent historical purview, Holland has indeed adopted the same argumentation and approaches that were prevalent in Nazi Germany, although even the Nazis never took the *formal* step of legalizing euthanasia.

For the immediate future, the danger is that Holland will serve as a trend-setter for other countries, beginning with the United States and Great Britain, which will now point to the "Dutch model" in order to expedite the legalization of euthanasia in their respective lands. This will be particularly seductive for the transatlantic financial policymaking elites, who are seeking to preserve the bloated structures of international indebtedness by "cutting health costs" and by claiming that budget deficits are being caused by the expenses required to "keep the elderly alive."

The City of London's *Economist* magazine gave the signal for this approach, which closely echoes the Nazi diatribes against "useless eaters," by referring to U.S. senior citizens opposed to cuts in Social Security benefits as "white-haired shock troops." The liberal establishment media in the United States have begun to give prominent attention to a new group, "Lead or Leave," which is mobilizing support among younger people for the grotesque idea that Social Security is a "rip-off by the elderly" of America's younger generation, and that "greedy" senior citizens are to blame for the United States' economic problems. Writing in the *New York Times*, the group's co-founders Jon Cowan and Rob Nelson proclaimed: "Older voters and politicians be warned. Younger Americans aren't going to let you continue destroying our country."

In Britain, the composition of a new House of Lords Select Committee on Medical Ethics is being announced on Feb. 24. This group is mandated to come up with guidelines for euthanasia in Britain. Sources at the Voluntary Euthanasia Society in London told a caller on Feb. 23 that they were greatly encouraged by the Dutch lower house's "courage," and were confident that euthanasia would be formally legitimized in the U.K. during the course of the 1990s. In Britain, there is an ongoing, savage "rationalization" of health care, to reduce costs.

'In this way you kill the law'

The "Dutch way" of doing things on the matter of euthanasia is particularly insidious, incorporating all of the cunning, guile, and immorality that one would associate with the Roman Empire's Pontius Pilate. The law passed by the Dutch chamber can, from an Aristotelian, formal-technical standpoint, be portrayed to the gullible as not a legalization of euthanasia, since it "only" gives formal legal sanction

to medical guidelines for euthanasia cases that have been elaborated by the Dutch Medical Association, based on accumulated practice in Holland over a two-decade period. This is precisely what Dutch Justice Minister Hirsch Ballin told *Corriere della Sera* on Feb. 23. However, this is a sick joke, since those medical guidelines are carefully designed to expedite the practice of euthanasia, *both voluntary and involuntary*, on a grand scale.

As Monsignor Sgreccia stressed in his Feb. 18 comments, the reasoning which states that the Dutch Parliament decision only "puts under control an ongoing practice," and therefore did not actually legalize anything, is the kind of reasoning which "makes the situation even worse, because in this way you kill the law, which is no longer there to safeguard the good of people, but is just a registration of facts, even the most evil ones. You also have the killing of the force of law, which is a force protecting the good of the person."

The trick of the thing is that after a patient dies, the doctor is required to submit a report to a coroner, who is the *only* judge on whether certain guidelines were met or not. Since the patient is dead, he or she can no longer testify as to what happened, barring new capabilities of speaking from beyond the grave. Worse, there is *no autopsy allowed*, beyond a cursory review of the body of the recently deceased, to ascertain the actual cause of death. So, if a doctor has committed an act of euthanasia without the request of the patient, he *need not* report this. He can, instead, claim death was from "natural" causes. Of course, with the usual Calvinist respect for detail, the questionnaires that doctors must fill out after the death of the patient contain questions asking whether there was involuntary euthanasia, and if so, why. And technically, this is still illegal. However, the doctor simply need not answer the question truthfully. By this cute trick, which is actually *encouraged* by the Dutch legal system in accordance with a Dutch Supreme Court decision against self-incrimination, the doctor avoids violating a still-existing legal prohibition against involuntary euthanasia.

Here is the way that Karel Gunning, president of the World Federation of Doctors Who Respect Human Life and an opponent of euthanasia legalization, characterizes the law passed by the Dutch lower chamber: "This law makes it possible for a doctor to kill a patient at his own request, but also without request. The euthanizing doctor must inform the coroner and give him a report which shows he has paid strict attention to a number of 'requirements of carefulness.' This report goes to the public prosecutor, who may dismiss the case if he sees no reason to start prosecution. But he can only judge on the basis of the report, as the chief witness is dead. And the report is written by the euthanizing doctor himself. Will there be any doctor who will report that he has not met the requirements, thus condemning himself? Even our Supreme Court has ruled 'that the suspect may not be compelled to active cooperation with what can lead to his con-

viction'!"

The point here, is that the *vast majority* of cases of euthanasia are *involuntary*, although in the Orwellian state of Holland this is covered up by various semantic and legalistic obfuscations. Hence, while the official Dutch statistics for 1990 listed 2,300 euthanasia cases (where the patient was killed ostensibly at his explicit request, although even that is not ultimately provable), estimates are that 6-17,000 further deaths were one form or another of euthanasia. According to experts, there are thousands of cases in which one of the following three events occurred: 1) a doctor gave a lethal drug to a patient without his request; 2) a doctor gave an overdose of a certain medicine with the intention—explicit or implicit—to kill the patient; 3) a doctor discontinued treatment with the intent to kill.

In the Dutch legal-administrative system, the first of these three categories is classified not as euthanasia, but as “killing without request,” while the last two are called “normal medical practice,” which means that the reporting procedure is not even required.

Adding the various categories together, the number of euthanasia cases in Holland per year could be as many as 20,000, the which figure would be almost *one in six* of all deaths annually in the country.

This reality explodes the fraudulent sophistry of “soft” euthanasia advocates that a society should allow “voluntary euthanasia, with the consent of the patient,” but not allow “involuntary euthanasia without request.” Anti-euthanasia spokesmen in Holland correctly counter with the “slippery slope” argument, namely that once you allow for one form of euthanasia, i.e., murder, then other forms will quickly be sanctioned as well. They cite the precedent of Nazi Germany, in which the categories of people against whom euthanasia was committed rapidly expanded to include the handicapped, the mentally ill, and others.

Mental patients, newborn babies— who's next?

Holland is rapidly travelling down this direction, although the point need be stressed that in many ways, it is even worse than under the Nazis. Under Hitler, the whole process of deaths by euthanasia was carried out much more surreptitiously, with great secrecy shrouding what was going on, and the propaganda directed to the population justifying “mercy killing” being incredibly sentimental in tone, as if even Hitler's jackboots feared a backlash from the German population. It is estimated that, in total, some 30,000 people were killed by euthanasia under the Nazis. In Holland, there is a much greater *public acknowledgment and awareness* of what is happening, with the practices justified by a liberal-utilitarian philosophizing about “quality of life” and “ending suffering” which echoes the Nazis' line about those “lives that are not worthy to be lived.” Recently, Social Health Minister Simons, a member of the Dutch Labor (socialist)

Party, made the claim that what matters is “not quantity of life, but quality of life,” a simple invitation for the elderly to kindly leave the scene, by whatever means are most efficient.

In Holland now, the next targetted layer of the population for elimination are psychiatric patients. Some months ago, the chief inspector of health had, in response to inquiries, stated that euthanasia guidelines prevailing in Dutch medical practice “did not apply” to psychiatric and mental patients. However, early this year, as the Dutch lower house was debating the euthanasia issue, the same chief inspector changed his policy, and said that the guidelines *were* applicable to psychiatric patients. This, of course, would appear to any normal person to be not only criminal but ridiculous, since the guidelines are *supposed* to apply only to those “consenting” to euthanasia (which is not met in practice anyway), and a mental patient is not competent to make that judgment. But, as one anti-euthanasia activist told *EIR*, the parliament chamber's formal approval of guidelines for euthanasia ultimately leaves all discretion up to doctors and the appointed coroners reviewing the case. “The whole procedure leaves the patient unprotected, and now mental patients are unprotected. In fact, nobody's life is protected any more.”

One other “target” part of the population that is, by definition, also unprotected, is the newborn infant, and here too, the Dutch Nazi doctors are moving to impose their “quality of life” genocide. An increasing trend in Holland, according to experts, is euthanasia against newborn infants who are adjudged to have a “poor quality of life” if they are allowed to live. One main advocate of this is Prof. Zier Versluys of the University of Utrecht, who says that “newborn euthanasia” should be carried out in those circumstances in which the child's quality of life will be severely impaired.

With euthanasia thus expanding into ever broader layers of the population, the message has been clearly delivered, that complicit doctors have extraordinary powers of life and death over patients, and that patients are, in essence, unprotected. Matters have gotten to the point, that many Dutch citizens now carry cards in their wallets, stating that, in case of accident, they do *not* want euthanasia committed against them.

Mercy is not murder

To counter the Dutch process, the entire edifice of the argument, usually suffused with sickening sentimentality that killing can be an act of “mercy,” must be taken head-on. As Monsignor Sgreccia told Vatican Radop, in response to the questioner's probe that “those who support euthanasia, claim they are doing it out of humanity and mercy”: “It never can be mercy to eliminate the lives of others, and to eliminate pain, by killing the sick person. Mercy is something else: better cures for sick people, attending those who are dying, administering therapies which reduce pain. . . . In any case, a kind of assistance which is human, but which does not proceed to kill the life of the others.”