NAZI DOCTORS
Directed by Hannes Karnick & Wolfgang Richter

“Robert Jay Lifton is enthralling.”
–Epd Film (German magazine)

“A brilliant insight into a very dark chapter of German history, illuminated by a vibrant thinker who has kept, in spite of it all, his healthy sense of humor.”
–Film-Echo/Film Week (Germany)

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ROBERT JAY LIFTON: NAZI DOCTORS
2009 | Germany | 86 minutes | In English

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Synopsis - Robert Jay Lifton: Nazi Doctors

An intense and illuminating conversationalist, world renowned psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton discusses the processes by which ordinary doctors became murders, the subject of his groundbreaking 1986 book *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (winner of the Los Angeles Times Book Prize & National Jewish Book Award). Dr. Lifton, a prolific author, founding member of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985) and a pioneer in the field of psychohistory, interviewed dozens of Holocaust perpetrators, including 40 former Nazi physicians.

In ROBERT JAY LIFTON: NAZI DOCTORS, we meet Lifton at his home on Cape Cod, where he engages in a lively discussion with veteran German filmmakers Wolfgang Richter and Hannes Karnick about the doctors who served in Auschwitz ("doctors were at the heart of it"), the circumstances under which they were currently living (financially affluent, some still practicing), and their attitude toward him (nervous, "unctuous"). With carefully calibrated analysis and a surprising amount of humor, Lifton leads us through the "acculturation to killing" that the camps fostered, the process of "splitting" or "doubling" which allowed doctors to strike a Faustian bargain, and his belief that "any one of us might find ourselves in service to evil."

Critical Acclaim

"This is a fascinating, compelling, profoundly disturbing movie that miraculously leaves one agreeing with Lifton that ‘there is room for hope.’" – Karen Cooper, Director, Film Forum

"Robert Jay Lifton is enthralling. Because Lifton is able to talk about very complicated issues in a clear and comprehensible manner, one is captivated when listening. You can virtually see thoughts turn into words" – Epd Film (German film monthly)

"Very exciting...a brilliant insight into a very dark chapter of German history, illuminated by a vibrant thinker who has kept, in spite of it all, his healthy sense of humor." – Film Echo/Film Week

"A film portrait of the scientist and cofounder of International Physicians for the Prevention of the Nuclear War to whom we listen with growing admiration.” – Konkret Magazine

Credits

ROBERT JAY LIFTON: NAZI DOCTORS
2009 | Germany | 86 Minutes
In English
16:9 Letterbox | Color | Dolby SR
DigiBeta, DVD
CAST
Robert Jay Lifton

CREDITS
Directors: Hannes Karnick & Wolfgang Richter
Director of Photography: Wolfgang Richter
Script: Wolfgang Richter
Editor: Wolfgang Richter
Sound: Michael Busch
Research: Hannes Karnick
Photos: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum
Music: Jan Tilman Schade
Re-Recording Mixer: Jochen Engelke
Sound Supervisor: Wolfgang Herold
Assistant Sound Supervisor: Max Wanko
Digital Postproduction: Frank Vogt, Magna Mana & Omnimago
Film Transfer: Magna Mana
Prints: ABC & TaunusFilm Kopierwerk
Transcription: Emily Rutkoske
Production Office: Sylvia Sadlon
Production: docfilm Karnick & Richter OHG

THANKS FOR ASSISTANCE TO
Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum
Bundesarchiv
Fritz Bauer Institut
Christiane Colhoun

Websites
www.wenn-aerzte-toeten.de
www.jewishfilm.org/catalogue/films/nazidoctors.htm

Biography - Robert Jay Lifton

Robert Jay Lifton is Lecturer in Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School/Cambridge Health Alliance, and Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry and Psychology, The City University of New York. He was formerly Director of the Center on Violence and Human Survival at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. He held the Foundations’ Fund Research Professorship of Psychiatry at Yale University for more than two decades. The recipient of many awards and honorary degrees, Dr. Lifton’s work combines scholarship and social activism.

Dr. Lifton has been particularly interested in the relationship between individual psychology and historical change, and in problems surrounding the extreme historical situations of our era. He has developed a general psychological perspective around the paradigm of death and the continuity of life, with emphasis on symbolization and the “formative process,” and on the malleability of the contemporary self. He has studied many of the most destructive events of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. He has played an important role in the development of the new field of psychohistory.
Dr. Lifton was born in New York City in 1926. He attended Cornell University and received his medical degree from New York Medical College in 1948. He interned at the Jewish Hospital of Brooklyn in 1948-49, and had his psychiatric residence training at the Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York, in 1949-51. He was a U.S. Air Force psychiatrist serving in the United States, Japan, and Korea, from 1951-53. He was research associate in psychiatry at Harvard from 1956-61, where he was affiliated with the Center for East Asian Studies. Prior to that, he was a member of the faculty of the Washington School of Psychiatry. Dr. Lifton lives in Cambridge, MA.

Dr. Lifton’s 1986 book *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* was awarded Los Angeles Times Book Prize & National Jewish Book Award. He has written and taught extensively on many topics, including: genocide, nuclear weapons and their impact on death symbolism, Hiroshima survivors, Chinese thought reform and the Chinese Cultural Revolution, psychological trends in contemporary men and women, war and war veterans.

Since September 11, 2001, he has been studying Islamic apocalyptic violence and American responses to the events of 9/11. His most recent book is the edited volume (with Irene Gendzier and Richard Falk) *Crimes of War: Iraq* (2006), which includes a number of Dr. Lifton’s essays, exploring the complex legal, historical, political and psychological dimensions of America’s military response to 9/11.

**Bibliography - Robert Jay Lifton**

• *Hiroshima in America: Fifty Years of Denial*, (With Greg Mitchell), Putnam’s, 1995.

**Filmmaker Biographies: Hannes Karnick & Wolfgang Richter**

Hannes Karnick and Wolfgang Richter, both born in 1947, work as a producing and directing team. In 1972 they founded a production company "docfilm" which produces documentaries on politics, culture and society for TV and theatrical release with special interest in current affairs and historical subjects. Their films have been screened in many international film festivals in Germany and abroad. Karnick and Richter are both founding members of the German Documentary Filmmaker’s Association (AG DOK), and Richter is a member of the German Federation of Film Critics and a member of the German Film Academy.

**SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY - Hannes Karnick and Wolfgang Richter**

**Powers Born to Hell** (Germany, 1970, 42 min)
– 1970 International Mannheim Film Festival (Award of the International Jury for Best TV Film)

**Greetings from Neckarsulm** (Germany, 1975, 54 min)
– 1976 International Short Film Festival Oberhausen (Main Award by the International Jury), 1976 Leipzig International Documentary Film Festival

**Willi Bleicher, He Saved the Child in Buchenwald** (Germany, 1978, 35 min)
– 1978 “Best German Short Film” Award by the German Federation of Film Critics, 1978 International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, 1978 Lille Film Festival, 1978 Leipzig International Documentary Film Festival, 1979 Moscow International Film Festival

**Martin Niemöller: The Man Who Defied Hitler** (Germany, 1985, 108 min)
– 1985, October "film of the month" Award by the Protestant Film Jury, 1985 Mannheim International Film Festival, 1985 Leipzig International Documentary Film Festival (Silver Dove), 1986 Montreal Film Festival, 1986 Berlin Film Festival / German Cinema, 1987 Chicago International Film Festival (Silver Plaque Award)

**Radio Star – The AFN Story** (Germany, 1994, 95 min)
– 1994 Hof Film Festival, 1995 Berlin Film Festival / German Cinema, 1995 Galway International Film Festival, 1995 Denver International Film Festival, 1995 Los Angeles AFI Film Festival, 1996 Bombay Int’l Film Festival

**Lab of Hope** (Germany, 2000, 45 min)
– 2000 Bratislava EKOTOP Film and TV Festival (Award by the International Jury), 2000 Munich Medicinale International (“Cum Laude”)

**Climate Change or Climate Disaster?** (Germany, 2005, 45 min)
– 2005 Bratislava EKOTOP Film and TV Festival (Grand Prix Award by the International Jury), 2005 Bangkok International South-East-Asia Festival of Scientific Film
Directors’ Statement

The prominent American psychiatrist and distinguished professor Robert Jay Lifton is best known for his studies of the psychological causes and effects of war and political violence. Lifton analyzes how men and women lose and recreate their humanity in extreme situations: Hiroshima, the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, and more recently terrorist cults.

After reading protocols of the Auschwitz Trial in Frankfurt, Lifton was motivated to undertake his psycho-historical research on Nazi doctors. In the late 70s, Lifton, who is Jewish, visited 80 Auschwitz survivors and 40 Holocaust perpetrators, most of whom were former Nazi physicians. In ROBERT JAY LIFTON: NAZI DOCTORS, he describes his approach and charts the way in which ordinary doctors changed from healers to killers. Lifton takes us on a journey through his experiences, including his most personal insights. From his interviews evolved a picture of psychological trauma, spanning the 60 years from the Nuremberg Doctors’ Trial to today.

We knew from the very start of the project that we would be confronted by great challenges. The film’s aim is to bring to life the psyche of people who experienced these events. Many of Lifton’s interviewees are no longer living. After months of editing the material it became clear that the images created by Lifton in the mind’s eye of the viewer were more effective than the archival film and photographic materials we had researched and intended to use in the film. We were also aware that these films and documents had been produced by the perpetrators and, in a way, continued the discrimination against victims.

So came into being a film which, notwithstanding the limits imposed by film as a medium, manages to convey the shocking truth of the Holocaust and totally absorbs the audience. The experience is deepened by Jan Tilman Schade’s moving film score.

Robert Jay Lifton – Quotes From the Film

Is it possible to make a film about things that are nearly impossible to show?
The same question whether it is impossible to carry out such a project came up in relation to my research and the partial answer is, that one can only do so much and in a sense one has to fail or at least has to fail to comprehend the entire event, it’s illusive, but one can capture or illuminate some portion of it. That’s what I try to do in my research and I think that’s what we’ll be doing in this film.

Evil doctors in comfortable settings ...
What I was feeling was still a lot of comfort that people had who were part of an evil structure and didn’t deserve that comfort. I felt in meeting most of these doctors in such comfortable settings that there was something wrong in the world.

To keep in mind what they were and where they were ...
I realized two things which I partly knew but realized all the more so in doing the study: first of all, it was very necessary to keep in mind – all the more so because of the comfort of sitting down with these people behaving in a gentlemanly way – all the more necessary to keep in mind what they were and where they were.

Interviews with survivors ...
You can’t get the full truth of evil from the perpetrators. And moreover, you can’t even find out most of what they did in terms of its emotional significance for others without talking to those they did it to.

Step-by-step ...
The questions were asked very incrementally, step-by-step. It wasn’t my goal to ask a shocking question to start with: “How many people did you kill?”

Gas jet in the hand of the physician ...
Under the Nazi principle, the syringe belongs in the hand of the physician, even though, of course, it was a gas jet, not a syringe in this case.
Look at the Turks ...
One of the perpetrators said, referring to the fact that he knew I was a Jew: “There’s been a great misunderstanding between your people and my people, but you know, we were only trying to solidify our identity and now we should join with each other. We should join the same Gemeinschaft, because look at the Turks.” In other words, he hadn’t changed at all, he was changing his cast of characters a little bit: now there were the Muslims. We have to band together to fight them or to do something worse to them.

From sterilization to so-called euthanasia ...
To me, in the whole medicalization of killing or the reversal of healing and killing, perhaps the crucial step, was from sterilization to so-called euthanasia. Because one was sterilization – the suppression so-called bad genes, a small medical surgical procedure – the other was killing human beings and one of my tasks, and what I still think about, is how individual doctors psychologically move toward actual murder.

Killing of children ...
One doctor I interviewed in Vienna was involved in the killing of children. I was struck by his remark, saying that, with these babies and little children, to whom they simply gave increasing does of sedatives until they became tired, comatose and died. He said it didn’t seem so much a killing as a ‘putting to sleep’. And that was his psychological defense or means of doing what he did.

Man trained to be a healer performed the act of killing ...
So-called euthanasia or, what I called ‘direct medical killing’ was the purest reversal of healing and killing. There was the doctor, opening the gas jet to kill people who were brought through the bureaucracy of that program. The man trained to be a healer performs the act of killing.

Maintaining the health of the ‘Volk’ ...
Auschwitz became the ultimate place of the reversal of healing and killing on a vast scale. In again examining what I wrote at the time and what I thought at the time, I am struck by the extent to which Auschwitz could be seen as an evil, mythic hospital center, on a vast scale, so that there is the theory of the absolute need for maintaining the health of the ‘Volk’, of the people, of the Nazi-centered community, which is the only healthy community and one must get rid of all disease and disease threats to that healthy community.

The physicians’ anti-nuclear movement ...
Auschwitz was almost mythic but all too real in its murderous structure and the doctors were at the heart of it. I would contrast it with the other group of doctors whom I felt, and still feel, in opposing nuclear weapons were carrying out a profound collective and world level communal service and activity, as physicians. So the contrast was very stark in my mind, to doctors joining mass murder, not literally in the name of medicine but overall in the name of medical cure, as Auschwitz was perceived in the highest Nazi circles.

Ordinary doctors joined in mass murder ...
Very ordinary doctors who were neither fierce ideologues nor were they impressive moral characters—somewhere in between, ordinary people, ordinary Nazis, who had embraced the movement could, despite their anxiety or ambivalence, could have their confidence overcome sufficiently to join in mass murder.

The real lesson of Auschwitz ...
Most of these doctors had some anti-Semitism, there’s no doubt about it, but the adaptation to killing was at the heart of what they did. And that’s more subtle and in many ways even more dangerous, because if it were simply a matter of having to be a extreme ideologue, that would be more unusual and one could take steps to isolate such groups or whatever, but if a whole society, including the professionals in general and the doctors in particular can be socialized to killing, that’s much harder to combat. And it makes genocide relatively easier to carry out. That’s the real lesson of Auschwitz, a lesson carried particularly by these Nazi doctors.

In the name of science ...
Some of those doctors simply did experiments to keep their hand in that way and sustain a sense of being a doctor. That’s an interesting idea because, you know, an ordinary doctor let loose in a totally dominated or controlled environment has the temptation to carry through in the name of science some kind of experiment and he can then justify it as contributing something to science. Of course, all of these experiments were sullied and negated in their value by the profoundly corrupt atmosphere of Auschwitz.
Like a guinea pig...
To be aware you’re being experimented upon first of all makes you feel like a guinea pig, is the phrase everybody used, because what is a guinea pig? It’s a laboratory animal. A non-human laboratory animal, with whom experimenters feel they can take any liberties. Therefore, if you’re being experimented on like a guinea pig, you’re not a human being in their eyes. If you’re being experimented on like a guinea pig by a physician, it’s in a way still more onerous.

Doctors are descendants of the Shaman...
We doctors are descendants of the Shaman, of the pre-modern world. Shaman could perform white magic of sustaining life or black magic of killing. Doctors can see themselves as mystical healers who have some moral prerogative that is of more than natural origin, to preside over life and death. And the very special role of doctors in societies can lead them to that temptation, so that societies that are murderers or simply too totalitarian, and the one often goes with the other, always tend to enlist doctors, either for killing or for controlling reality in some way. And they don’t necessarily enlist them by force.

The profession will often be quiet...
Doctors are notoriously socialized to a medical profession. They become closed, involved in that guild or the medical profession, partly because it has these life/death issues and when they fall on, shall I say, a dubious or a borderline moral grounds, they like support from the medical profession, as was exemplified by the German medical profession after World War Two. But there are other examples, in the medical profession in the United States and elsewhere where the profession will often be quiet about or even defend very immoral and dangerous behavior that was performed on the part of individual doctors.

Psychiatrists having a role in the military...
I have been interested even recently in, for instance in psychiatrists having a role in the military, any military—that is conflicted and irresolvable because the function of the military is to kill, the function of physicians is to heal, but when you are enlisted by the military, you are part of its bureaucracy and you join in some way in the killing function. That’s true of psychiatrists who are under pressure not to allow people to leave the combat zone, because that diminishes the power of command, or diminishes the military strength.

Loyalties to his group may supersede medical responsibility...
If a doctor is a long-term associate of a particular hospital, and the hospital has difficulties and needs income, or he has worked in various ways that defend the hospital’s behavior or mute its violations, as a doctor would when he’s loyal to a particular hospital or whatever group he may be in; it might be a university. His loyalties to his group may supersede a strict inner sense of his medical responsibility as given by the Hippocratic Oath or related oaths that medical students are now asked to take. Now, with the Nazi doctors, that was true in the extreme—the loyalty to the SS, to the Nazi project in general, to the Nazi hierarchy—it took over their conscience from everything.

High technology of killing...
High technology of any kind, and I’ve mentioned this in all of my work in terms of weaponry and especially nuclear weapons, but high technology of any kind can distance one for what happens at the other end of the technology. The gas chambers are not high technology by present standards but they were a high technology of killing by the standards of that time, in terms of the efficiency of killing. Moreover, the gas chambers became routinized in their use. So that the doctor could be distanced from his killing, from his killing function, almost from the beginning....He knew people were being gassed and he sometimes looked in and saw them, but he was still distanced to a considerable degree by underlings doing most of the dirty work and by the technology of gassing, which is much more distancing than the technology of shooting people face to face.

Humane self and Auschwitz self...
There are many levels to the explanation. What I call ‘doubling’ is the mechanism. For Wirths (Auschwitz Chief SS doctor) and others, doubling enabled them to do what they did. It’s really an aspect of the self that can adapt all too readily to evil because there’s another aspect of the self that sees itself as humane. It’s the humane self that in a way permits the evil self or Auschwitz self to function.

No absolute barrier between good and evil...
One has to realize that there’s no absolute barrier between good and evil. There’s no absolute polarization between the wonderfully good and the horribly evil, and that people who see themselves as trying to do good can inadvertently enter into evil. And again however inadvertently one becomes responsible and that means any of us, might under certain situations, find ourselves very close to or within a service to evil.
German Press (Excerpts) – Theatrical Release in Germany

Berliner Morgenpost, 12/3/2009, Barbara Schweizerhof

"[Robert Jay Lifton] was not concerned with pinning down the perpetrators, but in gaining insight into what made it possible to turn healers into killers...Lifton recounts so clearly that one is enthralled listening to his experiences. Completely collected and calm, he talks about aspects of his research such as his motivation, personal impressions from the encounters (he could not help but note the comparative wealth which the Nazi doctors enjoyed in the Federal Republic) as well as the most important insights he gained through his work. Lifton makes us aware that the physicians played a key role in the camps. There are many answers to the question of how those trained to save lives became the willing helpers in extinguishing life. That there are ways and means of socializing human beings into murderers isn’t just one answer."

Berliner Zeitung, 12/3/2009, Andreas Mix

"One of the first to ask about the role of physicians during the Third Reich after decades of silence was Robert Jay Lifton...A quarter of a century after the publication of his book, Lifton talks about his experiences with the doctors who killed instead of healing. In Hannes Karnick and Wolfgang Richter’s film, the man who had previously asked the questions becomes the one who is being asked the questions. The distinguished researcher is highly concentrated while speaking about his interviews with Auschwitz doctors and Euthanasia experts...They had agreed to the interviews because he was a renowned colleague who ensured them that they would remain anonymous. He is very discreet about what he found out in these interviews and what feelings they caused in him.

"As a Jew he was speaking with his potential killers...Who actually won the war? Lifton asks himself upon meeting the well off and respected interview partners...Lifton draws the conclusion that it is a case of ‘doubling’...a theory that new studies about perpetrators have begun to doubt...Impressed by Lifton’s aura, Hannes Karnick and Wolfgang Richter neglect to confront Lifton with these new interpretations. Their film is less of a documentation of this special group of perpetrators than a very sensitive portrait of a very important scientist (researcher)."

Darmstädter Echo, 12/1/2009, Stefan Benz

"The 40 physicians that Lifton interviewed have meanwhile died, but their ideas and their deeds represent symptoms of totalitarianism in general. The way the psychiatrist views the physicians is not very flattering. As offspring of the Shamans they work in a realm between life and death as if between black and white magic. The mysticism of their professions was fatally strengthened in the official system of the regime in combination with the mysticism of National Socialism and its idea of racial hygiene that turned in a most perverse reversal of interpretation the concentration camps into centers of hygiene for the people. "Here the Oath for Hitler was more important than the Oath of Hippocrates," says Lifton.”

epd film, 12/2009, Wilhelm Roth

"This film is different from many of the documentation about the Holocaust and the ‘System KZ.’ ...The Nazi Doctors was published in 1986, but even so many years later, [Robert Jay Lifton] speaking in front of the camera is as enthralling as if he had just experienced everything. Because Lifton is able to talk about very complicated issues in a clear and comprehensible manner, one is captivated when listening...you can virtually see thoughts turn into words."

film-echo, 48/2009, Andreas Wirwatski

"...85 minutes of interview with just a few camera positions, merely interrupted by picturesque views of the Atlantic, might appear to be quite a strenuous film at first glance. But after the first few statements that we hear from Robert Jay Lifton, the Brooklyn-born psychologist and psychiatrist in his very understandable and intellectual East Coast English, the film becomes very exciting...A brilliant insight into a very dark chapter of German history, illuminated by a vibrant thinker who has kept, in spite of it all, his healthy sense of humor."
“It was not until the Nuremberg Trials in 1946/47 that the world learned about the extent and horror of the experiments that had been carried out in the name of Medicine during the Third Reich. Examples of these numberless tortures are sub pressure experiments, in which prisoners were tortured to death. First they suffered cramps, then they became unconscious, minutes later they turned blue. They foamed at the mouth before they died. Or experiments with extremely cold temperatures where the victims were placed in icy water for hours or had to stay naked in sub zero temperatures in the freezing cold outside, many of them until they froze to death. Survivors were examined in their reaction to ‘animal warmth.’ This was the cynical euphemism used by the Nazi doctors when the victims were warmed by other inmates of the camp.

“‘These people had the need to do research in the name of Science even though all of their experiments were befouled in this criminal regime,’ says Lifton. ‘In this work they felt they were doctors.’ The now 83 year-old Harvard psychiatrist is considered to be the founder of Psychohistory. Very early on he occupied himself with the causes and consequences of the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as with the Vietnam War. His book The Nazi Doctors, published in 1986, was the first thorough study of the psychological adaptation and deformation of the perpetrators as well as the victims during the Third Reich. In interviews with 80 survivors and 40 perpetrators Lifton investigated how doctors experienced their participation in the mass killings and how they rationalized their brutal actions. ‘After the killing, they examined the internal organs. In this way, some of the doctors had the feeling that their actions were legitimized as research.’

In the Midst of Evil: “In the documentary film WHEN DOCTORS KILL: OBSESSION AND ETHICS IN MEDICINE Lifton describes how ‘normal’ physicians turn from healers into killers. The documentary filmmakers Hannes Karnick and Wolfgang Richter let Lifton speak exclusively. They visit him on Cape Cod and the psychiatrist explains sitting at his desk in his study, with a view of the ocean, what the perspectives, self deceptions and legitimizations were that made it possible that during the week doctors brutally tortured human beings and on the weekends they were caring husbands and fathers. In a kind of ‘doubling process’ the Nazi doctors split their personality into a human Self and an Auschwitz Self. Each and every one of us can be close to or find himself in the midst of evil, is Lifton’s somber summary.

“The documentation is very contained. There are no images of experiments on humans, no excerpts of interviews with victims or survivors are shown. Lifton sits at his desk, sometimes one sees the breakers of the Atlantic Ocean. Because the psychiatrist describes the motives, the worldview and the life lies of the Nazi doctors not only very vividly but also harrowingly and lucidly, this very sparse use of the camera is not detrimental but very effective. ‘There is nothing more menacing than when doctors turn into murderers,’ says Lifton. ‘That is the perversion - Healing turned into Killing.’ For this reason, medical crimes are even more disturbing than all the other atrocities of the Third Reich. Lifton shows very clearly that most of these doctors were no pathological sadists of fanatic murderers. ‘They were enraptured of the Movement and were brought to the ideology via Medicine and became mass murderers by way of biological activism,’ explains Lifton. From this point of view, Auschwitz was regarded as a “mythical evil hospital” at whose center stood the physician and the therapy consisted of the killing. In Mein Kampf Hitler had already stated the importance of the physicians as being the most important group of professionals for his racial politics - and many of the solicited doctors went along with this. According to Lifton, physicians have always considered themselves to be mystic healers with special moral rights/prerogatives, rulers over Life and Death, which was extremely helpful for and could be instrumentalized by totalitarian regimes for their goals.

“In the concentration camp Ravensbrück, doctors injured inmates to test Sulphonamide as a medical substance. Other victims were inflicted purulent and festering wounds, had to inhale toxic fumes or drink saltwater. In the concentration camp of Buchenwald, doctors tested vaccines for typhus and hepatitis. In Auschwitz, burn wounds were inflicted on children on their whole body, other inmates were given even less food then the rest of the inmates of the camp to carry out hunger experiments. Gynecologists injected formaldehyde into the uterus to sterilize the women. Josef Mengele, who from May 1943 onward was the chief responsible physician in Auschwitz, carried out many cruel experiments on human beings, he infected twins with typhus.

“The film is especially powerful when Lifton speaks about his encounters with the perpetrators. He had arranged to meet one of the Nazi doctors at the train station - the doctors came tanned, carrying skies on his shoulders, to the interview. Others were well-off and well situated, living in large houses. ‘These people were a part of an evil, false system and they were leading a comfortable life now.’

“‘Something is really wrong in this world, I thought at that moment,’ Lifton recalls. One of the doctors had found out that Lifton was Jewish and wanted to be friendly with him. ‘There was a misunderstanding between our people’ the doctor said at the beginning of the conversation, as Lifton remembers. At this moment Lifton, who is speaking in a very clear and impressively sonorous voice, becomes bitter for an instant. ‘By misunderstanding he meant the killing of the Jews.’"
“Whoever is looking for a spectacular thrill or grisly delight at Nazi crimes due to the title of the film will be sorely disappointed. Or anyone looking for piecemeal pseudo documentary tidbits of supposedly documentary info given by all-knowing commentators will not be satisfied. Because ‘nothing happens.’ We hear the psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton speak. And he is not propagating the so-called One and Only Truth, but he makes it possible for the viewer to reflect and come to his own conclusions. The scientist tells the filmmakers about the Nazi doctors with whom he had carried out interviews during the 1970’s. How does it happen that physicians, whose task is to heal, turn into murderers?

Questions like these have been important for Lifton for many years. He is the inventor-founder of psychohistory, investigating the motivation underlying the actions of individuals in their historical context. What effects do war, genocide, terror and violence have not only on the victim, but also on the perpetrator? What circumstances and dispositions lead human beings to torture, mutilate and kill other human beings?

In 1986 Lifton aroused great interest with his book *The Nazi Doctors*. At that time, as *Der Spiegel* wrote the murderers were still among the living and Lifton was one of the last to use the chance to speak with them. After the war, most had resumed positions of influence and public respect and were successful in their profession, had private hospitals or chairs at the medical department of the university, cared about their physical well being and good manners.

Meanwhile, there has been progress in the research of the Nazi Era, which has not only extended the circle of the perpetrators that can be investigated. The questions now asked by researchers also concern the causes and the social context in which the Nazis ruled and acted and goes beyond the demonization of Hitler and Co. that was prevalent after 1945. But physicians are special perpetrators. For Lifton, they are the very ‘heart’ of Auschwitz, yes, of the whole Nazi system, because the Nazi vision was at its core biomedical, the ‘extermination’ of all bad genes.

The result is a film portrait of the scientist and cofounder of “International Physicians for the Prevention of the Atomic War ” to whom we listen with growing admiration. How could he endure this research? How was he able to be a neutral interviewer of these SS physicians from Auschwitz, especially since none admitted to having done anything evil? Just two brief moments give us insight into the private life of the researcher, when he reports that he needed a ‘healthy and happy environment’ and the encouragement of the victims. One would like to get to know more: In how far did his work as a military psychiatrist in the US Army during the 1950’s bring him to do research on this (Nazi) topic?

At the end of the film one understands the importance of the impressions of the ocean and the landscape that form a contrast and function as moments of rest and respite. They are images of the view from Lifton’s summer home on Cape Cod in the United States. And one definitely wants to listen to Lifton.”