

Chapter 22

The Dachau Trial Continued, Later November 1945

I remain in my seat behind the prosecutors' table as we hear witnesses testify to the use of healthy prisoners for medical experiments at Dachau.

Franz Blaha, the prisoner physician, describes the freezing-water experiments done for the Luftwaffe:

The prisoners were put into a big basin of cold water without clothing, and they were kept there up to 38 hours. By means of a thermometer in the rectum, the temperature was measured and noted on a clipboard. Every time the body temperature dropped ten degrees, blood was taken from an artery at the throat, and it was examined in the laboratory, usually first as to sugar content, calcium, and nonprotein nitrates. At 25 degrees Centigrade [80 degrees Fahrenheit], the people usually

died, but one of them could stand it to 19 degrees [68 degrees Fahrenheit].

Sometimes the experiment was interrupted to warm the subject before proceeding again. They did this either with heat apparatus or animal heat. There were two women [camp prostitutes] in a bed, and they took the frozen person in between them, and they had to warm him up. Reichfuehrer Heinrich Himmler was present at one of these experiments.

Mostly Polish and Czech Jews, then the Russians, were used. Very, very many died . . . of calcification [freezing].

Asked when this took place, Blaha answers:

[The years] 1942 and 1943. All these bodies were dissected in the presence of [SS Dr. Sigmund Rascher] and the organs were taken out immediately, sometimes while they were still in the living condition. They were dispatched immediately to Munich to the Pathological Institute.

Some prisoners were kept from four to six hours, some 24 to 26 hours, in the cold water. Almost everyone died, and their time in the freezing water was noted on a clipboard by Dr. Rascher. Other evidence shows that these experiments were carried out for the Luftwaffe, to find ways to revive bailed-out fliers rescued from the ocean. Sometimes different types of clothing were used on the subjects.

One of the lucky subjects, Mizyla Tzepla, also testifies. He was in the prison hospital 42 days after the experiment. He says: "I had a col-

league, a male nurse there. He told me, 'You are real lucky. They selected 300 and only ten could stand it. You are one of those.'

According to Martin G. Weiss, SS camp kommandant, Reichfuehrer Heinrich Himmler took direct charge of medical experiments at Dachau. This information is partially corroborated in copies of letters by Dr. Rascher to Himmler.

Weiss testifies in his own defense that Himmler went directly to the experimental station and called for him:

Himmler received me immediately. When I opened the door of the experimental station, he was very angry. Probably the staff physician, Dr. Rascher, had complained about me because I didn't follow all of his wishes. Himmler received me with the following words, since he had never known me before: 'Well, you are the man Weiss.' Then he didn't let me speak, but he immediately explained to me that I was to give no orders to staff physician Dr. Rascher, that he was not under my supervision . . . [but that he] was under the personal protection of the Reichfuehrer [Himmler].



SS Dr. Sigmund Rascher

He further stated that I had to comply with every wish of Dr. Rascher, whether Dr. Rascher demanded cognac or coffee,

no matter what. Upon my saying that these things were restricted, the Reichfuehrer explained to me that it was my duty to get these things. If Dr. Rascher expressed a wish to me, it was as if he, the Reichfuehrer, were to give me that order. This discussion took place in the presence of prisoners in the experimental station.

We learn that SS camp doctor Fritz Hintermayer directed saltwater experiments at Dachau, to determine whether a bailed-out German could survive on ocean water. Blaha testifies:

About 50 to 60 persons from Room One of Bloc One did not get anything to eat but only received salt, that is, ocean water [for five days] and . . . their urine, blood, and excrements were examined.

During these experiments, there was a revolt. The prisoners, who were starved, beat the male nurses who took care of them . . . but none of the prisoners died, because they received food from other prisoners illegally . . . For this experiment they specifically used Gypsies and Hungarians.

An air-pressure experiment was done, also for the Luftwaffe. Blaha testifies about a "bell-like" compartment:

Twenty or 25 prisoners were locked up in one of them, then by means of machines, the air pressure was raised and lowered suddenly. Many were dead, and some of them died shortly after that. Some of them had hemorrhages, for in-

Witness to Barbarism



Nazis documented the dissection of this Dachau inmate's brain in an attempt to determine altitudes at which flight crews could survive without oxygen.

stance, to the ear or to the nose. All of these dead ones were dissected. Most died of brain hemorrhages or of embolisms or infarctions of the heart and lungs. [The subjects were] Czechs, Poles, and Russians. I think more than 100 died.

Then there were liver-puncture experiments:

That was done by Dr. Branto [a camp physician]. He made a series of liver punctures [to obtain pieces of liver for examination] on ill people, on healthy people, people who had stomach diseases, and people who had gall diseases.

The liver punctures were performed “by a needle” on live prisoners without anesthesia: “The procedures were painful because they were done in a series of several punctures, and the subjects died as a result of that. They were Poles, Russians, Czechs, and also Germans.”

Blaha also describes phlegmon experiments conducted with healthy prisoners. He says:

Forty healthy men were used at a time—20 received intramuscular and 20 received intravenous injections of pus from diseased persons. All treatment was forbidden for three days, by which time serious inflammation, and in many cases general blood poisoning, had occurred.

Then each group was divided again into groups of ten. Half were given chemical treatment with liquid and special pills every ten minutes for 24 hours. The rest were treated with sulfanilamide and surgery. In some cases all of the limbs were amputated.

My autopsies also showed that the chemical treatment had been harmful and had even caused perforations of the stomach wall. For these experiments Polish, Czech, and Dutch priests were ordinarily used. Pain was intense in such experiments.

Most of the 600 to 800 prisoners . . . used finally died. Most of the others became permanent invalids and later were killed.

Heinrich Stoehr, nurse at the prison hospital, also testifies:

[Phlegmon experiments were supposed to prove] that the worst diseases could be treated with biochemical methods. Thereupon, it was the task of Schulz, the chief doctor of the SS hospital, to produce the worst of all diseases. The main task was not to produce phlegmon, but the sepsis. For this purpose, pus was injected not only into the muscles but also into the veins . . . They were entirely healthy people . . . the last series consisted of Polish and Czech priests.

The sepsis was supposed to be produced by the pus, and then it was tried to fight this disease with biochemical and also with allopathic means.

Dr. B. W. Glick of the American army is questioned about taking pus from a person with diseased blood (phlegmon) and injecting it into the body of a healthy person. He says:

Yes sir, I believe you can infect anybody; it does not matter what their health is . . . Well, the treatment as we have it today in the American army would not only include the local treatment of dressings or surgical treatment but kinio-therapy, the sulfa drugs, and penicillin.



A GI enters Dachau subcamp Landsberg after Nazis set fire to trench barracks filled with Jewish slave laborers too emaciated to escape, April 29–30, 1945.

