

Primary Source (excerpts): Nazi Medical Experiments

All of the documents on this Web page were retrieved from the archives of Shamash: The Jewish Internet Consortium. The comments inside the square [. . .] brackets were written by Daniel Keren for the Shamash archives.

Letter from SS-Standartenfhrer Sievers to SS-Obersturmbannfhrer Dr. Brandt, November 2 1942. Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal, Vol. XX, p. 520:

Dear Comarade Brandt,

As you know, the Reichsfhrer-SS has directed that SS-Hauptsturmfhrer Prof. Dr. Hirt be supplied with everything needed for his research work. For certain anthropological researches - I already reported to the Reichsfhrer-SS on them - 150 skeletons of prisoners, or rather Jews, are required, which are to be supplied by the KL Auschwitz.

Letter from Graum to Reichsfhrer-SS Himmler, June 1 1943. Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression - Washington, U.S Govt. Print. Off., 1946, Supp. A, p. 1273:

Dear Reichsfhrer,

The fhrer's Commissioner-General, SS Brigadefhrer Professor Dr. Brandt, called me with the request that I should assist him by placing prisoners at his disposal for research work into the cause of contagious jaundice (Hepatitis epidemica) which he was furthering considerably.

The work has been carried out up to now by a medical captain, Dr. Dohmen, within the framework of the research place of the army medical inspectorate, with the participation of the Robert Koch institute. It has up to now led to the result, in agreement with the result of other German research workers, that contagious jaundice is not carried by bacteria but by a virus. In order to increase our knowledge, which is based up to now only on vaccination experiments from men to animals, the reverse way is now necessary, namely the vaccination of the cultivated virus germ into humans. One must reckon on cases of death.

Letter to SS-Obergruppenfhrer Pohl, 19 May 1944. Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression - Washington, U.S Govt. Print. Off., 1946, Supp. A, p. 1270-1271:

Dear Obergruppenfhrer,

Following our application of 30.9.43, you gave me your authorization on the 25.10.43 for the carrying out of experiments with a view to producing a new kind of spotted fever serum and transferred 100 suitable prisoners to Natzweiler for this purpose. It has been possible to carry out the experiments very satisfactorily so far with the help of the chief of Department D III, SS Standartenfhrer Dr. Dolling commissioned by you.

Letter from SS-Sturmbannfhrer Brandt to SS-Obersturmbannfhrer Sievers, 21 March 1942.BR> Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals - Washington, U.S Govt. Print. Off., 1949-1953, Vol. I, p. 144:

Reference is made to the subatmospheric pressure experiments which are being carried out on concentration camp inmates in the Dachau camp by the air force. The Reich Leader-SS has approved the experiments under the conditions that SS-Untersturmfhrer Dr. Rascher who is an Obersturmfhrer in the air-force, will take part in them.

Letter from SS-Untersturmfhrer Rascher to Reichsfhrer-SS Himmler, 5 April 1942.
Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals - Washington, U.S Govt. Print. Off.,
1949-1953, Vol. I, p. 144-147:

Highly esteemed Reich Leader:

Enclosed is an interim report on the low-pressure experiments so far conducted in the concentration camp of Dachau...

Only continuous experiments at altitudes higher than 10.5 Km resulted in death. These experiments showed that breathing stopped after about 30 minutes, while in two cases the electrocardiographically charted action of the heart continued for another 20 minutes.

The third experiment of this type took such an extraordinary course that I called an SS physician of the camp as a witness, since I had worked on these experiments all by myself. It was a continuous experiment without oxygen at a height of 12 Km. conducted on a 37-year old Jew in good general condition. Breathing continued up to 30 minutes. After 4 minutes the experimental subject began to perspire and to wiggle his head, after 5 minutes cramps occurred, between 6 and 10 minutes breathing increased in speed and the experimental subject became unconscious; from 11 to 30 minutes breathing slowed down to three breaths per minute, finally stopping altogether.

Severest cyanosis developed in between and foam appeared at the mouth...

Autopsy report

~~~~~

One hour later after breathing had stopped, the spinal marrow was completely severed and the brain was removed. Thereupon the action of the auricle stopped for 40 seconds. In then renewed its action, coming to a complete standstill 8 minutes later. A heavy subarchnoid oedema was found in the brain. In the veins and arteries of the brain a considerable quantity of air was discovered.

**Letter from SS-Untersturmfhrer Rascher to Reichsfhrer-SS Himmler, 11 May 1942,**  
**Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals - Washington, U.S Govt. Print. Off.,**  
**1949-1953, Vol. I, p. 152-155:**

Highly esteemed Reich Leader,

Enclosed I am forwarding a short summary on the principle experiments conducted up to date....

For the following experiments Jewish professional criminals who had committed race pollution were used. The question of the formation of embolism was investigated in 10 cases. Some of the experimental subjects died during a continued high-altitude experiment; for instance, after one-half hour at the height of 12 Km. After the skull had been opened under water an ample amount of air embolism was found in the brain vessels and, in part, free air in the brain ventricles.

To find out whether the severe psychic and physical effects, as mentioned under No. 3, are due to the formation of embolism, the following was done: After relative recuperation from such a parachute descending test had taken place, however, before regaining consciousness, some experimental subjects were kept under water until they died. When the skull and the cavities of the breast and of the abdomen had been opened under water, an enormous amount of air embolism was found in the vessels of the brain, the coronary vessels, and vessels of the liver and the intestines, etc.

It was also proved by experiments that air embolism occurs in practically all vessels even while pure oxygen is being inhaled. One experimental subject was made to breathe pure oxygen for 2.5 hours before the experiment started. After 6 minutes at a height of 20 Km, he died and at dissection also showed ample air embolism, as was the case in all other experiments.

**Report by SS-Untersturmfhrer Rascher about intense cooling experiments in Dachau concentration camps, 10 September 1942.**

**Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals - Washington, U.S Govt. Print. Off., 1949-1953, Vol. I, p. 220:**

The experimental subjects were placed in the water, dressed in complete flying uniform, winter or summer combination, and with an aviator's helmet. A life jacket made out of rubber kapok was to prevent submerging. The experiments were carried out at water temperatures varying from from 2.5 to 12 Centigrade. In one experimental series, the occiput (brain stem) protruded above the water, while in another series of experiments the occiput (brain stem) and back of the head were submerged in water.

Electrical measurements gave low temperature readings of 26.4 in the stomach and 26.5 in the rectum. Fatalities occurred only when the brain stem and the back of the head were also chilled. Autopsies of of such fatal cases always revealed large amounts of free blood, up to one-half litter, in the cranial cavity.

**Report by Prof. Dr. Holzloehner, Dr. Rascher, and Dr. Finke, regarding cooling experiments, 10 October 1942 Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals - Washington, U.S Govt. Print. Off., 1949-1953, Vol. I, p. 226-243:**

If the experimental subject was placed in the water under narcosis, one observed a certain arousing effect. The subject began to groan and made some defensive movements. In a few cases a state of excitation developed. This was especially severe in the cooling of head and neck. But never was a complete cessation of the narcosis observed. The defensive movements ceased after about 5 minutes. There followed a progressive rigor, which developed especially strongly in the arm musculature; the arms were strongly flexed and pressed to the body. The rigor increased with the continuation of the cooling, now and then interrupted by tonic-clonic twitchings. With still more marked sinking of the body temperature it suddenly ceased. These cases ended fatally, without any successful results from resuscitation efforts.

**Letter from SS-Untersturmfhrer Dr. Rascher to SS-Sturmbannfhrer Rudolph Brandt, October 3 1942. Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals - Washington, U.S Govt. Print. Off., 1949-1953, Vol. I, p. 221-222:**

The Reich leader SS wants to be informed of the state of the experiments. I can announce that the experiments have been concluded, with the exception of those on warming with body heat. The final report will be ready in about 5 days. Prof. Holzloehner, for reasons I cannot fathom, does not himself want to make the report to the Reich Leader Himmler and has asked me to attend to it. This report must be made before 20 October, because the great Luftwaffe [German air-force] conference on freezing takes place on Nuernberg on 25 October. The report on the results of our research must be made there, to assure that they be used in time for the troops. May I ask you to arrange for a decision from the Reich Leader regarding the final report to him, and the submission to him of the relevant material? Today I received your letter of 22 September 1942, in which the Reich Leader orders that the experiments on warming through body heat must absolutely be conducted. Because of incomplete address it was delayed. Today I asked Obersturmbannfhrer Sievers to send a telegram to the camp commander immediately, to the effect that four Gypsy women be procured at once from another camp. Moreover, I asked SS Obersturmbannfhrer Sievers to take steps to have the low pressure chamber ready for use.