

Chapter 25

The Dachau Trial Continued, December 1945

I am a bit late. The seats at the prosecution table are all occupied, and I find myself in a chair at the back of the room. Filming with four cameras adds life to the proceedings.

We hear of malaria experiments conducted at Dachau by defendant Dr. Klaus Schilling, 74, from 1942 to 1945. He testifies that in 1899 he started malaria research in Africa, returning there four times, then continuing his research in Italy. There he met two doctors, who took him to Germany to meet Himmler in December 1941. Schilling says:

Himmler himself gave me the order to continue my studies in Dachau . . . the sole purpose was to find a vaccination against malaria. The mosquitoes were put into a cage ten centimeters wide and ten centimeters long and just as high. These cages

were covered by mosquito gauze. Such a cage was then put in between the legs, or the arm was put on top of the cage. Then the mosquitoes bit through the gauze. The majority of the subjects were used for reinfection . . . injected repeatedly . . . to step up their immunity.

The Rev. Theodore Koch, a Catholic priest, was one subject of Schilling's malaria experiments. He testifies that he was on his last legs and put in the prison hospital. On release, still weak, he was sent to Schilling's experimental station:

For two days, I didn't eat and I was very tired, so for two days, and two nights almost, I slept . . . On the next day, not only I, but also the others who were in the same room with me, were sent to another room where pestilent mosquitoes were in little boxes . . . Each . . . received a small box, with a mosquito, and we had to hold our hands over that box, which was covered with a towel. That lasted a half-hour or an hour a day for almost one week. Also a male nurse . . . brought us another box with mosquitoes and it was put in the bed, between our legs for either a half-hour or an hour . . . Then each morning the blood smear was taken from the ear . . . my temperature was taken during the day and also at night.

Father Koch goes on to testify that he was released after 17 days and then had malaria attacks: "Malaria recurred precisely every three weeks for six months. The symptoms were high fever and chills, and there were pains in the joints."

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The Rev. Frederick Hoffman, a German priest and prisoner in Dachau from 1941 to liberation in 1945, testifies that approximately 200 priests were used in the malaria experiments.

Then Schilling testifies in his own defense about the effects of malaria:

The brain is the main organ with respect to acute malaria. Of course, the brain will also suffer under the anemia of chronic malaria, but the most important changes are in the brain. The smallest capillaries of the brain will be plugged and blocked, because the malaria parasites will cling to the walls of the blood vessels.

Schilling is asked a crucial question: “Were the prisoners volunteers for the experiments?”

This question was considered only with a very few patients. There were only about four or five patients who refused to be immunized. I talked to these four or five patients, and I explained to them that the vaccination would not be dangerous to them and that these experiments were of such a great importance that they could cause a great scientific discovery. Then these patients did not offer any more resistance . . . I told my assistants repeatedly that they should only give me patients that did not suffer from hidden diseases.

Dr. Franz Blaha testifies in contradiction: “None of them volunteered for it, and many we saved from these experiments.”

Blaha identifies Exhibit No. 38:

It is a request for new prisoners for the malaria experiments which was directed to the Kommandant Weiss and also signed by Professor Schilling . . . The subjects were given physical examinations before being used for malaria experiments . . . To see if those people [were healthy enough to] be used for that purpose.

Defendant SS Kommandant Weiss, when confronted by Denson about Schilling's requisitions, admits he approved them, as he did requisitions for other medical experiments. His initials are plainly marked on these papers.

Questioned about autopsy findings, Schilling testifies: "Blaha simply kept these dissections secret from me."

Asked on cross-examination whether he knew that those receiving the last doses of pyramidon (an experimental chemical) died, Schilling says: "Dr. Blaha did not notify me about the new-born cases of pyramidon poison. If he had, I would have stopped the experiments immediately. The cases are Dr. Blaha's fault."

Dr. Blaha contradicts his testimony:

The subjects were treated in different ways . . . with quinine, neosalvarsan, atipyrin, pyradium, and dye 2516, with several combinations. All the people who died of malaria and consequences, I dissected [with Schilling present or receiving the vital organs]. The causes were severe intoxication . . . and other diseases . . . the intoxication of neosalvarsan in the year 1943

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Colonel Bates questions a witness.

and then of pyramidon in 1945 . . . through big doses . . . the people could not tolerate . . . and which acted as poisons on them . . . First, three died on the same day and that was a big sensation in the entire hospital.

Blaha also testifies about dosages:

Perhaps 1.5 or two grams for a few days, but not too long because the poisonous action of the pyramidon becomes dangerous when it acts for a long time . . . After three days, signs of poisoning would show up in vomiting, and so forth.

Confronted with more exhibits found at Dachau by American troops after the liberation in April 1945, Schilling testifies: “This is one of the usual card file cards. I assumed they were burned—they

were not burned. They were put aside so that they could be used as evidence against me.”

We also learn that a “skin and bone museum” was maintained at Dachau. Dr. Blaha describes how human skin was removed at the morgue, then treated:

We took the [tattooed] skin from the chest and the back. We had to use chemicals and treat the skin with them. Then these skins were placed outside in the sun and parts were cut out according to drawings given to us by the SS men. They were for saddles or riding breeches, for gloves, for house slippers and ladies' handbags.

[That] was done in the masses . . . in 1942 . . . Especially the Russians were used for that . . . also Poles and other inmates . . . It was forbidden to cut out the skin of Germans. This skin had to be from healthy prisoners and free from defects. Sometimes we did not have enough bodies with good skin and [SS defendant Dr. Rascher] would say, ‘All right, you will get the bodies.’ The next day we would receive 20 or 30 bodies of young people. They would have been shot in the neck or struck in the head so that the skin would be uninjured.

And Dr. Blaha describes how skulls were prepared: “They were cut off, and then they were boiled. All the soft parts were removed and bleached in concentrated peroxide, dried, and then put together again.”

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He also tells of filling orders for complete skeletons: “The last time a request came through [SS defendant Dr. Hintermayer] was in February 1945—that was for two skulls and one skeleton.”

In a pretrial affidavit, Dr. Blaha stated:

In the case of skulls, it was important to have a good set of teeth. When we got an order for skulls from Oranienburg [camp at Berlin], the SS men in camp would say, ‘We will try to get you some with good teeth.’ So it was dangerous [for a prisoner] to have a good skin or good teeth.



Some skulls were preserved at Dachau, some not.



The author, above, with German V-2 missiles; children in the rubble of Allied bombing, right; slave laborers making—and sometimes sabotaging—munitions, below.

