

Concentration camps

War



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Concentration camps were constructed for mass killings. Digging deeper into the methods of murder they used, there's more to it than gas chambers, starvation, and overwork. The medical experiments were a major factor in the massive death toll in the concentration camps. Today doctors strive to keep people healthy and alive.

For Nazi doctors Joseph Mengele, Karl Clauberg, and Sigmund Rascherat, the ones responsible for countless deaths, that was not their number one priority. Nazi doctors in the concentration camps conducted inhumane experiments such as examining twins, sterilization of men and women, and the freezing of people.

When prisoners arrived at the camps, they probably expected the worst. For the twins however, life in the camps wasn't as bad as it could've been. Twins were allowed to keep their hair and sometimes their clothes (Remember.org, 4). Being a twin gave them a better chance of surviving (Lifton, 351). Even though the experiments were cruel and barbarous, they offered an escape from the harsh camp (Lifton, 354).

Twins lived in special buildings, such as the medical blocks. Unlike normal prisoners, twins were able to move freely throughout camp. Within the blocks, the father of a set of twins would be assigned block chief (Lifton, 348). Young female twins were lucky in a way since their mother was allowed to stay with them.

The reasoning behind this is, Joseph Mengele, the mad man behind these experiments, wanted them in stable mental and physical condition (Lifton, 349). No matter how healthy they were, nothing could prepare the twins for

what was to come. The Nazi's thought that twins were the key to discovering a way to quickly increase the German race.

Doctors hoped to uncover the secret to multiple births (Pbs. org, 3). In order to conduct experiments, Mengele needed twins. He exploited easy access to twins at Auschwitz and was a fanatical figure in the selection (Lifton, 348). In 1944, 250 individual twins arrived in Birkenau (Lifton, 349).

The selection process began with Mengele shouting, " Zwillinge heraus!", which means twins in German. Once rounded up, they were each given a number sequence on their arm (Lifton, 348). Identical twins were the ones Mengele wished for the most, as they were his most treasured research objects (Lifton, 349).

Although the experiments sound like Nazi's torturing prisoners without any medical knowledge, there was a method to the madness. Mengele's method was based off of scientific training, Nazi ideology, and the peculiarities at Auschwitz's setting (Lifton, 347). When twins were examined, they were examined together and naked (Lifton, 349-350). Measurements of every part of their body were taken (Remember, org, 4).

Each session, ten cubic centimeters of blood were drawn and during the first examinations the family history of the twins was taken (Lifton, 350). Today we can look at an actual experiment performed on a set of identical Hungarian twins. Selection began in 1943 when three sets of twins arrived at Auschwitz.

Dr. Mengele saw the Hungarian set and took them (Remember. org, 4). They were 18 year old men and described as very handsome and athletic.

Examination began right away with their heads, which took several days.

Next photographs were taken to show hair growth. The most dangerous thing done to them while they were alive was being ventilated with gas.

They coughed so severely, restraints were needed to hold them down. After the gas, they were placed into hot water up until the point of passing out and then all their hair was removed; more photographs were taken. The Hungarian twins were killed the same way as every other set that made it to the end of the experiments.

A syringe of chloroform was injected into their hearts. Mengele was very careful to make sure the twins died at the exact same time. Once no longer alive, they were dissected and their organs were sent to the Institute of Biological Racial and Evolutionary Research Berlin (Remember. Org, 4).

Dissection of the corpses was the last part of Mengele's twin research (Lifton, 350). These experiments were drastic. Of the 1, 000 pairs experimented on, only 200 pairs survived (Pbs. org, 3).

Sadly, this was not the end of cruel Nazi medical experiments; sterilization of prisoners was also very important to the Germans. Sterilization: surgery to make a person unable to produce offspring. The main goal of sterilization was to discover a rapid, inexpensive, and unobtrusive method to wipe out Russians, Poles, Jews, and other races (Berenbaum, 347).

Nazis hoped to sterilize millions with minimum time and effort (Pbs. org, 5).

Even though a method already existed, surgical sterilization, doctors thought it was too slow and expensive. These experiments occurred in camps such as Auschwitz and Ravensbruck (Berenbaum, 247). There were mainly two

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doctors known for sterilization, Gebhardt and Clauberg. Gebhardt worked at Ravensbruck by the surgical method.

The method Clauberg used was by an injection. Dr. Karl Clauberg conducted it on a large scale (Berenbaum, 348). He was the main man for sterilization (Lifton, 271). Although the doctors knew how they wanted to sterilize, a formula had to be developed. Since Dr. Clauberg was the head of these experiments, he developed his own formula, but he was very secretive about the substances he used.

Researchers today assume he used formalin and novocain (Lifton, 271-272). Formalin is a clear watery solution of methanol used as a preservative. Novocain, also known as procaine, is a local anesthetic drug used as a sodium channel blocker. This impairs the conduction of sodium ions.

This injection was done in three stages over a few months. Unfortunately, Clauberg used over 300 women over the course of his work (Lifton, 272). Not just women had to face the horrors of Dr. Clauberg, thousands of male Jews and Gypsies were sterilized at Auschwitz by injection. Later on, doctors discovered a brand new method, x rays.

This way was effective, but castration would result. There were also dangers to other parts of the body if not covered by lead (Berenbaum, 348). Even though the Nazidoctor's main goal was to sterilize, other issues occurred. Thousands who were sterilized suffered excruciating mental and physical pain (Pbs. org, 5).

Fever also overtook many victims. Some prisoners were very resistant but many feared what would happen if they were. Prisoners who resisted were sent to the gas chamber at Birkenau (Lifton, 272). Knowing each day what would be done to them by Clauberg caused them to be overcome with fear and anxiety (Lifton, 273).

Of course sterilization was extremely painful and killed many people, but the freezing experiments were the most painful experiments the Nazi's conducted. A problem Germany had during World War II was when their pilots in planes had to eject into the ocean, they would die from hypothermia. Nazi's number one goal was to discover a way to treat frozen German pilots (Pbs. org, 2).

These experiments were designed to simulate conditions on the eastern front and were conducted for the Nazi high command. Some camps had the perfect weather conditions; Birkenau, Dachau, and Auschwitz (Remember. org, 2). Two methods used were an icy vat of water and using the sub-zero temperatures outside.

Each experiment was divided into two parts. The first part, Sigmund established how long it took for body temperature to lower to death. During the second part he tried to find the best way to revive the frozen person. Through tests, Sigmund figured the icy vat method was the quickest way to drop body temperature (Remember. org, 2).

Before the prisoners were placed in the icy vat, they were either given an aviator suit or wore nothing at all. They were each in the vat for up to five hours at a time. Once their body temperature fell to 79.7 degrees

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fahrenheit, Sigmund would throw hot sleeping bags or use scalding baths to rewarm them (Pbs. org).

The second method was conducted outdoors. Dr. Sigmund strapped prisoners to a stretcher and placed them outside. Auschwitz was one of the most ideal places for experiments outside because of the extreme winters. Eventually after suffering in the cold for hours, most victims lost consciousness and died once their body temperature dropped (Remember. org, 2).

Throughout the whole experiment, Dr. Sigmund was constantly measuring the changes in heart rate, body temperature, and muscles flexes (Pbs. org, 2). Although not many survived, there is a documented experiment done on two men. These men were both from Russia and once at the camp they were both sent to the icy vat.

A long time after being submerged in the vat, neither of the men were losing consciousness. Realizing not much was happening, Dr. Sigmund lowered the temperature. Shortly after this, both of them passed away. Everyone apart of this experiment were shocked at how long they lasted (Remember. org, 2).

All in all, 80 to 100 people died due to these freezing experiments conducted in icy vats or in sub-zero temperatures (Pbs. org). Nazi doctors were ruthless and would've done anything for the name of science. No matter how many people they killed, they were determined to get rid of the Jews, Gypsies, and other races.

Even examining masses of twins, attempting to sterilize millions of men and women, and pushing the human body to as cold as it could go. These medical experiments caused hundreds of deaths and gives the title doctor a dark background.