

No evidence for German BW activities in WWII

Erhard Geissler, MDC Berlin-Buch

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Biological weapons research and usage was triggered in the XX century by the German biosabotage activities with anthrax and glanders bacteria.¹

After WWI the history of biological weapons research and usage is marked by misinformation and disinformation.² ("Misinformation" is false by mistake. "Desinformation" is false by design, the intent being to advance a conspiracy, to manipulate an adversary, to alter a perception, to advance an interest or a career.³)

BW defense activities, especially when performed by potential adversaries, trigger suspicions even when they are performed for peaceful purposes. Research on dual-threat agents and facilities where such activities are carried out raise similar doubts. Wrong information, sloppy or consciously false interpretation of correct information, or complete fabrications had been the main cause for the largely unfounded biological arms race.

For example, 80 years ago, respected British journalist Wickham Steed claimed that the German Reichswehr had carried out secret BW experiments in the Paris Metro and the London Underground.⁴ Steed was probably the victim of a hoax. Nevertheless several governments believed that preposterous story and started or increased BW (defense) activities.⁵ Their concern was totally unfounded. The Reichswehr did not perform such experiments, not even at home in Germany.⁶

Two years later, British intelligence reports charged that the *Wehrmacht* were carrying out open-air trials with the causative agent of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) on Lüneburger Heath not far from Hamburg.⁷ However, open air FMD trials were not conducted until 1942 far from Germany in occupied Russia.⁸

Some 25 years ago, USAMRIID, the biological defense institute of the US Army in Fort Detrick, Maryland, was alleged to have been the place where

the AIDS agent had been deliberately constructed.^{9,10} That claim proved to be disinformation. The AIDS agents had been not the artificial products of BW R&D but are natural are descendents of some viruses infecting apes living in Sub-saharian Africa.¹¹

Recently another disinformation was spread. Klaus Reinhardt, an entomologist of the University of Tuebingen, announced in the headline of an article to provide "evidence for offensive biological warfare research in the third [*sic*] Reich" performed in the Entomological Institute of the Waffen-SS.¹² Accordingly he claims in his introduction to present research protocols "which confirm the existence of an offensive biological warfare research programme in Nazi Germany" while in the mainbody of the article he mentioned that "Hitler repeatedly and strictly ordered that biological weapons should *not be used*, even for defensive purposes" [Emphasis added, E.G.]. (By the way: That quotation is a little misleading: Hitler's prohibition was more comprehensive. He ordered "that *no preparations* for bacterial warfare are to be made by us". [Emphasis added])¹³

As previously extensively described^{14,15,16} the "Entomological Institute of the Waffen-SS and Police" was established in 1942 by order of Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler. Himmler was an advocate for biological warfare, but found himself bound by Hitler's prohibition of BW activities.¹⁷ The institute without doubt was a dual-use facility. Its director, Dr Eduard May was engaged not only in pest control but was also involved in discussions on offensive and defensive biological warfare capabilities. Nevertheless research activities could not be performed there before summer 1944 because the facility suffered from lack of resources throughout the war in contrast to CW and other armament facilities. The insufficient resourcing was certainly caused mainly by the fact that Hitler never withdraw his prohibition on preparations for BW.

Despite the thrilling headline Reinhardt in his article does not provide any new material regarding the dual-use activities performed in the Entomological Institute of the Waffen-SS" beyond that what was already

published. The low-scale experiments performed by Eduard May in September 1944 on the survival of food-deprived mosquitoes,^{18, 19} can hardly be assessed as confirmation of "the existence of an offensive biological warfare research programme in Nazi Germany". Besides that, the mainbody of Reinhardt's paper including its concluding paragraph does not pick up the alleged BW preparations but deals with the "enigmatic figure" of its director, Eduard May.

Up to today there is no evidence of offensive biological warfare research in Germany after the unsuccessful attempts of German biosabotage in WWI. It is a pity that the misleading heading of Reinhardt's article similar to other disinformation campaigns are favored by some media's apparent craving for a breaking story that often supersedes thorough investigation.

<http://www.prof-dr-erhard-geissler.de/biowaffen-und-ihre-geschichte/alte-und-neue-desinformationen/no-evidence-for-bw-activities-in-wwii/>

¹ Geissler, Erhard: "Anwendung von Seuchenmitteln gegen Menschen nicht erwünscht". *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 56, 1997, 107-55.

² Geißler, Erhard, *Anthrax und das Versagen der Geheimdienste*. Kai Homilius Verlag, Berlin 2003.

³ Geissler, Erhard and Robert H. Sprinkle: "Disinformation squared. Was the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth a Stasi success?" *Politics and the Life Sciences* 32/2, 2013, 2-99.

⁴ Steed, Wickham, „Aerial warfare: secret German plans". *The Nineteenth Century&After*, 116/689, 1934, 1-15.

⁵ Geissler, Erhard and John Ellis van Courtland Moon (eds.), *Biological and Toxin Weapons: Research, Development and Use from the Middle Ages to 1945*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

⁶ Geißler 2003, 72-80.

⁷ Committee of Imperial Defence. Sub-committee on Bacteriological Weapons, „Extract of information received up to the 21st October, 1936, regarding the development of Bacteriological Warfare in Germany". 4 November 1936. Public Record Office, Kew, UK. WO188/650 XP010754.

⁸ Geißler, E.: *Biologische Waffen - nicht in Hitlers Arsenalen. Biologische und Toxin-Kampfmittel in Deutschland von 1915 bis 1945*. LIT-Verlag, Münster, 1998, see especially pp. 262-265.

⁹ Anonymous, "AIDS may invade India: Mystery disease caused by US experiments", *Patriot* [New Delhi, India], 16 July 1983, pp. 2, 7.

¹⁰ Segal, Jakob, interviewed by Alfred Lee, "Aids sensation", *Sunday Express* (London), 26 October 1986.

¹¹ Geissler and Sprinkle 2013.

¹² Reinhardt, Klaus, „The Entomological Institute of the Waffen-SS: evidence for offensive biological warfare research in the third Reich", *Endeavour* 37/4, 2013, 220-227, see p. 220.

¹³ Unleserlich, Schreiben des Generals der Nebeltruppen an V In, „Betr.: USA-Versuche mit Bakterien / Lieferungen nach England". Geheime Kommandosache. 23. Mai 1942. National Archives, College Park RG 319, Box 3, Folder BW 14.

¹⁴ Geißler 1998, see especially pp. 551-575.

¹⁵ Geissler, Erhard, „Biological warfare activities in Germany, 1923-45“. In: Geissler and van Courtland Moon 1999, 91-126, see p. 111.

¹⁶ Geissler, Erhard and Jeanne Guillemin, "German flooding of the Pontine Marshes in World War II: Biological Warfare or Total War Tactic?" *Politics and the Life Sciences* 29/1, 2010, 1-23, see p. 8.

¹⁷ Geißler, 1998,392-393.

¹⁸ Geißler 1998, 566.

¹⁹ Reinhardt 2013, 225.