

05 Selection and Public Welfare

Vienna's Main Health Office and "genetic and racial hygiene"

Shortly after Austria's Anschluss, the Viennese health system began to be restructured on the model of the Altreich. In accordance with the principles of eugenics, every effort was made to exclude certain parts of the population from health and welfare services on the grounds that they were "genetically inferior" or "unworthy of social aid." The most important instruments of this policy were the public health offices, which underwent a massive expansion. They were in charge of genetic screening of the population by creating "genetic files" and "genealogical files." The entire Viennese population was screened for "inferior" people. The Department for Genetic and Racial Hygiene within the Main Health Office collected all the incriminating data that was available: mental illnesses, previous venereal diseases, prostitution, alcoholism, hereditary diseases, mental and physical handicaps, etc. In the course of time, approximately 700,000 index cards were compiled. They formed the basis for the systematic discrimination against the registered persons, who were either denied social benefits (child allowance, "marriage loans," public welfare, etc.), prohibited from marrying, sterilized, interned in labor camps or youth concentration camps, or murdered in the children's euthanasia program.

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