

Steinhof, Vienna

A center of Nazi medical crimes

In the National Socialist system, medicine took on a new task: the "weeding out" of people designated as "inferior." There was no room in the performance-orientated Volksgemeinschaft (people's community) for the handicapped, the mentally sick, for members of social fringe groups, and nonconformists. They were persecuted, imprisoned, and abandoned to annihilation. The Heil- und Pflegeanstalt "Am Steinhof" (today's Otto Wagner Hospital) developed in the years after the Anschluss of 1938 into the Viennese center of National Socialist medical murder that was to take the lives of far more than 7,500 Steinhof patients:- Between 1940 and 1945 a so-called "children's ward" named Am Spiegelgrund existed on the Steinhof premises where approximately 800 sick or handicapped children and young people perished.- In the course of the so-called "Operation T4," more than 3,200 patients were deported from the clinic in 1940/41 and murdered in Hartheim Castle near Linz.- After the official halt to "Operation T4" in August 1941, "euthanasia" was continued within the clinic by means of deliberate malnutrition and systematic neglect. More than 3,500 patients fell victim to hunger and infection. Remains of victims of the "Am Spiegelgrund" clinic were used in medical research until the 1980s. They were interred in an honorary grave at the Vienna Central Cemetery only in 2002. Additional Spiegelgrund preparations as well as remains of victims of the "decentralized euthanasia" at Steinhof were put to rest in May 2012. Starting out from the occurrences at the Steinhof clinic compound, the exhibition in Pavilion V of the Otto Wagner-Spital in Vienna – which is made available in its entirety on this website – offers a comprehensive overview of the circumstances and consequences of Nazi medical crimes in Vienna.

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