

GERMAN SCHOOLS FOR BACKWARD CHILDREN IN
THE BOHEMIAN LANDS:
AN EXEMPLARY ASPECT OF SCHOOL POLICY

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The system of schooling backward German children in the Bohemian lands has at best received only cursory treatment. In each of the three stages of development, with their differing state authorities (Austria-Hungary, the Czechoslovak First Republic and the *Reichsgau Sudetenland* as part of Nazi Germany), there is a typical pattern of inception and development, especially as far as the system of schooling backward children is concerned. Although the first such schools were set up for exclusively pedagogic and didactic reasons, very soon this special kind of school became an object of political and even ideological influence and argument. Conservative circles rejected special schools for backward children out of hand, socialist groups supported them.

Under Nazi rule, the schools for backward children were retained for the single reason that the *Bürgerschule* (citizen school) was elevated to the status of a six-form elementary school performing a selective function, and the schools for backward children, on the other hand, in this situation served as a kind of dump for children with hereditary defects. What is noteworthy is the cooperation between German and Czech teachers at special schools not only in matters of professional politics. The build-up of the German network of special schools for backward pupils in the Bohemian lands was until 1938 closely related to the personality of the chairman of the Association of German schools for backward children in the Czecho-Slovak Republic, Rolf Marschas.