



1/20 Julius Tandler or: The Vision of the “New Man”

“Tandler’s comprehensive health policy was part of his comprehensive idea of man, of his vision for a ‘New Man.’” Karl Sablik, *Julius Tandler*, 2010

2/20 A humble background

Julius Tandler was born on 16 February 1869 in the Moravian town of Jihlava; shortly afterwards, his family moved to Vienna. In 1889, Tandler enrolled at the Medical University of Vienna, one of the best of its kind in the world. The head of the Anatomical Institute, Emil Zuckerkandl, would soon become his mentor. Willing to assimilate, Tandler converted to Catholicism a few days after his habilitation in 1899. In the following year, he married the Protestant Olga Klauber. Tandler started publishing his own scientific papers in 1896, making his breakthrough with an atlas of the female ureter with particular consideration of pathological factors and gynaecological surgeries.

3/20 A scientific career

When Zuckerkandl died in May 1910, Julius Tandler succeeded his former mentor as head of the institute, and was appointed dean of the Medical Faculty in 1914. A proponent of women’s access to higher education, he was one of the first professors to take on a female assistant. Tandler championed a reform of medicine as a field of study and suggested putting the focus of training on a new subject – social medicine.

Tandler addressed demographics and population policy as early as the First World War, and gave a widely noted lecture on “Population in Wartime” in 1916: “One can certainly rule out the possibility of improvement through selection by modern warfare; indeed, one could even say that war entails a selection of the inferior.”

Tandler’s magnum opus is his “Textbook of Systematic Anatomy”; one of the most notable publications penned by a Viennese medical scientist.

4/20 Early political career

On 29 January 1917, Julius Tandler was summoned to an audience with Emperor Charles. In their very candid conversation, Tandler vindicated the idea of replacing private charity with a public national welfare system and suggested founding a state health ministry, but was left out of the process of establishing that same ministry just a few months later.

On 9 May 1919, Tandler was appointed as undersecretary of state and head of the National Health Office of the new Republic of Austria. When the Christian Social Party won the elections in 1920, Tandler resigned from the cabinet and found a new field of activity in "Red Vienna". His assignment in "Red Vienna" as city councillor for welfare and health care included the Youth Welfare Office, diacony, communal welfare services, disabled relief, and the municipal cemeteries.

On 30 June 1921, Tandler presented the basic principles of his programme to the city council, which decided to found a new public relief office that same day. It was the first step for a fundamental reform of "Red Vienna's" welfare system.

5/20 Julius Tandler on the move

In June 1929, Julius Tandler was a guest speaker at the 1st International Hospital Congress in Atlantic City. He praised the technical sophistication of the United States but criticised the fact that all of its services were in private hands. As of 1930, Tandler also served as advisor to the League of Nations, but took his leave in consequence of repeated anti-Semitic episodes at his institute. He accepted an offer from the Shanghai National College of Medicine in the spring of 1933 and travelled to China in the autumn, but returned to Austria in February 1934 when he learned of the uprising that led to civil war. When Tandler visited China some time later, he prophetically noted down his impressions of "The Chinese People": "World history, however, will be made at the shores of the Pacific Ocean, and it will determine the fate of all mankind."

6/20 Declining years

Back in Vienna, Tandler was immediately arrested, imprisoned for several weeks, and forced into retirement. He visited China once again in the summer of 1934, where a hospital was built in Shanghai following his ideas. He returned to Vienna in May 1935 and participated in a congress in the Soviet Union in August 1935 to "keep busy".

During a stay in the United States in November 1935, Tandler received an invitation from Moscow to collaborate as consultant for hospital construction and medical training. Struggling with Moscow's midsummer heat, he suffered multiple fits of angina pectoris and was admitted to the Kremlin Hospital, where he died on the night of 25 August 1936.

7/20 The "fourth Jew"

Tandler was baptised, but is nonetheless regarded as one of the foremost Jewish scientists, though his Jewishness was primarily ascribed to him by others. When he became head of the Anatomical Institute in 1910, the *Deutsches Volksblatt* newspaper carried an article on the "Judaisation of the Vienna University"; when appointed head of the National Health Office, the Christian-conservative *Reichspost* newspaper wrote: "With Dr. Tandler taking office, the number of Jews in the cabinet rises to four out of 17."

November 1923 saw the first anti-Semitic incidents at Tandler's institute, and the disturbances and acts of harassment continued during the following years. When Nazis repeatedly raided his institute in the spring of 1933, Tandler accepted a teaching assignment in China.

8/20 Socialist by instinct

A man from a humble background, Julius Tandler was quick to develop a keen sense of social justice. He later said that he had spent more than one night studying in the light of the chestnut vendor's carbide lamp in the street to save light, so he was no stranger to poverty. Tandler's biographer Karl Sablik described him as a "socialist by instinct". His trademarks – a broad-brimmed slouch hat, a bow tie, and his moustache – identify him as a supporter of the ideals of the 1848 Revolution. He was not a Marxist in any case.

Some eminent figures of "Red Vienna" were in fact Freemasons: social reformer Ferdinand Hanusch, for example, was member of the "Lessing of the Three Rings" lodge, to which he introduced Tandler in 1920.

9/20 Eugenics: science and ideology

Eugenics – derived from the Greek *eu* (“good”) and *genos* (“race, stock”) – is a demographic and health policy that aims to promote “superior” hereditary factors over those considered less desirable. Supporters of eugenics were to be found across all countries and ideological camps. The seed for “negative eugenics” was sown by social Darwinists like the Briton Herbert Spencer, who applied the theory of evolution to the development of society, thus perverting Darwin’s notion of “natural selection” into the idea of the “survival of the fittest”.

Eventually, the theory became a reality: the first forced sterilisations and castrations based on eugenics were carried out prior to 1910 on patients at a mental hospital in Zurich, and were still common practice in numerous Swiss hospitals in the 1980s. Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Iceland likewise enacted eugenic laws. However, shaken by the horrors of Nazi “racial hygiene”, many former eugenics supporters turned their backs on the theory after 1945.

10/20 Socialist eugenics

Before long, eugenics had gained a foothold in the international labour movement. Good health was particularly important to the working class, so a strong case was made for prophylactic measures: people should be protected from diseases rather than cured of them!

The German physician Alfred Grotjahn developed “socialist eugenics”, which had many traits of the *Lebensreform* (life reform) movement. A social democratic member of the Reichstag from 1921 to 1924, Grotjahn was adamantly opposed to racial anthropological notions. In his view, environment-related diseases should be fought primarily with “social hygiene”.

A sober analysis of socialist eugenics shows that this international scientific movement has nothing in common with Nazi ideology. Whereas “rightist” eugenics aimed for a state-controlled “racial hygiene”, socialist eugenics proposed purely voluntary measures to prevent “inferior” life. Even feminists, progressive physicians and many assimilated Jews endorsed eugenics. They criticised the devastating effects of capitalist production on worker health and called for measures to improve human genetics.

The firm belief in progress and science augured a “new era” with “new people” and a better – socialist – order of society. The “new man” would be fitter for work, more productive and more responsible in mindset. The physician Karl Kautsky Jr., for instance, opined that “individuals in frail health” should volunteer to renounce reproduction without having to deny themselves the possibility of matrimony and partnership.

11/20 Eugenics in “Red Vienna”

In contrast to Germany during the Weimar Republic, where virtually all parties favoured eugenic measures, most social democrats in predominantly Catholic Austria came out in favour of “positive eugenics”; for them, enlightenment, education, reason and voluntariness were key. Shaken by the Great War, Julius Tandler also became a supporter of eugenics. As early as 1916, he gave a lecture warning of the negative repercussions of the war: “The war not only harms or annihilates the population group that is most valuable in terms of reproduction; its recruitment-based selection process strikes precisely the most valuable individuals within that group.” Tandler elaborated on eugenic population policy in his essays “Ehe und Bevölkerungspolitik” (“Matrimony and Population Policy”, 1924) and “Gefahren der Minderwertigkeit” (“Risks of Inferiority”, 1928), which contain some highly controversial and contradictory statements on eugenics.

One of the most frequently quoted passages in “Ehe und Bevölkerungspolitik” is also one of the most disturbing: “The great expense states bear for life unworthy of life are exemplified by the fact that Germany spends 2 billion *Friedensmarks* (peace-time Deutsche marks) on its 30,000 idiots. In view of these figures, the question of the destruction of life unworthy of life for the benefit of life worthy of life gains topicality and importance.”

However, in the same essay, Tandler also points to the individual’s right to live and discusses the aspect of voluntariness: “Appraising the value of one’s own life remains a matter of personal freedom, for not only is there a right to life but also an obligation to live. However, it is for the individual to choose between the obligation to live and the right to go.”

In any case, Tandler did not believe in the viability of selective “breeding of humans” and since it was impossible to ban reproduction, he saw the need to counsel, educate and enlighten the individual.

12/20 Tandler as eugenicist

Tandler's essay "Gefahren der Minderwertigkeit" essentially recapitulates his prior theses. In his view, "population policy" must aim to "improve the quality of the individual and hence of society as a whole". Once again, the essay contains some rather disturbing passages, among them Tandler's comment that: "The very society that is so unsympathetic and recklessly indifferent as to let hundreds of children perish – including, perhaps, talents and geniuses –, is fostering idiots with prudent care, congratulating itself for seeing them through to a comfortable senectitude." Nevertheless, coercive measures were out of the question: "People need to understand that conceiving children that are ill from the outset is nothing less than a crime." There is nothing to prettify about the quoted passages, says historian Herwig Czech. They are "no exceptional faux pas, but deliberate conclusions of a concept of man based not only on empathy [...] but also on the application of economic considerations to people as individuals and as a biological collective."

Julius Tandler must be judged by his actions. The "social population policy" he propagated "does not aim for unlimited reproduction of people; it asks whether those who are actually born can live in decent conditions." The bottom line is that Tandler will always have to be seen as a humanist. For him, medicine's top priority is to preserve life, regardless of whether that life is "inferior" or not.

13/20 Reorganising welfare

Half a year after taking office as councillor in November 1920, Julius Tandler presented the Vienna city council with a concept for his future welfare system. Its prime principle was that "society has an obligation to help those in need". This marked a fundamental change of thought: the idea of "random charity" was abandoned in favour of a general legal entitlement to welfare for everyone. After all, "no one asks to be born into society."

Another novelty and revolutionary aspect of Tandler's concept was that social aid was to be "comprehensive" with regard to space, time and quality. The City of Vienna established a dense welfare infrastructure that covered the entire course of human life, from birth to death, and pervaded multiple spheres such as social housing facilities, sports facilities, public baths and unemployment aid.

14/20 The Tandler system

Vienna's separation from Lower Austria in 1922 went hand in hand with a reform of the city's entire administrative body, which included a reorganisation of the welfare system. The youth welfare office was pooled together with the poor relief and health care into a general welfare centre. The resulting "Vienna system" could also be called the "Tandler system": public welfare was henceforth responsible for open social services, including welfare offices and boards of guardians for the poor. The welfare institutions and disabled relief were helmed by individual municipal departments; the health office was henceforth responsible for public health care including public medical officers, paramedics, tuberculosis centres, and school dental clinics. The health office also oversaw a monitoring centre for the mentally ill and emotionally disturbed, a counselling centre for people suffering from venereal diseases, a marriage guidance council, and asylums for alcoholics.

Tandler expected a lot from the welfare workers: they had to be philanthropic, idealistic, empathic and down-to-earth. But the ultimate task for welfare workers was, in Tandler's words, "to make themselves redundant, because when the last social welfare worker is buried, mankind will be free."

15/20 Child and youth welfare

Julius Tandler's focus was on child and youth care, the "basis of any welfare". His goal was to educate future generations to become "better people".

When, on Tandler's initiative, Vienna introduced free layette sets for newborns early in 1927, the opposition raged. Every set contained 24 diapers, six cardigans, one large terry bath towel, one ordinary bath towel, six shirts, two umbilical binders, one pinafore dress, one flannel blanket,

and two rubber undersheets. As 1927 was also an election year, the Christian Social Party derided the layette sets as “election diapers”.

Another important landmark was the creation of nursery schools, the main purpose of which – according to Tandler – was to “kindle social awareness and action”. “Red Vienna” more than doubled its number of nurseries, the 100th of which was inaugurated in 1930 by no less a figure than Mayor Karl Seitz. More than 10,000 children were provided with breakfast, lunch and afternoon snacks, three-quarters of them received these free of charge.

The new welfare system also included regular school examinations. Children and adolescents were measured and weighed; vaccination details and findings of tuberculin samples were entered into specific “pupil profiles”. From the first school year onwards, 15 school dental clinics examined over 9,000 children twice a year and treated them, if necessary. The children were even taught how to brush their teeth properly.

16/20 Sports and leisure activities

To prevent lung diseases and rickets, Julius Tandler had outdoor pools built for children. This afforded city children an opportunity to bathe for free. The period of the First Republic saw numerous public playgrounds and 23 outdoor pools built for children.

Tandler was also a patron of workers’ sports. In 1926, he became deputy chairman of the Österreichischer Arbeiter-Turn- und Sportbund (Austrian Workers’ Gymnastics and Sports Federation) and in 1931 chairman of the Wiener Arbeiter Turn- und Sportverein (Viennese Workers’ Gymnastics and Sports Federation). In 1927, when Vienna was chosen as the location for the 2nd International Workers’ Olympiad in 1931, a presentable stadium had to be built almost overnight. At the inauguration ceremony on 11 July 1931, Tandler gave a rather emotional speech that glorified the stadium as a “nursery of free thought” and “source of a new mass culture.” The press echoed his enthusiasm, praising “Europe’s most beautiful and modern sports arena”.

In 1922, the Wiener Jugendhilfswerk (Vienna Youth Welfare) was founded as a service offering recreation to Vienna’s children. By 1925, 35,000 children spent their summer holidays at state-run vacation homes and day-care centres.

17/20 Foster and home care

Founded in 1925, Vienna’s foster care centre was a hub for children in need; it was the first European institution of its kind and the largest in the world. “Homeless mothers with newborn babies, daughters of drunkards, wives of jobless men [...] in a word: a compendium of the whole of straitened humanity is pushing its way into the foster care centre day after day. It is a horrific sight of child misery – a frightful symbol of capitalist society!”

Children were examined, bathed, clothed, and monitored in one of six units (sorted by age), where physicians or psychologists would assess them and refer them for further care.

In 1927, the City of Vienna purchased the former archducal Wilhelminenberg palace for use as a state-run community home for 200 children. It was fitted with a dental clinic, lecture and cinema halls, a bath, a gym, a workshop, a primary care clinic and a sick ward. Tandler referred to it as the “Castle of the Future”.

The purpose of the institution was to monitor, examine and assess children who had been admitted to the foster care centre; a child’s subsequent placement was based on the remedial teacher’s diagnosis. “Normal children” and “mildly maladjusted children” were placed in foster homes, while the “severely maladjusted” were placed in orphanages and reformatories. The most important of these correctional institutions was located in Eggenburg, Lower Austria. Tandler introduced modern educational methods and banned corporal punishment. The children’s daily schedule included occupational therapy, vocational training, sports and music, with the aim of “rearing children to be civilised people”.

18/20 Education and guidance

The most spectacular product of Julius Tandler’s demographic campaign was Europe’s first marriage guidance office. Its director was Karl Kautsky Junior, a son of social democratic theoretician Karl Kautsky who was very close with Tandler and primarily active in Germany. Guid-

ance sessions were held twice a week. According to one brochure, "The good health of spouses is more important for marital happiness than money or worldly goods". People were also given information about contraceptives for the prevention of venereal diseases, as well as abortion and possible "imperfections".

As early as 1917, the first counselling centres for mothers were installed in Vienna's youth welfare offices, with branches opening all over the city after 1923. Guidance mainly revolved around baby and child care.

Julius Tandler – like many other eminent social democrats – opposed abortion on principle. After all, new blood was needed to continue the fight of the proletariat. The party line in this regard was determined at a congress of social democratic doctors in 1924: from a biological point of view, the embryo was an individual from the moment of conception; sociologically, it was a member of society. It was therefore neither part nor property of the mother. Thus decided, the Social Democratic Party resolved to educate the masses, propagate effective methods of contraception, and advocate an abortion law based on medical, social and eugenic indications. The idea was to obviate the need for abortion instead of banning it.

19/20 Fighting on multiple fronts

Julius Tandler was an avowed enemy of alcohol, but his efforts against it proved all but futile. He tried at least to ban alcohol in his own sphere of influence – i.e. from welfare and health care centres, but also from the sports stadium. Deeply impressed by his first visit to the United States, he declared Prohibition to be "one of the utmost cultural achievements of all times". But in the end, Tandler's realist tendencies kept his focus on education and treatment.

In Lainz – home to Europe's largest facility for the elderly – a former "sick house" was adapted for the closed poor relief. Homeless shelters welcomed disabled and war invalids, providing their residents with board, lodge and daily allowances. Founded as early as 1915, the so-called "Cripple Relief Centre" was also incorporated into the municipal administration in 1923. Its workshops manufactured all kinds of prosthetic and orthopaedic devices.

One of Julius Tandler's first and most controversial projects was the building of a crematorium in Vienna's Simmering district. The Catholic Church and the Christian Social Party fought its construction tooth and nail. Nevertheless, it was inaugurated on 17 December 1922, despite the federal minister of social services' explicit ban on its activation. By the early 1930s, the annual number of cremations had risen from 835 to approximately 4,000.

20/20 Old and new diseases

On Julius Tandler's initiative, the City of Vienna started a "relentless campaign against tuberculosis", which was so widespread as to be known Europe-wide as *morbus viennensis*, or the "Viennese disease". One vital aspect of the campaign's success was its focus on prevention, which included the construction of "healthy" dwellings for the people: "Building bright, airy, sunny flats with separate bedrooms for parents and children is the safest way to nip consumption in the bud."

In order to get an idea of just how far the disease had spread, Vienna conducted mandatory examinations of all residents of the newly-built municipal housing estates. Tuberculosis centres opened city-wide, in each of which two doctors held surgery hours several times a week. Follow-up care was carried out by social workers, who visited the affected in their homes, informed them about domestic and personal hygiene, ensured that contagious patients were isolated within their flat, and brought economic relief in the form of free school meals, home care, or loaned beds and laundry. Starting with 14 tuberculosis centres in 1921, their number rose to 24 until 1930, by which time the "Viennese disease" was virtually under control.

Whereas the fight against tuberculosis was crowned with success, there was a considerable increase in cancer, heart and vascular diseases. Tandler identified cancer as the new enemy and opened the first unit for radiotherapy at the Lainz hospital. Vienna purchased 5 g of radium (of a global stock of 400 g). The costs of the radium, including medical equipment such as an irradiation unit, amounted to 1.9 million Austrian schillings, which is equivalent to six million euros. Julius Tandler also worked out a new hospital law, which parliament passed in 1920. It was the first law to stipulate the state's obligation to share every citizen's costs of treatment.