

“RACIAL SCIENCE”

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In 1936, the new Research Institute for Racial Hygiene and Population Biology of the Reich Health Office in Berlin launched a “racial research” project - later run in collaboration with the Institute of Criminal Biology - into the Sinti and Roma in Germany, Austria and the territory of today’s Czech Republic. Research Director Robert Ritter and his assistant Eva Justin drew up genealogical trees of individual Sinti and Roma families, in many cases going back more than a hundred years. They photographed and measured parts of the body and registered people’s blood groups and the colour of their hair and eyes.

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Did you know

... that after 1941, such lists were used to select Roma and Sinti for deportation to the concentration camps?

For you to do

What did the photographer wish to convey with this photo? Find out whether any authorities in your country still collect “racial” information.

The photo

The “racial hygienist” Robert Ritter (right) and one of his assistants taking a blood sample from a young German Sintiza. The photograph was taken in 1936 as a record of their research work. German Federal Archives, Koblenz, Germany.