

endangered living

Queer people 1933 – 1945

An exhibition of Magnus Hirschfeld
Federal Foundation

**English texts
of all exhibition panels
and biography folders
(no pictures)**

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Content Exhibition Panels

Prologue

To this day, the history of queer people during the Nazi era is largely unknown. This exhibition tells the story of social exclusion, denunciations by the population, and state measures of repression and persecution. It reports on the confinement of queer people in prison and concentration camps, their flight and suicide. But it also tells tales of love, friendships and networks, and associated forms of self-assertion.

All queer people were at risk – especially those persecuted on racist grounds. The exhibition provides information on more stringent criminal legislation and the increasingly threatening dragnet of regulations. Nevertheless, only a fraction of the queer population was convicted and imprisoned, including prostitutes and so-called seducers of youth, Nazi Party adherents and completely apolitical individuals. The majority managed to live through the Nazi era undisturbed.

At the heart of the exhibition is a multitude of life stories. This panorama conveys an impression of the practices in persecuting people who did not correspond to the imperative of a heteronormative hierarchical male-female relationship. The gaze is directed at spaces for action, self-discoveries, stubbornness and forms of masking – also after the end of the Nazi dictatorship.

“Queer” is used in this exhibition as a generic term for homosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, intersexual, non-binary and/or gender-fluid. Historic as well as current external and self-descriptions are also used.

1. Destruction of queer infrastructure

1.1 Closing of pubs and clubs



The visibility achieved by queer life in major cities had long been a thorn in the side of conservatives, church circles and Nazis. They took action against it wherever they gained in power and influence. On 4 March 1933, Berlin's new Nazi chief of police ordered the closure of fourteen prominent queer pubs and the restriction of night-time operation in another four. This was followed ten days later by the next index, affecting seventeen pubs. The local police authorities then handled further shutdowns. The bans meant a loss of both public and protected spaces for queer society and community – the loss of places that had permitted contact, joie de vivre and self-confidence.

Collage Notschrei

Caption:

Photo collage in: *Der Notschrei* 5/1933, Schwules Museum Berlin

The Viennese Nazi magazine *Der Notschrei* published a fragmentary review of the destroyed queer scene in Berlin in May 1933. The collage shows exterior views of seven of the fourteen lesbian and

gay bars closed by the police in March 1933 and photos of the personnel of the queer cabaret "Eldorado," where cross-dressing was permitted.

Pub closures before Berlin administrative courts 1933/34

For pub owners, closures ordered by the police constituted an existential threat. Many appealed, suing in the administrative courts, which often granted temporary stays. The pubs were then sometimes renamed and reorganised. In the meantime, plainclothes police officers continued to attend them. In court, they appeared as prosecution witnesses. Withdrawal of the licence to sell alcohol then also arose, amounting to an occupational ban for the proprietors.

Lesbian life from 1933

Lesbian women were not threatened with persecution if they remained inconspicuous and avoided the subculture. There was a risk of potential denunciations: behaviour and/or appearance that deviated from the norm, associated with the suspicion of "perverse tendencies", could quickly result in charges. Lesbian life became relevant for criminal prosecution if the Nazi authorities became aware of other offences; during investigations of theft, "shirking work", regime-critical statements and other "shortcomings", sexual behaviour deviating from the norm exacerbated the criminal punishment. At particular risk were lesbians who were persecuted as Jews or "half-castes" or regarded as suffering from "hereditary diseases".

Notification *Freundschaftsblatt*

Caption:

Editorial notification on the pub bans in *Freundschaftsblatt* of 9 March 1933.

The magazine of the homosexual association "Bund für Menschenrecht" countered the notification on the police closures of queer pubs with Goethe verses from *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years, or the Renunciants*: "We scatter out in you – that's why the world is so big." From then on the meeting places shifted to other pubs, private flats and unprotected public spaces.

"Monokel-Diele" Berlin (closure autumn 1933)

Caption:

The dance cabaret bar "Monokel-Diele", Berlin-Charlottenburg, Budapester Strasse 14, postcard ca. 1931/32, Arkivi photo agency.

In 1931, Lotte Hahm opened a "fashionable, elegant dance bar for the spoiled woman." It was closed by the police in March 1933 for "promoting immorality". The proprietors sued and managed to effect a reopening in April under the new name "Budapest am Zoo". Its customer base remained loyal to the pub. In October 1933, it was once again closed and the licence to sell alcohol also revoked.

"Marienburg" Hamburg (closure 1935)

Caption:

Building view of "Marienburg", Hamburg, Marienstrasse 53 on Encke Platz (small, narrow building in picture centre), photo from 1940, Hamburg Bildarchiv

"Marienburg" was a gay bar for all classes in the 1930s: workers, clerks and rent boys, the rich and famous. The host and waiters arranged sexual contacts on request – in the toilets, cellar or a separate club room. The pub was closed in 1935. This was followed by court proceedings against the personnel and guests on charges of "unnatural fornication" and "procuration".

"Zum Blauen Bock" Stuttgart

Caption:

Street view of the Lindenstrasse 31–33, the second building entrance from the right led into the former pub "Zum Blauen Bock", photograph Stuttgart 1939, Ludwigsburg State Archives EL 228 a III no. 4679

The proprietors of the "Blauen Bock" in the Lindenstrasse 31 were Theresia Michelberger (1891–1950) and her girlfriend Else Bühler. They were still advertising in the *Freundschaftsblatt* in October 1932 for the "meeting place for female and male friends" and for the "friendship pub". In 1933, Michelberger changed the name to "Württembergische Hohenzollernsche Brauerei-Ges. AG" and as a result was able to continue running her pub until 1943.

"Chez Eugen" Berlin

Caption:

Advertising postcard of the pub "Chez Eugen" with dedication on the back: "Let the memory, not the applause, be my victory. Eugen Boral Berlin, 21. III. 32", LABO Berlin, BEG file reg. 325082

It was a queer pub in Berlin that attracted students, painters, actors and athletes in order to experience the waiter Eugen Boral (1906–1982). With his evening performances as chansonnier, he was celebrated as "chevalier of the Uhlandstrasse" and attacked as "Moses". When the pub was closed in 1933 and ransacked by the SA, he fled via Prague to the US.

"Schwarzfischer" Munich (raid October 1934)

Caption:

Pub "Schwarzfischer", advertising postcard, Munich 1925, Munich City Archives DE-1992-FS-PK-STB-04231

In September 1927, Antonie Flum from Vienna took over the pub and developed it into a well-known homosexual meeting point. The pub was monitored by the police, but they were unable to revoke the licence. The premises were searched in the night of 21 October 1934 as part of a largescale raid. Guests were taken to police headquarters and many transferred to the Dachau concentration camp.

"Nettesheim" Cologne

Caption:

Advertising postcard of the pub "Nettesheim", undated, Centrum Schwule Geschichte, Cologne

The "Nettesheim-Casino" of Jean Nettesheim already existed prior to the First World War. In 1920, it advertised itself in *Die Freundschaft*, which was also on sale in the pub, as a "longstanding meeting point of the international and elegant world", "[...] always well-attended" [...] "daily mood music". Those attending certainly included many rent boys. How long the pub existed is unknown.

1.2 Suppression of magazines

Magazines for queer people assisted visibility and awareness of community. They conducted emancipatory debates, reported on the movement and the scene, handled relationship questions and entertained with short stories and poems. They provided photos of desirable people, information on events and meeting points, and contacts to find connections and friendships. Magazines could also reach people who lived far away from major cities. They created involvement, encouraged self-confidence and demonstrated: queer life is possible.

Magazine kiosk

Caption:

Newsstand on Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, photograph around 1926, with the magazines *Die Freundin*, *Der Eigene*, *Eros*, *Die Freundschaft*, *Freundschaftsblatt*, *Die Insel*, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030, no. 16935

Magazines for a queer audience were available in Berlin at numerous public newsstands in every inner-city district. Furthermore, they could be purchased in many queer pubs and in some bookshops. In 1921, seven Berlin newspaper wholesalers already supplied these retailers. There were demonstrably 44 newsstands and 26 pubs that sold queer magazines in 1925.

Individual magazine covers

Die Freundschaft 1926

Caption:

Die Freundschaft, Year 8, September 1926, no. 9, Forum Queeres Archiv Munich

Die Freundschaft was the publication of the "German Friendship Association" (DFV) and was initially published from 1919 to 1933 in Berlin by Karl Schultz, from 1928 in Phoebus-Verlag by Kurt Eitelbus.

Die Freundin

Caption:

Die Freundin, Year 5 17 July 1929, no. 3, Forum Queeres Archiv Munich

Die Freundin was the first periodically published lesbian magazine worldwide. It was published by the "Association for Human Rights" (BfM) from 1924 until its final issue on 8 March 1933 with interruptions due to being indexed in Berlin. It was the joint association publication of the BfM and of the "Association for Ideal Female Friendship".

Garçonne

Caption:

Garçonne, Year 1931, no. 9, Forum Queeres Archiv Munich

Garçonne was published with the subtitle *Junggesellin* ["Bachelorette"] from 1930 to 1932 in Berlin. *Frauenliebe*, *Der Transvestit* and *Femina. Blätter für somatische Veredelung und praktische Schönheitspflege* [Female Love, The Transvestite and Femina. Papers for Somatic Refinement and Practical Cosmetic Care] were "inserts".

Das 3. Geschlecht [The Third Gender]

Caption:

Das 3. Geschlecht, fourth instalment, Privatarchiv Rainer Herrn

Das 3. Geschlecht, subtitled *Die Transvestiten* ["*The Transvestites*"] is considered the first magazine worldwide for transvestites. The five issues overall were published from 1930 to 1932 by Radszuweit-Verlag in Berlin.

Mitteilungen des WhK

Caption:

Mitteilungen des Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees e.V., ["*Reports of the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee*"] January/March 1932, no. 32, Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft Berlin

The *Mitteilungen des Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees e.V.* were published from 1926. The final issue appeared in February 1933.

Die Freundschaft 1933

Caption:

Die Freundschaft, Year 15, March 1933, Schwules Museum Berlin

Die Freundschaft had to be discontinued with the March 1933 issue.



Cover of *Der Eigene*

Caption:

Der Eigene. Ein Blatt für männliche Kultur [*The Unique. A Newspaper for Masculine Culture*], Year 10, 1925, no. 12

Der Eigene was the first homosexual magazine in the world and as a paper for "masculine culture" represented the "interests of the homoerotic male world". It was published by Adolf Brand and was the "artistic and fighting organ of the 'Community of the Unique'". The magazine was published from 1896 to 1932.

Adolf Brand

Caption:

Adolf Brand, photograph of Jaro von Tucholka around 1930, photo postcard with dedication to Martin Fiedler and the Nietzsche quote "Let the friend be the feast of the earth for you!", Schwules Museum Berlin

Adolf Brand (1874 Berlin–1945 Berlin)

He was an anarchist and rebel, poet and publisher, activist in the gay movement and a champion of "masculine culture and friendly love". 1896–1932 publisher of the magazine *Der Eigene*; 1903–1933 chair of the "Community of the Unique". Five house searches and seizures occurred from May to November 1933, in 1936 Gestapo investigations took place due to the suspicion of the formation of homosexual networks, in 1937 a trial due to "distribution of lewd publications". This resulted in his financial ruin. After this, Adolf Brand lived inconspicuously. He died during an air raid on his house in Berlin-Wilhelmshagen.

Selli Engler

Caption:

Selli Engler, photograph 1929, in: *Die Freundin*, Year 5 1929, no. 16, Forum Queeres Archiv Munich

Selma "Selli" Engler (1899 Schwiebus/today Świebodzin/Poland–1972 West Berlin)

As a writer and chair of lesbian associations, she was a well-known activist from the beginning of the 1930s. From 1926, she independently published *Blätter idealer Frauenfreundschaften* [Magazine for ideal female friendships] and established the "Damen-BIF-Klub"; she was the author of the magazine *Frauenliebe* and from 1929 to 1931 of *Freundin*. During this period, she also ran the "Damenklub Erato". Her activism ended after this. In 1933, she dedicated a play she had written to Adolf Hitler. It was unappreciated and not staged. She was also refused admission to the Reich Chamber of Literature.

Cover BIF – *Blätter idealer Frauenfreundschaften*

Caption:

BIF – *Blätter idealer Frauenfreundschaften*, Year II, no. 2, German National Library Leipzig

The *Blätter idealer Frauenfreundschaften* was the first lesbian publication that was independent of men as regards publication, editing and content. It considered itself to be a "monthly for female culture" and was independently published by Selli Engler in Berlin from 1926 to 1927.

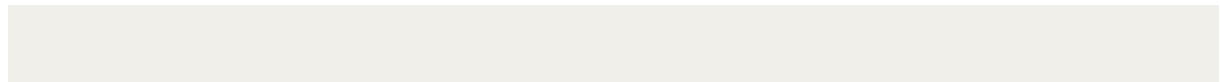


Points of sale of *Freundschaft*

Caption:

Points of sale of *Freundschaft* in the German Reich, advertisement in: *Die Freundschaft*, no. 4, 1921

1.3 Self-dissolution of associations, smashing of friend groups



The self-dissolution of the world's first homosexual association "Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee" (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee – WhK) in June 1933 was a signal: very soon after the seizure of power by the Nazis, magazines and associations had disappeared as visible signs of the queer infrastructure – an experience with consequences to the present day. Smashing of the networks and groups of friends occurred in parallel. Those who had become well-known to the public were at risk, as were association members, subscribers and customers from card index or mailing lists. Police investigations were often accompanied by compulsory outings. Investigations were then likewise instituted against persons whose names the police found during the searches of homes in address books, letters or diaries. Solidarity and support were impeded and many driven into isolation.

Albrecht Becker

Portrait/photo Albrecht Becker

Caption:

Albrecht Becker, self-portrait around 1938, Schwules Museum Berlin, Albrecht Becker Collection

Albrecht Becker (1906 Thale–2002 Hamburg)

Albrecht Becker, who worked as a window dresser, lived in Würzburg from 1924. He resided there in an open romantic relationship with State Archive Director Joseph Abert (1879–1959) on the latter's property. When the circle around Leopold Obermayer (1892–1943) was exposed, they were among those arrested in 1935. Becker was sentenced to three years of imprisonment. After this, he was shunned as a homosexual and entered the army. In 1944, he met and fell in love with the stage designer Herbert Kirchhoff (1911–1988). In company with the director Helmut Käutner (1908–1980), the pair began a career with hundreds of documentary and feature films.

Albrecht Becker's circle of friends

Caption:

Albrecht Becker (left) and friends at the Lido in Venice, photograph 1926, Schwules Museum Berlin, Albrecht Becker Collection

The Jewish wine dealer and Swiss citizen Leopold Obermayer was already a magnet in the gay scene in the 1920s. Polyglot, well-read from Hans Blüher to Oscar Wilde, he was extremely able "to influence young people" and networked his circle of friends. As a member of city society, Joseph Abert, his young friend, Albrecht Becker, and the doctor Werner Heyde, were part of this circle, as were many others.

Milo Becker's circle of friends

Quotation:

"In earlier periods, I also appeared in women's clothing at masked balls. Since the seizure of power [by the Nazis], I have no longer appeared anywhere as a woman. The wardrobe that I had I in part gave away, in part I had cushions made from them."

Quotation signature:

Statement of Milo Becker while in "protective custody" during interrogations at Gestapo headquarters.

Berlin in October 1937, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Rep 358-02 no. 21 652

Advert

Caption:

Advert of Milo Becker, in: *Freundschaftsblatt* Year 10, 1932, no. 26 (July)

Milo Becker (1882 Borna–to 1943)

From 1930, Milo Becker ran a "Viennese café" in Berlin. After it was closed by the police in 1933, Milo's flat became the meeting place for former guests. They called themselves Loni, Adelheid, the Kösen, Edith, Uli and Ossi. There was a framed photo of Ossi in women's clothing on the wall. This was confiscated in 1937 upon his arrest, as well as Hirschfeld's book *Berlins dritte Geschlecht*, an issue of the magazine *Der Eigene* and a box "with a replica of the male sexual organ made out of marzipan". Milo Becker got off without punishment and still worked as a businessman in Berlin in 1943.

Hella Knabe

Portrait photo

Caption:

Advert of the bespoke atelier Hella Knabe, in: *Die Freundin*, no. 51, 21 December 1932

Hella Knabe (1879 Berlin–?)

The tailor and hair stylist ran a bespoke atelier and mail-order business for lingerie with attached guest house in Berlin-Schöneberg. It catered to transvestites, usually family fathers from the provinces. The latter had themselves clothed and made up by Knabe and for a few days enjoyed the convivial company offered by Knabe's personal circle as well as big city life. During a raid, the police confiscated Knabe's address list and launched nationwide investigations against her customer base. In 1938, she was sentenced to pay a fine in a trial for the distribution of lewd material.

Advertisement

Caption:

Sales brochure of the bespoke atelier Hella Knabe, 1930s, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Rep. 358-02, no. 132648

In her "Bespoke atelier for corsets and lingerie", Hella Knabe made corsets for "figure enhancement", wigs, female breasts and lingerie in striking materials for high prices. In addition, she and her husband, Dr Richard Knabe, distributed their monthly *Customer Information*, which was mailed on request. After the criminal trial in 1937/38, the couple moved their business operations to Vienna.

Knabe quote:

"On request, I also provide my transvestite customers with the opportunity to live under my roof as women. [...] The customers involved get dressed under my direction [...] as women and also have their hair styled by me. [...] Once they are dressed, I give the person involved an inspection, as it were. In this respect, I would at the same time like to note that, on my part, lewd behaviour with transvestite customers never occurred in my flat."

Quote signature:

Hella Knabe, interrogation minutes of 13 September 1937, in: Rainer Herrn, *Transvestitismus in der Nazi-Zeit – Ein Forschungsdesiderat*, *Zeitschrift für Sexualforschung* 26/2013



Kurt Hiller

Caption:

Kurt Hiller, photograph of Lotte Jacoby, Berlin 1930, Kurt Hiller Gesellschaft, Hamburg

Kurt Hiller (1885 Berlin–1972 Hamburg)

He was a combative publicist, pacifist and activist of the homosexual movement. He was active in the WhK for 25 years; in 1925, he became its deputy chair. As a declared Nazi opponent, socialist and Jew, he was arrested three times in 1933 and sent to a concentration camp. In 1934 he was able to flee to London via Prague, where he lived until 1955. From 1948, he was in demand as a contact in attempts to revive the WhK in the fight against the still prevailing homosexual penal law. These attempts failed. In 1962, he took the initiative to re-establish the WhK in Hamburg but remained isolated.

Käthe Abels

Käthe Abels (1892 Duisburg–?)

Käthe Abels had a wide circle of female friends and was suspected of being lesbian. In 1934, she opened a care home in Joachimsthal in which she employed women without corresponding training as nurses. The impression arose that she maintained a kind of "lesbian community" in her home. When one of her employees committed suicide in 1942, the Criminal Police launched investigations. Denounced in addition by various parties as a lesbian, Abels, a member of the Nazi Party, was expelled from the party for "prohibited intercourse". She was forced to close her care home.

Exhibit: postcard about WhK dissolution 1933

Caption:

Invitation card to member meeting of the "Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitees e.V." on 8 June 1933 for the purpose of dissolution, Schwules Museum Berlin

The "Wissenschaftliche-humanitäre Komitee" (WhK), established in 1897 in Berlin, was a national association for the educated classes. Its aim was the abolition of homosexual penal law based on medical-legal expertise – true to the motto of its co-founder and chair, Magnus Hirschfeld: "To justice through science".

Quotation:

"The accused has [...] forfeited the right to remain in the party due to the proven abnormal sexual disposition and activity. The Nazi Party combats every kind of sexual degeneracy, irrespective of whether this is subject to criminal prosecution or not. Homosexual activity of women constitutes a considerable threat to marriage and the natural attitude of women to motherhood."

Quotation signature:

Decision of the Brandenburg District Court against Käthe Abels of 22 June 1944, Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv, Rep. 31 A Potsdam no. 31 A no. 5097, page 4

This made it clear why being lesbian could result in expulsion from the party: the "sexual degeneracy" of Käthe Abels undermined both motherhood as well as marriage. Just like the employee of Abels, who committed suicide, other partners were also younger than her. During the Nazi era, the homosexual "seduction" of younger individuals by older was regarded as a threat to the body politic.

File quotation

Caption:

Registration of the criminal charge of the Deutsche Arbeitsfront in the "K-Index" of the Criminal Police dated 7 December [1942] Berlin, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Pr. Rep. 030-02, no. 24.

The registry of the Criminal Police stated in the section "Crime, etc." next to the name of Kathe Abel "lesbian love". Persons unknown denounced Abels to the Deutsche Arbeitsfront, which passed on the accusation to the Criminal Police. Since "lesbian love" was not a criminal offence, this charge was not pursued. At the same time, it demonstrated the readiness of the local population to engage in denunciations.

1.4 Institute for Sexual Science

The first Institute for Sexual Science was established by Magnus Hirschfeld in Berlin in 1919. The goals of the institute were sexual science research and medical advice, sexual clarification and sexual reform. Moreover, the institute also hosted the first homosexual organisation of the world in the form of the "Scientific Humanitarian Committee".

Consequently, the institute became the tip of the spear against homosexual penal law, the pioneer for the emancipation of homosexuals and a place for advice and refuge for trans* people. It became internationally famous.

Portrait Magnus Hirschfeld

Caption:

Magnus Hirschfeld, frontispiece, in: Magnus Hirschfeld, *Geschlechtskunde* Vol. I, 1926, Picture Archive Magnus-Hirschfeld Gesellschaft Berlin

Magnus Hirschfeld (1868 Kolberg/today Kołobrzeg/Poland–1935 Nice/France)

He was a doctor and the co-founder in 1897 of the "Scientific-Humanitarian Committee" and in 1914 the co-founder of the "Medical Society for Sexual Science". In 1919, he established the Institute for Sexual Science and in 1928 the "World League for Sexual Reform". He was the object of increasing hostility in Germany as a pioneer for homosexual emancipation and as a Jew. At the end of 1930, he undertook a lecture and world tour. From 1932, he lived in exile in Austria, Switzerland and from May 1933 in France, where he tried in vain to re-establish his institute. He died on his sixty-seventh birthday on 14 May 1935 in Nice.

Institute for Sexual Science

Caption:

Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin, In den Zelten 10/ Beethovenstrasse 3, photograph of Willy Römer, bpk Picture Agency, Art Library, SMB, Photothek Willy Römer

The institute was intended to become a "place of research, teaching, healing and refuge": open to everyone who lived within and beyond societal norms. It offered medical treatment and advice, a library, archive and collections for researchers, tours through the sexual history museum, a lecture hall for sexual education and rented rooms in the adjoining building for patients and guests.

Photo of the plundering of the institute

Caption:

Goods looted from the Institute for Sexual History in the Students' Hostel of Friedrich-Wilhelms-University Berlin, Oranienburger Strasse 18, on the right busts of Magnus Hirschfeld, photograph 1933, Landesarchiv Berlin, F Rep. 290, no. 57702

On 6 May 1933, the Institute for Sexual Science was plundered by Nazi students in preparation for a book burning. The books of the library, archive and numerous collection items were thrown on trucks and initially brought to the students' hostel. A portion of this was burnt on 10 May 1933 on Berlin's Opernplatz.



Felix Abraham

Portrait photo

Caption:

Felix Abraham, photograph, in: Félix Abraham *Les Perversions sexuelles*, Paris 1931, Picture Archive Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft Berlin

Felix Abraham (1901 Frankfurt/M–1937 Florence/Italy)

After qualifying as a doctor and acquiring a doctorate in 1928, he entered the service of the institute, became the director of the Sexual Science Department and was above all occupied with expert opinions for the courts. In addition to this, he supervised the “transvestites”, as the trans* patients of the Institute were then known.

After the plundering of the Institute, he ran his own practice in Berlin where he mainly took care of the trans* patients. In 1936, he attempted in vain to settle in Sweden. In 1937, he moved to Italy. At the end of that year, he committed suicide in Florence.

Admission of Felix Abraham to the Institute

Caption:

Consultation with Felix Abraham at the Institute for Sexual Science, photograph in: *Das Kriminalmagazin*, 1929, Picture Archive Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft Berlin

Felix Abraham authored the first publications on gender reassignment genital surgery in trans* persons. Four of his patients are known by name: Dora Richter, known as Dorchen, Toni Ebel, Charlotte Charlaque and Gerd Katter.

Karl Giese

Portrait photo

Caption:

Karl Giese, photograph 1931 with dedication to Hans Graafe, Picture Archive Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft Berlin

Karl Giese (1898 Berlin–1938 Brunn/today Brno/Czech Republic)

He came from a working-class family, probably got to know Magnus Hirschfeld during the filming of *Anders als die Anderen* [*Different from the Others*] in 1919 and became his life companion. They lived together in the Institute for Sexual Science. His room there became the meeting point for young people. He was probably the source of the “eyewitness report” of the plundering of the institute on 10 May 1933. In 1934 he went to Paris and had to leave France at the end of October 1934 due to a “public bathhouse affair”. After this, he lived in Vienna and Brunn and committed suicide there in March 1938.

Photo of Karl Giese in the Institute

Caption:

Karl Giese on the stage in Ernst Haeckel Hall of the institute, photograph around 1930, in: Magnus Hirschfeld, *Geschlechtskunde* vol. IV, 1930, p. 892, Picture Archive Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft Berlin

Karl Giese was the archivist of the institute. He organised and took care of the collections and library, guided visitors through the inhouse “museum” and held regular lectures in the Ernst Haeckel Hall. These were very popular, since at the time they were one of the few ways of obtaining information on sexual questions.



Portrait Dora Richter

Caption:

Dora Richter (at right) together with Toni Ebel (1881–1961) and Charlotte Charlaque (1892–1962), around 1930, film still from: *Mysterium des Geschlechtes* [*The Mystery of Gender*] (1933, directors: Lothar Golte, Carl Kurzmayer), Film Archive Austria

Dora Richter (1892 Seifen/today Ryžovna/Czech Republic–after 1938)

She was one of the first persons who had a genital operation performed because she did not identify with the gender assigned to her at birth. She came to the Institute at the beginning of the 1920s. The expert opinion drawn up there later also enabled her to officially change her name to Dora. In 1934, she was still working in Berlin as flower seller and lived at Motzstrasse 76. Toni Ebel and Charlotte Charlaque, likewise former trans* patients of the Institute, also lived there.

All three emigrated to what became the Czech Republic. Dora Richter is said to have opened a pub in Carlsbad.

2. Exclusion and dissolution of limits

2.1 Social ostracism



The concept of a “national community” promoted the exclusion, demonization and denunciation of queer people and activated their persecution.

Fears of “youth seduction” and “contamination” of the national community were suited to tie in with homophobic prejudices and anxiety about sexual abuse. The willingness to bring charges from within Nazi organisations, companies and the population revealed that many members of the national community endorsed the negative official stereotypes or appealed to them to justify their collaboration.

At the same time, there continued to be tolerance within the population as well as protection. But who could still be trusted? And what did it mean for queer people to have to constantly live in fear of being suspected?

Quotation collage regarding reports

(1937)

“I also assume that Jonny is a candidate for Paragraph 175. I have no proof.”

Quotation signature:

Report of the dockworker and landlord Martin P to the Hamburg Criminal Police 1937

(1938)

But [...] she is certain that he had always lain on the couch with his visitors. She felt she could say this, especially since the sounds of the conversation also came from there. She had confronted Weckmüller

repeatedly and accused him of his disgraceful behaviour to his face. He then just smiled and said the eleventh commandment was that you could do anything as long as you didn't get caught."

Quotation signature:

Minutes of the report of the landlord Pauline N against her subtenant, recorded by the Hamburg Criminal Police in June 1938

(1938)

"I must let you know about the gay men in Wohlers Allee Altona Hamburg Cellar 70 in the villa go in on the courtyard side they could work a bit with a shovel like other men have to."

Quotation signature:

Anonymous report to the Criminal Police in 1938 after observing a house in Wohlers Allee 70 in Hamburg-Altona

(1941)

"There is not the slightest doubt that the two women represent abnormally disposed people. Their entire appearance allows one to conclude wholeheartedly that something is wrong with both of them. I suspect that both engage in abnormal sexual intercourse with each other."

Quotation signature:

Therese P about her flat neighbours to the Gestapo, March 1940

(1943)

"I hereby inform the Criminal Police that I have to give them a tip. This particular Lola [...] must have many more women whom she loves and who have to be there for her in financial terms [...]. In addition, the little Lilo who lives with her appears to engage in black market dealing with butter and other foodstuffs! [...] Please do not mention my name."

Quotation signature:

Report by Ernst U to the Berlin Criminal Police in November 1943 against Charlotte Eberle ("Lola"), who was known to the police as "lesbian" and "engaging in commercial fornication".

(1933)

"Blind to her surroundings, Ms Reichmann deluded herself that one would [...] not pursue the unambiguous intimacies with Ms St, to which she yielded without regard to the location [...]; but they are enough [to] completely expose her perverse inclinations. Her attitude to the girls was always provocative and ambiguous."

Quotation signature:

Denunciation letter against Doris Reichmann, June 1933, submitted to Nazi Party Hanover

(1936)

"The homosexual tailor K maintains a refuge in his flat Gleditschstrasse 44 for others of his kind. We are infuriated by this in the entire building and look forward to a rapid remedy."

Quotation signature:

Anonymous 1936 report to the Berlin Gestapo

(1937)

"I had the feeling that they were a gay couple, since when they became aware of me, they suddenly changed their route. I then observed them both. At a distance of 30 metres, I then saw them embrace and kiss each other."

Quotation signature:

Report of a worker who then fetched a Berlin night watchman to bring the men to the police in 1937

(1938)

"We have been living in one house for 12 years but he has never been involved with a girl even once. [...] I cannot say anything precisely of course, but that strikes me as pretty suspicious. What are the boys doing in his place. But please don't mention my name." (277)

Quotation signature:

Report of Hedwig R from Berlin-Wilmersdorf 1938 made to the Gestapo.

(1940)

The joint use of a flat by two women *"is a source of annoyance"* because *"they are living together as man and wife"*. One of the two *"has a man's hairstyle, wears culottes and her face – despite her youth – makes a worn-out and unnatural impression."* The behaviour of both women *"in no way comports with a healthy national sensibility."*

Quotation signature:

Denunciation of Elfriede M to the Berlin District Directorate of the Nazi Party, March 1940

(1941)

"Anneliese Wulf constantly brings girls back to her flat for the purpose of fornication. On various occasions, this is said to have involved very young-looking girls."

Quotation signature:

Report to the Berlin Criminal Police, August 1941

(1943)

"A confidential report was made here today that the commercial clerk Georg W is said to engage in unnatural fornication."

Quotation signature:

Note of the Reich Central Office for Combatting Homosexuality in 1943, which conducted investigations itself and arranged the committal to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp after the convicted person had been granted a period of probation.

Denunciations and their consequences

The reports of divergent sexual and gender behaviour set the repression and persecution of queer people in motion to a great extent. They always resulted in the violation of their privacy and private life.

Lesbian women were summoned to the police station, warned and intimidated. More severe penalties were imposed in connection with other offences. Female workers risked being condemned as "antisocial". Married women had to fear losing the right of custody for their children in the event of a divorce.

Men and transvestites who engaged in homosexual intercourse additionally had to contend with the homosexual penal law provisions tightened in 1935.

Exhibit newspaper headline "These are enemies of the people"

Caption:

Cover of the SS magazine *Das Schwarze Korps* of 4 March 1937, Schwules Museum Berlin

"'Poor, sick people' are not to be 'treated' but weeded out as enemies of the people," according to an editorial in this SS magazine. The widespread homophobia contributed to many Germans approving or putting up with the state-ordered persecution measures. At the same time, the Nazis also attempted to take action against the "moral rot" in its own ranks through the stigmatisation of homosexuals.

Agnes Spindler

Caption:

Criminal record entry of Agnes Spindler, 1940, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-02-05, no 855

Agnes Spindler (1904 Berlin–?)

Agnes Spindler was a Berlin street trader. Her regular customers accepted her comfortable men's clothing and boy-like short hairstyle. She was known to all as "kid" or "fatty".

In 1939, she was reported for the prohibited sale of apples at a street intersection and was thereafter under observation by the homosexual department due to her wearing of men's clothing. On the occasion of a renewed charge in 1940, the police identified her as a "transvestite, who wears men's clothing on immoral grounds". She had to sign a declaration to refrain from wearing men's clothing. Her subsequent fate is unknown.



Doris Reichmann

Doris Reichmann (1891 Hannover–?) Doris Reichmann conducted a gymnastics course in Hanover when she was denounced in 1933. The letter reached the intelligence service of the Nazi Party, which looked into the suspected behaviour. Reichmann was suspected of lesbian relationships and fornication with schoolgirls. On top of this, she was accused of contact with Jewish women and associated with evidence of a communist past. The accusations came from the circle of her competitors at the community college, where Reichmann had been working since the late 1920s. They appear to have had no further consequences for Reichmann, who had joined the Nazi Party in 1933.

Hans Küpper

Hans Küpper (1892 Essen–?)

In 1938, the Essen District Court took up investigations against the wholesaler Hans Küpper, Nazi Party member and SA storm leader, regarding rumours of an "abnormal disposition". A party comrade and colleague from the wholesale market had spread these rumours. Economic motives played a role here. Küpper had already sued his party comrade in vain due to the spreading of such rumours in 1933 – witnesses at the time confirmed Küpper's sexual orientation. In 1939, this was followed by party exclusion proceedings, which were suspended from 1941 due to the war. The outcome – unclear.

Theodor Gehring

Caption:

Theodor Gehring as cabin boy in 1932, from his seaman's report book, The Hamburg State Archive 213-11, 65499

Theodor Gehring (1918 Erlangen–1942 Hamburg)

From 1935, he became a streetwalker in Hamburg and exploited sexual services to blackmail his clients. Arrested in 1938, he was sentenced to nine years imprisonment, escaped from prison and once again blackmailed and robbed his clients. After being re-arrested in 1941, he was condemned to death and executed. About 200 men denounced Theodor Gehring after his arrest. His blackmail victims were then sentenced to imprisonment, some sent to concentration camps, forced to "voluntary" castration or committed suicide.

Helmut Jahns

Caption:

Helmut Jahns, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Rep. 358-02, no. 104457-104458

Helmut Jahns (1907 Vienenburg/Goslar–?)

The engineer was consumed by a brooding lust to observe paedophile interactions with 12- to 14-year-old boys. From 1938, he recorded his observations in his diary at Berlin Alexanderplatz and reported the perpetrators. He was a witness in the criminal proceedings. The Gestapo called him a "report fetishist". Helmut Jahns was an Nazi Party block warden and took care of abused children.

In 1941, it emerged that he sought sexual contact to children and adolescents himself, including to those who had been victims of the perpetrators he had previously reported. He was sentenced to four years imprisonment.

2.2 Arbitrariness and terror

The assassination of the homosexual SA leader Ernst Röhm and his confidants at the end of June 1934 was the prelude to radicalisation. Homosexuals in the Nazi organisation were declared to be enemies of the people. The Gestapo and SS took charge of this and created a climate of fear and threats.

Initially, this involved a "cleansing" of their own ranks. The actions were then expanded to identify suspects through interrogations. At the end of 1934, raids of homosexual meeting points began in the national capital Berlin and in the "capital" of the Nazi movement in Munich. Those arrested were then sent to concentration camps for several months.

Gerhard von Prosch

Caption:

Gerhard von Prosch, identification photo of the Police Directorate Munich, 1934, Staatsarchiv München, Pol. Dir. Munich 15540

Gerhard von Prosch (1895 Saxony–1937 Turkey)

After a career in the army, Gerhard von Prosch joined the police. He had been a Nazi Party member since 1923. After the Hitler Putsch was suppressed in November 1923, he lived in Turkey until 1933.

In July 1933, he became Sturmbannführer (major) in the supreme SA command. Due to this position, he believed himself to be safe from persecution and initiated sexual contacts with young men. Following the murder of Ernst Röhm, von Prosch was arrested and sent to the Dachau concentration camp for six weeks in August 1935. After this, he returned to Turkey, where he died in 1937.

Curt Wittje

Caption:

Curt Wittje as brigade commander of the SS Group North Hamburg, photograph July 1933. In September 1933, he was promoted to SS Gruppenführer (lieutenant general), Federal Archives Berlin R 9361-III/564247

Curt Wittje (1894 Wandsbek–1947 Czechoslovakia or Moscow)

After graduating from high school, Curt Wittje joined the army in 1913. In 1929, he had to leave the army due to allegations of homosexuality. He became the personnel director in a malting plant, in 1930 a member of the Nazi Party, in 1931 of the SS.

From 1931, he represented the Nazi Party in the Bavarian Landtag, from 1933 in the Reichstag. As a confidant of Heinrich Himmler, he became Head of the SS Central Office in 1934 and was responsible for the deployment of personnel in concentration camps amongst other things. After renewed accusations, he was dismissed in 1935. In 1938, he was an entrepreneur in Czechoslovakia, where he enriched himself through "Aryanisations". He was arrested after the end of the war.

Werner Heyde

Caption:

Prof. Dr Werner Heyde, March 1940, Würzburg State Archive, Gestapo files, 1484

Prof. Dr med. Werner Heyde (1902 Forst/Lausitz–1964 Butzbach)

The Würzburg junior doctor led a discreet homosexual life. When the Gestapo rounded up his circle of friends in 1935, a hospital incident became public: Heyde had attempted to sexually abuse a colleague. The SS declared the matter to be national secret since Reinhard Heydrich protected him. When the doctor became the head of the T4 euthanasia campaign, the incident caught up with him again in 1942. This time, Himmler supported him: "I do not want [...] to dismiss Heyde since I believe he is [...] completely saved." Heyde succeeded in covering his tracks after 1945, as "Dr Sawade" in Schleswig-Holstein. Exposed in 1959 and accused of 100,000-fold murder, he committed suicide.

Jutta Rüdiger

Caption:

Portrait photo Jutta Rüdiger, national speaker of the BDM from 1937 to 1945, with autograph in black ink, akg image

Jutta Rüdiger (1910 Berlin–2001 Bad Reichenhall)

With her entry into the "Bund Deutscher Mädel" (BDM) [League of German Girls], the PhD psychologist and later national speaker of the BDM began her unbroken Nazi career. True to its motto: "German girl, your honour is loyalty to the blood of your people", she propagated racial hygiene and total commitment to the national community. She called on women and girls to assist the Wehrmacht, from 1943 also as anti-aircraft gun assistants. Jutta Rüdiger lived from 1940 to 1991 in a relationship with her employee Hedy Böhmer, protected against attacks by status and prominence.

Max Ernst Lenz

Max Lenz (1901 Marienburg/today Malbork/Poland–1937 Emsland camp Papenburg)

Max Lenz was a pastry chef in Berlin and from 1921 a clerk in the police administration. In 1923, he performed as a dancer in music halls in Germany and abroad. He lived in Hamburg from 1930, was usually unemployed and active in the Nazi Party. In 1933, he was able to avert a trial under Paragraph 175. After being denounced by a neighbour, he was sent to the Fuhlsbüttel concentration camp in November 1935. In April 1936, he was sentenced to a 15-month prison term by the Hamburg Regional Court under Paragraph 175. He served the sentence in the Emsland Brual-Rhede camp, where he died from the forced labour conditions in the moors.


Kurt von Ruffin

Caption:

Kurt von Ruffin, photograph Cine Allianz, collective picture 156 from the series: "Hans Bergman Colour Film Pictures" of the Dresdner Zigarettenfabrik Bergmann, in: *Theaterleben Berlin. Ein illustriertes Kritikenbuch, ausgeführt von Kurt von Ruffin, [Theatre Life Berlin. An Illustrated Criticism Book, produced by Kurt von Ruffin]* Schwules Museum Berlin

Kurt von Ruffin (1901 Munich–1996 Berlin)

The actor played on the Berlin operetta stage and in several films. Up to 1933, he was a member of the Schiller-Theatre ensemble. The Gestapo arrested him in December 1934 as a result of extorted accusations of homosexual activity. He was held without trial and conviction for several months in the Columbiahaus concentration camp, later in the Lichtenburg concentration camp. He provided early information on the crimes that occurred there: in 1978, in an interview and in 1991 in the NDR television report *Wir hatten ein grosses A am Bein* [We had a large A on our leg] by Elke Jeanrond and Josef Weishaupt.



Headline "This is how the Führer cleaned up"

Caption:


"This is how the Führer cleaned up", in: *Völkischer Beobachter*, 30 June 1934, akg-images

The *Völkischer Beobachter* described the preceding murders and the onset of the hunt for homosexuals within the Nazi Party as "cleansing action".

"Cleansing actions"

In autumn 1934, a special department was set up in the Secret State Police Office, the headquarters of the Gestapo in Berlin, which hunted for homosexuals in Nazi formations. The focus was above all on men from the Nazi Party, SA, SS and HY (Hitler Youth), since they were regarded as a threat to the "male club" Nazi state and were therefore to be excluded. Prominent figures from the worlds of culture and business were also targeted.

Task forces were also set up in 1936 to expedite the persecution in the areas of responsibility of the Criminal Police nationwide with raids and investigations, e.g. in 1936 in Hamburg, in 1937 in Catholic institutions and in 1938 in Cologne and Vienna.



Early concentration camp imprisonments of homosexuals and transvestites 1934/1935

From the end of 1934, men from all classes suspected of being homosexual were sent to the early concentration camps, including so-called transvestites and rent boys, SA leaders and Hitler Youth members, Nazi opponents and Jews. More homosexuals than political prisoners were interned in the Lichtenburg concentration camp in spring 1935.

Only a few left written testimonies of the early terror. Criminal trials from this time reveal how the terror spread in queer groups of friends despite the enforced silence after release from the concentration camps.

Quotations regarding the Lichtenburg concentration camp

Heinemann Quotation:

"The Gestapo officials came to the concentration camp every week for interrogations. They then demanded under threats and beatings that the prisoners make confessions on the one hand, and put on record the names of homosexuals they knew on the other [...]. The minimum punishment for statements that one didn't know anything or couldn't remember was beatings and sixteen days confinement in darkness on bread and water."

Dr Leopold Heinemann (1896–1954), unpublished report on his imprisonment in the Lichtenburg concentration camp, composed in September 1935 after his escaping to London. In 1937, the Jewish journalist emigrated to the US. British Library, Harold Picton, "Four Reports on Concentration and Prison Camps in Germany"

Fleischer Quotation:

"The commander of Lichtenburg gave a speech on our arrival in which he included us among the career criminals and stated that the fewer of us who were later released and the more that drowned in the latrines or were shot, the better! Our heads were then shaved completely bald. Exercise was performed six hours a day, i.e., we had to crawl around on our stomachs for hours on the icy courtyard [...]. Flogging was performed almost daily on account of 'lying' during interrogations, etc. I'll never forget those terrible screams."

Werner Fleischer (1902–1944), sales representative, unpublished report on his imprisonment in the Lichtenburg concentration camp from January 1935, composed in 1937 and smuggled to England. British Library, Harold Picton, "Four Reports on Concentration and Prison Camps in Germany"

Ruffin Quotation:

"Down in the courtyard, we then had to see that the transvestites brought there, who had been forced to travel as women, were stripped and beaten in front of everyone, pushed and abused, until they were naked. The bigwigs, the SS thugs, revelled in the despair of these people. One of them – I don't know what his name was – was [dragged] to the latrine, which was downstairs, had his head [shoved] in the cesspit and suffocated there." Kurt von Ruffin on the Lichtenburg concentration camp, 1978, in an interview with Winfried Kuhn, in: *Capri*, Issue 13, 1991

2.3 Dragnets of the law

Dragnets of penal prosecution

One goal of the Nazi regime was control over the sexuality and reproduction of all Germans. "Hereditarily healthy" people were expected to meet their reproductive obligations while relationships between queer people were deemed to be harmful to matrimony. Hierarchical relationships between men and women were considered ideal.

The penal laws, decrees and regulations that expanded the powers of the authorities were effective instruments. They were directed primarily against homosexual men, who were regarded as enemies of the people. For the persecution of lesbian women and trans* people, paragraphs were normally applied that did not explicitly refer to sexuality – or action was taken, as in the case of "preventive custody", without a legal basis. The risk of being caught in the dragnets of the Nazi persecutors continually increased over the course of the radicalisation of the homosexual persecution.

Crimes

Paragraph 175a subparagraphs 1–4 (applicable version September 1935 to September 1969)

"The following persons shall be punished with imprisonment with hard labour for up to ten years, in the case of mitigating circumstances with imprisonment not under three months:

- 1. a man who coerces another man with violence or by threats with an immediate risk to life or limb to engage in fornication with him or to let himself to be abused for fornication by him;*
- 2. a man who directs another man through the abuse of dependence established by a service, employment or subordinate relationship to engage in fornication with him or to be abused by him for fornication;*
- 3. a man over twenty-one years of age who seduces a male person under the age of twenty-one to engage in fornication with him or to let himself be abused by him for fornication;*
- 4. a man who engages in commercial fornication with men or lets himself be abused by men for fornication or offers himself for this purpose."*

These special penal provisions were directed exclusively against violent homosexual perpetrators (rape or abuse of dependents), against homosexual seduction and homosexual prostitution. Subparagraphs 3 and 4 above all were excessively used in the practice of homosexual prosecution.

Paragraph 175a subparagraph 3 applied to so-called **seduction for fornication**.

The attempted seduction of male adolescents under the age of twenty-one was also punishable. The courts assumed seduction if the adolescents had not previously had any homosexual contacts, in the case of undesired flirting and erotic approaches or homosexual assaults.

The age of consent for homosexual contacts differed considerably from the heterosexual age of consent, which was sixteen.

Paragraph 175a subparagraph 4 applied to **commercial fornication with men**.

"...a man who engages in commercial fornication with men or lets himself be abused by men for fornication or offers himself for this purpose."

This penal provision above all affected young men who earned money with sexual services. The attempt itself was punishable and was classified as a crime.

The Nazi verdicts under Paragraph 175a subparagraph 4 were retrospectively revoked and declared void in 2002.

Paragraph 176 (I) subparagraph 3 applied to **lewd behaviour with persons under the age of fourteen**.

"Anyone who engages in lewd behaviour with persons under the age of fourteen or leads such persons astray to engage in or tolerate lewd behaviour [...] shall be punished with imprisonment with hard labour of up to ten years." This penal provision applied to paedophile and paedosexual behaviour. In the case of first convictions or less severe cases, prison sentences were imposed, otherwise it was imprisonment with hard labour and normally the loss of civil rights. In the case of homosexual abuse, the perpetrators were recorded by the police and courts as "homosexuals" and charged concomitantly with Paragraph 175.

From 1934, in the case of severe child abuse and for repeat offenders additional sentences could be added, including preventive detention (Paragraph 42e), castration (Paragraph 42k) and in the case of mental incapacity, accommodation in a mental institution (Paragraph 42b).

Misdemeanours

Paragraph 360 (1) subparagraph 11 2 (applicable version 1872–1975) **gross mischief**

"Anyone who commits gross mischief ... shall be punished with a fine of one hundred and fifty marks or imprisonment"

Wearing of the clothing of the opposite sex was also covered by this penal provision. It applied to lesbians in "male clothing", transvestites and trans* persons.

So-called "transvestite certificates", issued by police authorities since the 1920s, could protect against arrest.

Paragraph 361 (1) subparagraph 6 (applicable version 1933–1973) **anyone who offers themselves for fornication**

"The following persons shall be punished with imprisonment: ... 6. anyone who in public in a conspicuous manner or in a manner suited to inconvenience individuals or the public, invites to fornication or offers themselves for this purpose."

According to Paragraph 361 subparagraph 6, those men were punished who were observed and identified by the police while cruising in the park or in public toilets – without a "commercial nature" (prostitution) being present or susceptible of proof.

Offences

Paragraph 175 old version (1872–1935) **unnatural fornication**

"Unnatural fornication committed ... between persons of the same sex shall be punished with imprisonment; it can also result in the loss of civil rights"

This regulation was initially interpreted to make "sexual intercourse-related actions" (a form of penetration) between male persons punishable. As early as 1934, the old version of the norm was interpreted to cover all sexually motivated actions, i.e., joint masturbation, caressing and kissing, etc.

Paragraph 175 new version (September 1935–September 1969) **fornication with another man**

"(1) A man who engages in fornication with another man or lets himself be abused for fornication, shall be punished with imprisonment.

(2) In the case of a person involved who at the time of the action was not yet twenty-one-years old, the court may in especially minor cases refrain from punishment."

All consensual homoerotic and homosexual contacts were from then on punishable by law. Maximum penalty: five years imprisonment.

For minors or adolescents who entered into initial homosexual relationships, youth detention or youth prison as well as accommodation in reform schools could be ordered.

The Nazi verdicts under Paragraph 175 were retrospectively revoked and declared void in 2002.

Paragraph 183 (applicable version 1876–1969) **public nuisance**

"Anyone who causes a public nuisance through lewd actions shall be punished by imprisonment of up to two years or a fine of up to fifteen hundred marks; the loss of civil rights can also be adjudged"

This penal regulation prosecuted publicly visible nudity and exposure (exhibitionism) as well as sexual actions in public, for example in parks or public toilets. A report had to be made by a private individual or police officer.

From 1934, exhibitionists could also be sentenced as repeat offenders and "dangerous sex offenders" to "emasculatation" (castration according to Paragraph 42k RstGB (Reich Criminal Code).

Paragraph 184 (applicable version 1927–1965) **distribution of lewd publications and pictures**

"Anyone shall be punished with up to one year of imprisonment and with a fine of up to one thousand marks or with one of these penalties, who... 1. offers for sale, sells, distributes, exhibits or puts up or otherwise distributes lewd publications, illustrations or representations at locations accessible to the public, manufactures them for the purpose of distribution or for the same purpose stores, announces or recommends them"

The forwarding, recommendation or attempted distribution of "lewd" books, magazines, pictures or objects was punishable. Possession was not punishable; however, whatever appeared to the police to be lewd was confiscated when searching homes and the parties affected were forced to consent to the removal.

Paragraph 185 (applicable version 1876–1969) **physical insult**

"The insult shall be punished with a fine of up to one thousand five hundred marks or with imprisonment of up to two years ... if the insult is committed by means of assault and battery."

This penal regulation was aimed at undesired sexually-motivated approaches and infringements. The affected party had to lodge a report.

From 1935, approaches made to male adolescents under the age of 21 were assumed to involve an intention to seduce, charged and sentenced as a crime under Paragraph 175a subparagraph 3.

2.4 Dragnets of the law (2nd)

Police regulations

Protective custody by the Gestapo (1933)

"Protective custody" ordered by the Gestapo was directed primarily against so-called enemies of the state. These also included homosexuals confined in police jails or concentration camps.

Up to 1935/36, numerous individuals arrested after Gestapo raids – if suspicious factors were insufficient for criminal prosecution by the courts – were hauled off to concentration camps for three to six months "as deterrence" for "homosexual activities". Moreover, protective custody was used in Gestapo investigations to secure confessions and hand over homosexuals to the courts for further criminal prosecution.

Reich Central Office for Combatting Homosexuality and Abortion (1936)

The Reich Central Office for Combatting Homosexuality and Abortion was created at the Gestapo headquarters by a secret decree of the SS Reichsführer and Head of the German police, Heinrich Himmler on 10 October 1936. In Himmler's view, the high number of abortions was a threat to national health just like male homosexuality. This was "*one of the greatest threats to the youth*" which was why "*effective combatting of this national plague*" was necessary.

The main task of the Reich Central Office consisted in registering homosexual men in a central Reich card index. The initial goal was to eliminate homosexuals from government and party bodies and collect incriminating material. Special task forces were active in the investigations. The Reich card index supplemented those of the regional and local Criminal Police, which had already been created before 1933.

When the Reich Central Office was transferred to the Reich Criminal Police in 1940, it was given a new task: the Reich card index was used to order preventive measures such as concentration camp internment against "repeat offenders". By the end of the war, more than 50,000 men had been recorded in this card index.

Preventive custody by the Criminal Police (1937)

"Preventive custody" was the name for the temporally unlimited internment in concentration camps ordered by the Criminal Police. This affected anyone "who was a threat to the general public due to his antisocial behaviour". Apart from previously convicted homosexuals (classified as "career criminals"), this applied to the unemployed, Sinti and Roma, Jews, prostitutes, lesbians, transvestites and trans* persons. From 1940, "preventive measures" were ordered by the "Prevention" criminal inspectorates in cooperation with the Reich Criminal Police Office.

Secret Himmler decree (1940)

A decree of Heinrich Himmler of 12 July 1940 stated: "I hereby request that in future homosexuals who have seduced more than one partner be placed in preventive custody after release from prison." As a result of this request, those persons who had served the prison terms imposed by the criminal courts were then to be interned indefinitely in a concentration camp.

Secret Himmler order to SS members (1942)

"[T]o keep the SS and police free of homosexually-oriented parasites" Heinrich Himmler had already announced that SS members were to be punished with transfer to concentration camps and execution on account of breaches of Paragraphs 175 and 175a. After special SS and police courts had been set up in 1939/40, the Führer issued an express secret command for the death penalty, which

was announced by an order of Himmler to members of the SS and police officials on 7 March 1942. They then had to sign a declaration that was included in their personnel files.

Wartime penal law

Regulation Against National Parasites (1939)

The National Parasite Regulation of 5 September 1939 led to exacerbation of punishment for delicts of all kinds during the war. Anyone who committed an offence while exploiting the darkening ordered as part of the air-raid measures, e.g., when street lighting was switched off, could be sentenced as a criminal under the National Parasite Regulation to imprisonment with hard labour, also in the case of offences under Paragraph 175. As a result, cruising in parks and toilets as meeting points for homosexual men became zones of risk. Rent boys, who blackmailed or robbed men under these circumstances, faced the death penalty by special courts from 1941 (Paragraph 1 Amendment Act 4 September 1941)

War Perpetrator Regulation 1940

“War perpetrators” were persons who had been sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour and had lost their civil rights or “military eligibility”. The aim was to be able to extend the confinement for an indeterminate period – until after the end of the war. Only then was the imprisonment penalty imposed in the sentence to be served. War perpetrators were obliged to perform forced labour in the penal camps subject to the courts, above all in the Emsland moor camps. The War Perpetrator Regulation was rescinded with retrospective effect by the Allies in July 1947.

3. Self-assertion and stubbornness

3.1 Networks

All queer people were affected by the growing number of repressive regulations and measures. Denunciations became an everyday risk. Nevertheless, only a fraction of the queer population was convicted and punished. The majority managed to live through the Nazi era undisturbed. Withdrawal into privacy, isolation or also a life in discreet partnerships were options to evade the pressure of persecution from state and society. Solidarity was important for this purpose. Even under the conditions of the Nazi regime, queer people repeatedly sought ways to meet, enjoy themselves and be sociable, find love and affection, even if it was merely a brief fling. They had to learn to estimate the risks in this connection.

Anneliese Isermeyer with friends on Langeoog, 1939

Caption:

Anneliese Isermeyer (second from right), photograph Langeoog 1939, Schwules Museum Berlin

The photo shows Anneliese Isermeyer (1905–1985) with a group of her friends. From 1938, the certified secondary schoolteacher lived together with her life companion Luise Reinhardt (1880–1983) in Berlin. After losing their accommodation in an air raid and making their escape to Cottbus, the couple moved to Goslar in 1945 into Isermeyer's parental house, where both women taught in the higher secondary school well beyond pension age.

Meuselwitz clique

Caption:

Members of the Meuselwitz clique, photograph 1930s with identification during investigations, Landesarchiv Thüringen—StA Altenburg, public prosecutor's office at Altenburg Regional Court, no. 448, page 3

The circle of friends of Rudolf Brazda (1913–2011) in the small town of Meuselwitz undertook excursions, attended fairs and dances, sometimes in the company of lesbian friends. At parties in flats they kept to themselves. Some sewed themselves women's clothing, called themselves Inge, Ardina, Asta or Lilli, and confidently entered into love affairs – until their arrest in March 1937.



Lotte Hahm

Caption:

Charlotte Hahm in an advertisement for her ladies' club "Violetta" in: *Liebende Frauen*, Year 2, 1927, Issue 48, p. 2, Spinnboden Lesbenarchiv & Bibliothek e.V., Berlin

Charlotte Hahm (1890 Dresden–1967 Berlin)

After adopting Berlin as her residence, she put her stamp on the subcultural scene of the Reich capital from 1926 to 1932 with the ladies' clubs "Violetta" and "Monbijou". Together with her Jewish friend Kät(h)e Katharina Fleischmann (1899–1967), she opened the "Monokel-Diele" and "Manuela-Bar".

After the forced closure of the pubs in 1933, Hahm and Fleischmann renamed the "Damenklub Violetta" to "Sportklub Sonne" and continued to organise dance evenings for lesbians and trans* persons.

Hahm opened a guest house in 1935 and later worked as a dealer for textile goods. Käthe Fleischmann survived the Nazi regime in hiding. Hahm organised the first ladies' ball after the end of the war in 1946. Her motto: "Your heart must be filled with the love of fighting."

Erwin "Isabella" Friedrich & Liegnitzer Kreis

Caption:

Erwin Friedrich, undated photo around 1941 from his personnel file, Federal Archive Berlin, R55/23478

Erwin "Isabella" Friedrich (1902 Brand/Saxony–1990 Bonn)

Isabella, as Friedrich called himself, served as a Luftwaffe sergeant in Liegnitz in 1941. There he moved in a circle comprised "of lesbians, homosexuals, homophiles, transsexuals and transvestites". These get-togethers remained undisturbed for a long time, until investigations were opened against the soldiers amongst the guests on account of "fornication".

Isabella also came under suspicion as a transvestite, but the proceedings remained without

consequences. After 1945, he edited the newspaper supplement *Aphrodite* for lesbian women. In 1965 until his retirement, he was responsible for *Informationen für die Truppe* [Information for the Troops] in the Ministry of Defence in Bonn.

Isabella Quotation

One day, "Isabella" asked the army auxiliary Hertel who was friends with him *"whether she would allow me to put on one of her dresses. She said: 'Yes, of course, why not', and the dresses fitted me perfectly. She then said: 'Let's just go out in dresses, too!' We went by tram, attended the theatre and I was so proud that everything went off so swimmingly."*

Quotation signature:

Claudia Schoppmann, "The only thing that kept us going was that we were different from the others" – Erwin "Isabella" Friedrich (1902–1990), in: *Mitteilungen der Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft* no. 65/66

Erwin Friedrich related his service years in Liegnitz 1941–1943 to Claudia Schoppmann in 1987, where he spent time in the villa of the factory owner Gertrude Seiler, who was friends with Anita Killa: "She was the young boy and, for her, Gertrude the girl." And further: "The only thing that kept us going was that we were different from the others." These contacts were lost after 1945.

Marcus Behmer

Caption:

Marcus Behmer, West Berlin 1949, photograph by Marie-Agnes Schürenberg, Schwules Museum Berlin

Marcus Behmer (1879 Weimar–1958 West Berlin)

The graphic artist, book illustrator and early supporter of the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee was part of the artistic Boheme, who met in the Berlin "Westend-Klause" pub and also had networks at Lake Constance, which served as a safe haven. During a lengthy stay there, Marcus Behmer was arrested in December 1936 and sentenced in April 1937 to two years imprisonment on account of sexual relationships with men aged from 19 to 24. He served his detention pending trial and prison terms until July 1938 in prisons in Stockach, Constance and Freiburg/Breisgau.

Behmer drawing

Caption:

Marcus Behmer, "The Bitter Chalice", MB 6.1.1937. INV. 3, 4 et 6 6.1.37 STOCKACH", pen drawing, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kunstbibliothek, rights holder 2003: Marcus Haucke, Berlin

During his imprisonment, Marcus Behmer was able to produce almost two hundred drawings, which often had encrypted contents. "The Bitter Chalice" with the engraved names of Paul Verlaine, Oscar Wilde, Benvenuto Cellini, Sandro Botticelli, Leonardo and Socrates addressed the devaluation of the homosexual cultural canon. Some of these drawings were first exhibited in the Springer gallery in West Berlin in 1951.



Harald Kreutzberg + Niedecken-Gebhard

Caption:

The dancer Harald Kreutzberg (1902–1968), the choreograph Hans Niedecken-Gebhard (1889–1954) and the solo dancer Werner Stammer (1906–1985) observe dance rehearsals on the Reich sports field for the festivals of the Olympic Games in 1936, photograph, Ullstein Bilderdienst Berlin

The homosexual artists Harald Kreutzberg and Hans Niedecken-Gebhard were also able to seamlessly continue their careers under Nazism. Niedecken-Gebhard warded off police investigations against him on account of homosexual relationships by marrying the stage designer Lotte Brill (1907–?), which the media reported as an "Olympic marriage".

Photo Paul Hahn and youth movement friends

Caption:

Youth movement friends: Horst Andresen (1908–1940), Werner Wohlers (1915–1944) and Paul Hahn (1907–1985), photograph around 1932, Archive Rainer Hoffschildt, Hanover They were in love with each other and active in the youth movement in Hamburg, enjoyed the group outings into the countryside. In 1936, they came to the attention of the Gestapo due to derogatory remarks about Hitler, youth movement opposition and the suspicion of homosexual contacts. After several months in prison, they fled to Belgium and worked on setting up a youth movement emigrant organisation there.

Hermann Zimmermann and friends 1944

Caption:

Hermann Zimmermann (1900 Berlin–?), at centre, with friends at an excursion pub on the Dahme, photograph 1943/44 – Berlin was already being bombed at this time, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Rep, 358-02, no. 108079

The machine fitter Hermann Zimmermann worked at an important war munitions factory in 1943/44 and spent the summer months at his boat house "Faun" in Karolinenhof. He went sailing there with young men whom he met in relevant Berlin pubs, such as the "Rollkrug" at Hermannplatz. The spacious cabin boat permitted undisturbed hours à deux or larger group meetings.

Sylvin Rubinstein/resistance Poland

Caption:

Sylvin Rubinstein in his Hamburg flat, photograph of Anna Bedyńska 2005, Archive Anna Bedyńska

Sylvin Rubinstein (1914 near Moscow–2011 Hamburg)

The Jewish dancer and cross-dressing artist performed in the 1930s with his twin sister in European music halls as "Dolores & Imperio". During the war, a Polish family in Miejsce Piastowy hid him in Outer Subcarpathia. He was in the local underground cell of the Polish Home Army, for which he also carried messages in women's clothing and did scouting. He later managed to come to Berlin as a "foreign worker". After 1945, he lived in Hamburg and performed as "Dolores" in clubs.

Aimée & Jaguar matrimonial contract and diary

Caption:

Matrimonial contract between Elisabeth Wust and Felice Schragenheim, Berlin 26 June 1943, paper, ink, 10.5 x 15 cm; Jüdisches Museum Berlin, inv. no. 2006/37/506, donation by Elisabeth Wust, photo: Birgit Maurer-Porat

Caption:

Matrimonial pledge of Elisabeth Wust and Felice Schragenheim, Berlin 29 June 1943, paper, ink, lipstick, 26.15 x 19.9 cm; Jüdisches Museum Berlin, inv. no. 2006/37/87, donation by Elisabeth Wust, photo: Roman März

Caption:

Diary I of Elisabeth Wust, Berlin 21 August 1944–28 February 1945, paper, ink, photograph (mounted), 20.9 x 29.7 cm; Jüdisches Museum Berlin, inv. no. 2006/37/486, donation by Elisabeth Wust, photo: Jens Ziehe

The friends got to know each other in Berlin, shortly after Felice Schragenheim had gone into hiding as a Jew, and moved in together. On 21 August 1944, she was discovered and sent to the Theresienstadt ghetto, then deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp. She died at the beginning of 1945, probably in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Her history is the subject of the book *Aimée und Jaguar* (1994) and the eponymous film (1999).

3.2 Masking

Masking, camouflage and mimicry were survival strategies for queer people – they simulated norm compliance by sending unambiguously heterosexual and clearly binary signals. The means included marriages of convenience, engagements or friendships.

Queer circles of friends and supporter networks only existed thanks to precautionary measures.

These often included withdrawing into privacy and precautions to protect private spaces.

These multiple protection strategies present a great challenge for research since being undetectable was a strategy for survival. What is needed are door openers and contemporary witnesses who provide the keys to rooms that would otherwise remain closed to later generations.

Paul Otto with wife and Harry

Caption:

Paul Otto with his wife and Harry, photograph (self-timer, activated by the wife), Berlin 1937, Schwules Museum Berlin

The master tailor Paul Otto and his friend Harry got to know each other in the 1920s in the Berlin queer pub "Hollandais" and remained friends until Harry's death in 1983. To protect Paul, Harry arranged a marriage with an acquaintance in 1937, who tolerated their friendship.

Werner Burger

Werner and Richard at a bock beer party, 1940

Caption:

Werner Burger (1909–?) and friend Richard at a bock beer party, photograph 1940, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Rep. 358-02, no. 121672

The flower dealer Werner Burger from Berlin-Neukölln never missed an opportunity to idolise men. The employees in his flower shop knew this too and kept it to themselves. Private garden parties

granted blithe feelings of freedom, but a public bock beer party also offered moments of harmless affection.

Postcard of Werner Burger

Caption:

Postcard, posted by Werner Burger, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Rep. 358-02, no. 121672

Werner Burger sent his declaration of love to a friend with a playful image. In a letter, he wrote: "Despite it being so awful in this grave time, I'm so happy."

Richard Schultz

Caption:

Hans Spann (1916–1944), Richard Schultz (1889–1977) and an unnamed female friend, photos from the photo album *Gemeinsames Erleben in den Sommerferien 1940 auf Rügen* [Shared Experiences during Summer Holidays on Rügen], Schwules Museum Berlin, partial estate Richard Schultz

The two Berlin friends Richard Schultz and Hans Spann spent a holiday with two female friends. The photographs from the album show two presumably heterosexual couples. Only when you know about the mutual relationships of the people does it become evident that it involves a lesbian couple and gay couple.

Circle of friends Frankfurt/M.

"The accused are of the view they were accidental victims of misunderstood criminal prosecution from Paragraph 175 Criminal Code (sic). Similarly, consultations with family members, employers and acquaintances of the accused reveal that these feel sorry for the prosecuted 'victims' without conceding the necessity of the criminal prosecution. The assurance is frequently provided that the accused would nevertheless remain the same as before in the eyes of the family members."

Quotation signature:

From a situation report of the senior public prosecutor's office at the Frankfurt/Main Regional Court of 24 January 1939 on the "Status of action against homosexuals", Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Wiesbaden, HHStAW 461/11108 A network of men was uncovered in the summer of 1938, who in part lived in longstanding relationships with each other and were accepted by their families and friends, indeed, even by their employers. The men had for the most part been outside the meeting points usually monitored by the police. As a result, the criminal prosecutors had failed to discover them.

Gertrude Sandmann

Caption:

Gertrude Sandmann (1893–1981) and her girlfriend Hedwig Koslowski (1904–1968), West Berlin, photograph of Sonja Hain around 1952, Andreas Hain, Berlin

The Jewish painter and graphic artist pretended to commit suicide by means of a farewell letter, went underground and survived: with Charlotte and Reinhold Grossmann and their daughter Sonja in Treptow, in a summer house in Biesdorf and finally in the flat of her girlfriend, an applied artist in

Berlin-Schöneberg. Gertrude Sandmann lived and worked not far from here after 1945, in Eisenacher Strasse 89.

Maxi Ackers

Caption:

Maximiliane "Maxi" Ackers, in: *Sonderblatt des Hannoverschen Anzeiger für alle Frauen-Interessen*, no. 52, 1 December 1932, Spinnboden Lesbenarchiv & Bibliothek e.V., Berlin

Maximiliane "Maxi" Ackers (1896 Saarbrücken–1982 Glonn)

In 1923, the singer, cabaret artist and author, active in Hanover and Berlin published the book *Freundinnen. Ein Roman unter Frauen* [*Girlfriends: A Novel About Women*], which achieved high sales in the following years. It is not just about a lesbian relationship but also provides insights into the queer subculture of the 1920s and demanded tolerance from society.

The book was placed on the list of "harmful and undesirable literature" in 1934. A year later, Ackers withdrew to the countryside in Bavaria together with her life partner and devoted herself to the art of glass painting.

Hilde Radusch

Caption:

Hilde Radusch (left) with her girlfriend Else Klopsch (1906–1960), called Eddy, 1940s, FFBIZ – das feministische Archiv e.V., Berlin

Hilde Radusch (1903 Altdamm near Stettin/today Szczecin/Poland–1994 Berlin)

Resident in Berlin since 1921, she worked as telephonist at the post office. From 1929 to 1932, she represented the German Communist Party in the city assembly and consequently landed in "protective custody" for several months in April 1933. She met her life partner Eddy in 1939. She launched a private lunch facility and supported persecuted comrades wherever she could. Warned of her impending arrest, Hilde Radusch became part of the underworld in 1944.

After the end of the war, she worked for the department "Victims of fascism", was co-founder in 1974 of the lesbian group "L74" and in 1978 of the Feminist Archive FFBIZ.

Marriage of convenience Friedrich Weigel & Jaro von Tucholka

Caption:

Jaro von Tucholka (1894–1978) and Friedrich Weigelt (1899–1986), Berlin around 1957, photograph of Lore Feininger, Schwules Museum Berlin, partial estate Richard Schultz

The photographer and teacher entered into a "comrades' marriage" in 1931 and continued to have homosexual relationships. They were guests at the queer *jours fixes* of the head waiter Richard Schultz (1889–1977) in his private flat in Charlottenburg, which he could only stage after 1933 with security precautions. Married couples as guests helped to disguise these evenings.

3.3 Flight into death



Suicide was a final way out for some to escape state persecution. A lonely decision, reached after weighing up the consequences that going on living would bring with it; many suspected or knew what they were in for, and the situation appeared to them to be hopeless.

They were driven to death – out of despair, helplessness or as an expression of self-empowerment. The bereaved and friends usually remained alone with their grief and memories. In any case, who were they to contact when suicide and the reasons for it were burdened with a double taboo?

III.3.3 Ernst Niebuhr's Veronal tablets

Caption:

Secured as evidence by the Berlin Criminal Police: remains of discovered Veronal tablets and glass tubes, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Rep. 358-02, no 109717

Ernst Niebuhr (1888–1944) was a trained business clerk and was active over the course of his life as a receiver of stolen goods. After fourteen convictions, he was regarded as a "career criminal". The police were also aware of his homosexuality. When the Criminal Police wanted to arrest him and forced their way into his flat, he poisoned himself with an overdose of Veronal.

Theodor Wulff Hamburg

Caption:

Theodor Wulff, photograph 1937, Staatsarchiv Hamburg, 213-11, 66392

Theodor Wulff (1922 Hamburg–1938 Hamburg)

The trained baker, a member of the Naval Hitler Youth, committed suicide at the age of sixteen. The Criminal Police had previously investigated him on the suspicion of him having masturbated with a boy. He suddenly counted as a "175-er". This reputation and the fear of even more being discovered made him despair. Two years later, the Criminal Police discovered that he had also had an affair with a 42-year-old man.

Fritz Klaus

Caption:

Local Court Councillor Fritz Klaus, 1925, with a dedication on the reverse to Max Matschke: "Your talisman! Will it be strong enough to keep you?" Landesarchiv Berlin, A Rep. 358-02, no. 40000

Fritz Klaus (1881 Stade–1939 Berlin)

It was love until death. For 15 years, the Local Court Councillor Fritz Klaus from Lübbenau discreetly met the Berlin costumer Max Matschke (1897–1939) and endeavoured to be discreet: as "life companions", as they confessed after their arrest in July 1939. A neighbour had denounced them. They were sentenced to several months in prison and released after the verdict had been pronounced. The order to present themselves to commence their punishment then arrived. On 20 September 1939, an employee of the costume rental business discovered both men dead, lying in front of the gas oven.

Suicide quotation collage

Gottlob Haug

"My lawyer is of the view that an appeal would certainly protract the matter but not change much. I would also undertake it. But I would have to live in constant fear that I might once again become the victim of a trap and I cannot bear that. I have decided to end my life as an unsullied person in the interests of our family."

Farewell letter of Gottlob Haug to his brother

The sales representative Gottlob Haug (1883–1938) had been identified by a rent boy as a client during a Gestapo interrogation, then was arrested and charged. After he received a summons to a court hearing, he committed suicide in his Berlin flat with town gas on 1 October 1938.

Fritz Crienitz

Fritz Crienitz *"committed suicide early this morning by hanging after he had made a confession to public prosecutor Stegmann during a recent interrogation. Mr Stegmann asks that in the event of a trial, the fact of the involvement of a senior officer in counterintelligence is not made known to the public.*

Quotation signature:

Notification of Berlin Garrison Court to public prosecutor Jenrich at the Berlin Regional Court, of 7 October 1938

Fritz Crienitz (1885–1938) was a lieutenant colonel in the Armed Forces High Command. From 1929 to 1938, he had an intimate relationship with Alexander Parisianu (1903–?), head of the tourist information office and representative of the Rumanian propaganda ministry in Berlin.

Edith from Hamburg

"So, stupidly, she had left behind a farewell letter [...] and her sister had given the letter to the Criminal Police. [...] Any at any rate, my name was mentioned in it. Yes. And then I was summoned to the vice squad. Well and they then asked me all sorts of things. [...] Whether we had ever done anything together? No, I said, her husband was always there. [...] OK, and then the Criminal Police came to our house and searched my room." (450)

Report by Edith from Hamburg on the aftermath of the suicide of her married friend in 1936

Erich Fischer

"The accused Fischer has committed suicide. His corpse was recovered on 29 January 1938 in Charlottenburg from the Landwehr Canal."

Report the Berlin General Public Prosecution Office to the Reich Ministry of Justice

In the Gestapo interrogation, Erich Fischer (1895–1938) confessed to masturbating with a soldier and emphasised this had happened by mutual consent; he feared for his "entire existence and family".

Erich Fischer was an administrative assistant at the German Foreign Office and married. He was immediately dismissed. His request to the court that the proceedings be dropped was rejected.

Alexander Baron von Osten-Sacken

"Dear Willy!

I have fallen into the hands of malicious blackmailers of people and therefore there is no other way out. There is a letter in my desk to the Criminal Police, insist that this letter is posted, even against Martha's will.

Two brothers [...] have turned out to be utterly vile fellows. [...] The reason for my death is no one's business."

Farewell letter by Alexander Baron von Osten-Sacken (1875–1938) to his brother, copy translated from Russian

Born in Petersburg, Alexander von Osten-Sacken lived as a stateless emigrant and person of independent means in Berlin, was married and was blackmailed in 1938 by two brothers, 18 and 19 years old, whom he had paid for sexual services. He shot himself with a pistol not far from his flat in Berlin-Dahlem.

Werner Schütz

"Berlin March 1936

As confirmation, the enclosed ring is to be given to my brother Otto! He is to wear it: this ring is to protect him against what destroyed me. Please God that he is not also like me. His unhappy brother Werner.

The ring is worth a lot to me, wear it with pride and respect. Do not damn your brother when you grow up. I love you so much! Otto!

All the best and a good pure life for you is the wish of Werner"

Letter from Werner Schütz

Werner Schütz (1915–1936) lived as a sales representative in Berlin-Charlottenburg. On 23 March 1936, he threw himself in front of an arriving express train at Spandau Station and died from the resulting injuries. He left a letter to his family in Siegen.

Karl Erber

"Deeply shocked and ashamed, all of us, mother and sisters, are confronted by this grave fate, that our brother Karl Erber has fallen victim to an aberration inexplicable to us all."

Letter from the Erber family from Oppeln (today Opole/Poland) to the Berlin public prosecutor's office dated 16 June 1937

In its letter, the family promised to look after the accused and asked for his release from detention pending trial. This succeeded. But the bank official Karl Erber (1907–1938), who had lost a close circle of friends of homosexual men in Berlin as a result of the investigations, did not see this as a way out. His sister from Oppeln gave notice "that my brother voluntarily ended his life on 5 August."

Farewell letter Friedrich Bräckow

Caption:

Parting words of Friedrich Bräckow to his mother, written in prison in newspaper margins, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Rep. 358-02, no. 128609

Transcription of the farewell letter

"My dear good mother!

*A heavy blow for you, but at least the final sorrow that I cause you. You have had to put up with a lot in life, may God give you strength and power that you also get over all of this and please, please do not be angry with me, I would have no peace. Farewell, your unhappy son. [...]
Lay the good eiderdown over her bed for my mother, she loved to sleep under it when she visited me and then I will always be with her, it's not too good for that."*

Friedrich Bräckow (1887–1937) was a hairdresser in Berlin-Schöneberg. He had already been sentenced to a year in prison under Paragraph 175 after several months of internment in a concentration camp. In 1937, he was surprised by neighbours in the hallway as he was engaged in intimacy with another man. Interrogated by the Gestapo and transferred to the remand centre Lehrter Strasse, he took his life there.

3.4 Emigration

Emigration was not a voluntary decision, but often the final salvation. This was dependent on networks of friends, family relationships or contacts abroad. The financial means were often lacking. Queer people were not necessarily welcome, had to conceal their sexual orientation or sexual identity, in the US, for example, while previously convicted homosexual men were refused entry. After the war began, emigrants from Germany were increasingly unwelcome in other countries. Receiving countries such as Czechoslovakia, France or Holland could become lethal traps after their occupation by the German army. In addition, many receiving countries such as Australia or England set up internment camps for refugees from countries with which they were at war.

Richard Plant

Caption:

The three friends in exile: Oskar Seidlin (1911–1994), Dieter Cunz (1910–1969) and Richard Plaut in the foreground, Zermatt/Switzerland, Schwules Museum Berlin

Richard Plaut, from 1938 Plant (1910 Frankfurt/Main–1998 New York, USA)

Richard Plaut grew up in a well-off middle-class family but, as a Jew, was unable to continue his studies of history and German after 1933. He moved in queer and intellectual circles in Frankfurt/Main with his friends. All three moved to Switzerland between 1933 and 1935 and published several detective stories in the Goldmann Verlag Leipzig under the pseudonym "Stefan Brockhoff". In 1938, they emigrated to the US. Richard Plant became a professor for German literature. In 1977, he published the essay "The Men with the Pink Triangles", which became a book in 1986.

Kurt Fontheim

Caption:

Kurt Fontheim with his nephew Ernest Fontheim in New York, photograph 1947, private collection

Dr jur. Kurt Fontheim (1882 Berlin–1976 Baden-Baden)

In 1906, Fontheim began working as a lawyer in Berlin and became a sponsor of the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee. His clients included the Prussian royal family, especially its gay princes, whom he defended against blackmailers. Arrested by the Gestapo at the end of 1935 on account of accusations of homosexuality, he was interned until March 1936 in the Columbiahaus and Lichtenburg concentration camps and, as a Jew, was severely mistreated. At liberty once again, he fled to Switzerland, Italy and France. In 1941, he was able to save himself by entering the US, where he worked as a business consultant and stock trader.

Annette Eick

Caption:

Annette Eick, 1990s, Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies, Institute of Modern Languages Research, Senate House Library, University of London

Annette Eick (1909 Berlin–2010 Brixham, England)

After a sheltered childhood and adolescence in Berlin, she became involved in the subculture, where she met Ditt, her first lover. Eick wrote for *Frauenliebe* and took part in readings.

The anti-Jewish laws were the reason why she had herself trained for a life in Palestine at a course in Havelberg in 1938. When she received an entry permit from Ditt for England after an arrest she was able to evade, she emigrated to London.

In 1964, she moved with her life companion Gertrud Klingel into a house in Brixham, Devonshire, where she set up a nursery school.

Erica Anderson

Caption:

Erica Anderson in the US, photograph around 1955, Maison Albert Schweitzer, Archives Centrales Albert Schweitzer Gunsbach

Erica Anderson, née Erika Kellner (1914 Vienna–1976 Great Barrington/Massachusetts, US) In 1931, she began an apprenticeship as portrait photographer and to study at the Vienna School of Graphic Arts at the same time. She discovered her love of women there. Romances and love affairs continued as friendships. This network supported her after she fled from Vienna to London in 1938 due to her being Jewish. She acquired the coveted visa through a sham marriage in order to emigrate as Erica Anderson to the US, where a rich patron and lover promoted her career as documentary filmmaker.

Wilhelm Tag

Caption:

Wilhelm Tag, photograph shortly after release from Buchenwald concentration camp 1939, Staatsarchiv München, Pol. Dir. Munich 15140

Wilhelm Tag (1907 Munich–after 1962)

After a raid against homosexuals, the businessman Wilhelm Tag was interned in February 1936 in the Dachau concentration camp for a year. He served a renewed prison sentence in Nuremberg prison. From there he went to the Buchenwald concentration camp. Thanks to the assistance of his mother, he was released. In June 1939, he emigrated to Shanghai and in 1946 was a leading member of the Jewish community there. Up to 1962, he lived in Hong Kong, Munich and South Africa, after which all trace of him is lost.

4. Reasons for arrest and prison locations

4.1 Prison and hard labour prison

The convicted served their sentence in prisons. Those who had multiple previous convictions under Paragraph 175 or who had been accused of crimes under Paragraph 175a received sentences with hard labour.

Those who were to be punished with the most severe physical labour were sent to the penal camps of the Ministry of Justice, such as the Emsland moor camps.

People were transferred to concentration camps by the Gestapo or Criminal Police, which could order protective or preventive custody at their own discretion.

Sketch by Botho von Gamp

Caption:

"Prisoners", undated pencil sketch by Botho von Gamp, (1894–1977), 1940s. When Gamp learnt of the death of his lover Oskar Gades (1902–1937), prison sketches became a motif for the landscape painter. Illustration in: Karl-Georg von Stackelberg (editor), *Der Maler Botho von Gamp*, Munich: Moderne Verlagsgesellschaft, 1976

In March 1933, they lived together and went out in women's clothing in Berlin when the Gestapo arrested and charged them as "spies" in disguise. Botho von Gamp returned to France. Oskar Gades, known as Ossi, was sent to a concentration camp as a transvestite in 1935. Arrested once again and charged in 1937, Ossi committed suicide while on remand.

Erich Bonde

Caption:

Erich Bonde, identification photo, Ichtershausen penitentiary 1927, Landesarchiv Thüringen, Staatsarchiv Rudolstadt, Ichtershausen penitentiary, no. 1409

Dr Erich Bonde (1895 Altenburg–1976 Senftenberg)

The doctor had conducted a secret relationship with the Leipzig businessman Heinz Hesse (1909–1993) since 1924/25. Hesse moved to Altenburg in 1929 and lived with Bonde in his house. Hesse's appointment as personal secretary served as cover. Although both were concerned with secrecy, the two lived out their longstanding relationship openly, including in front of the domestic staff. In 1936, investigations occurred due to denunciations, probably by one of the domestic servants. In 1937, Bonde was sentenced to twelve-months, his partner to nine-months imprisonment, under Paragraph 175. Bonde's doctor title was revoked. He emigrated to Shanghai in 1939.

Quotation

"The great love binding Hesse and Bonde is beyond description. Married couples are not as kind to each other. Each of them gave the other presents and made the other happy wherever they could. When Dr Bonde came from his consulting room, Hesse had already decorated it with masses of flowers. [...] I also noticed that the two of them would often look into each other's eyes like a couple in love."

Quotation signature:

Klara Kresse, Erich Bonde's cook on the relationship of the two men. The quote is from the police investigation files, Thüringisches Landesarchiv Altenburg StA LG Sign. 430



Ruth Knoll

Caption:

Private photo of Ruth Knoll from the 1930s, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Rep. 358-02, no. 33189

Ruth Knoll (1907 Reichenbach–?)

In 1931, Ruth Knoll came to Berlin, dared to go out in women's clothing in public and attended queer dance parties. In 1938, she worked as an assistant hairdresser and lived together with a rent boy, who protected her against transphobic violence. In the evenings, she occasionally looked for men in parks.

In March 1938, she was arrested by the Gestapo and her clothing was confiscated. The local court sentenced her under Paragraph 175 to an 18-month prison sentence and a "strict labour camp." She was sent to the Rodgau moor camp. In November 1939, she was released to Berlin. Her subsequent fate is unknown.

Willi Schattmann

Caption:

Willi Schattmann, identification photo of the Hamburg police, 1940, Staatsarchiv Hamburg, 213-11, 61857

Willi Schattmann (1914 Magdeburg–1974 Triptis)

After dropping out of his apprenticeship, Schattmann lived from occasional work and earned his living with sexual services and as a pimp in Hamburg.

He had been convicted for begging and theft eleven times since 1930. After renewed arrest in 1939, he revealed the names of many of his lovers: fifteen men were then sent to prison, two men died in concentration camps.

Due to repeated theft, pimping and male prostitution, he was sentenced to three years hard labour with subsequent preventive detention and sent to the Neuengamme concentration camp. He was released in 1945.

Hilda Patow

Hilda Patow (1914 Hamburg–1962 Flensburg)

The trained salesperson had no permanent position when she was arrested for theft by the Hamburg Criminal Police in August 1938. She confessed to being lesbian and to having spent the money in "Stadtkasino", a "meeting point [...] for lesbian love." She was given a one month suspended sentence for theft. One year later, the Hamburg delinquent supervision gave notice that Patow led "an unsteady gypsy life in lesbian and prostitute circles" and had "developed into a workshy and morally degenerate person". Patow then had to serve her sentence in the Fuhlsbüttel prison.

Werner Scholtyssek

Caption:

Dr Werner Scholtyssek, photo of the Criminal Biological Collection Hamburg 1944, Staatsarchiv Hamburg, 242-4, 946

Dr Werner Scholtyssek (1904 Biskubitz/Upper Silesia/today Biskubice/Poland–1985 Hamburg)

Scholtyssek studied dentistry, had a flourishing practice in Hamburg and was associated with the opposition Swing movement. Due to sexual contacts with young men, he was arrested several times between 1937 and 1943 and sentenced to prison terms under Paragraph 175. Appearing before court again in 1943, he was sentenced as a “career criminal” to one year hard labour with subsequent preventive detention, was “voluntarily” castrated in 1944 and liberated in 1945 from the Waldheim hard-labour prison. The Nazi verdict was reduced in autumn 1952 “to a just degree of punishment”, i.e., to a one-year prison term.

Castrations

In 1933, castration was embedded in the Criminal Code (Paragraph 42k) as a measure against “dangerous sexual offenders” and could be ordered after two convictions under Paragraph 176. Those affected were paedosexual offenders.

From June 1935, the amended “Act to Prevent Hereditarily Ill Progeny” opened a path to also pressuring homosexuals with multiple convictions under Paragraphs 175 and 175a, now as “seducers of youth”, to “voluntary castration”.

A decree of May 1939 ordered that this “voluntary nature” also existed in the case of those preventively interned and that release would be possible after castration. Such promises were normally not observed.



Erich and Josef

Caption:

Poem by Erich (1915–1986), written in 1940 in the Rottenburg am Neckar prison. From his book of poems with fifty handwritten poems, completed in January 1941, Stadtarchiv Tübingen BiKa S 1128

Transliteration:

My heart is wounded and full of longing

For freedom, for lost happiness.

Nothing left is left to me, nothing, except a thousand tears

and my mother’s sorrowful gaze.

[...]

Thus I was at fault and yet have none.

It’s not my fault I am as I am,

The world all alone made me like this

With body and soul, heart and mind.

Erich worked as a commercial clerk in a company in Tübingen where he became friends with a civilian forced labourer Józef (1921–?). Information from work colleagues sparked investigations; letters and photos of other men were found at Erich's flat. Due to strategic statements by Erich, both were only convicted of joint masturbation in 1940 and Józef sentenced to two-and-a-half-months, Erich to ten-months imprisonment.

"Queering the Archives": reconsidering Erich's book of poetry

The poetry book was handed over to the Tübingen city archive in 2014 by the grandson of the former Rottenburg prison chaplain Sigel. Erich had given him the book as a gift. The fact that it involved statements by a man whose desire was directed at men was concealed by the prison chaplain for reasons of protection. Its clear meaning was only discovered upon enquiry by the Polish historian Joanna Ostrowska, who had come across Józef and Erich in the Warsaw archive of the Institute for National Commemoration. The case file of the Tübingen Local Court had been brought there after 1945.

Hans Schmid passport

Caption:

Deported as criminal foreigner: cancelled passport of Hans Schmid, 1944, LABO Berlin, BEG file reg. no. 271788

The Swiss operetta singer and dentistry student Hans Schmid (1912–?) formed part of the Berlin artist scene from the mid-1930s. Arrested in 1942 on account of contacts with 16- to 19-year-old adolescents, he was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment in 1943 under Paragraphs 175, 175a subparagraph 3. After serving his sentence, he was expelled from Germany in August 1944.

In judicial custody

From 1933 to 1945, tens of thousands convicted under homosexual penal law were imprisoned in prisons, hard-labour prisons and penal camps: many of them multiple times, subjected to the constantly deteriorating terms of imprisonment and forced to perform labour. From 1939, the work periods were eleven to twelve hours.

Hard-labour prisoners scarcely had any way of maintaining contacts with the outside world. The "War Perpetrator Regulation" meant that from 1940, imprisonment did not count towards completing the sentence. Those of them who were also condemned to preventive custody, were sent to concentration camps by the judicial system for "destruction by labour".

Hilmar Damita

Caption:

Hilmar Damita, police photograph around 1952 from an autograph card around 1920, Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, F 215, Zug. 2017/066, 641

Hilmar Damita (Michael Mayer) (1889 Schwaben–1969 Munich)

The fictional character Damita had been performing from around 1910 in Berlin, Zurich, Vienna and Budapest. Photos also show her in a front theatre during the First World War. Convictions occurred in 1934 and 1939 on account of offences under Paragraph 175, in 1943 "in part concomitantly with disorderly conduct in public and insult". To avoid looming concentration camp internment, Michael Mayer had himself "voluntarily" castrated in the central hospital of Hamburg City Remand Centre. His application for compensation after the war was rejected.

4.2 Concentration camps

Queer German men were normally transferred to concentration camps because the Gestapo or Criminal Police had ordered protective or preventive custody. From 1937, anyone who had been sentenced to several prison terms could be sent to a concentration camp immediately. Concentration camps were initially regarded as a temporary pedagogic measure; from 1937, they were intended to ensure permanent prevention.

Queer German male prisoners were marked with a pink triangle from 1938, whereas foreign prisoners wore a red triangle, even if they were homosexual.

Lesbian women were sent to concentration camps if their sexual identity had played a role in their arrest. The majority were deported on other grounds. Many fell in love with a woman for the first time in a camp.

Sketch Jeannin-Garreau

Caption:

Éliane Jeannin-Garreau (1911–1999), Ravensbrück women's concentration camp, pencil on unprinted reverse of a torn-out newspaper, 12 x 15.8 cm, around 1943, Sign. VI 624- 5E1, Ravensbrück Memorial Museum/Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten

The French resistance fighter drew scenes of everyday life on the unprinted reverse pages of the SS newspaper *Das Schwarze Korps* in the Ravensbrück concentration camp. She kept the pencils and erasers in the hem of her clothing.

Walter Richter

Caption:

Walter Richter in the kitchen of his flat, photograph 1940 with reverse dedication: "In recollection of 'Anna the woman'", Landesarchiv Berlin, A Rep. 358-02, no. 121309-121310

Walter Richter (1907 Berlin–1942 Sachsenhausen concentration camp)

Richter worked as a page in a pharmacy and lived in a basement flat in Berlin-Lichterfelde. This was the place where he was able to enjoy switching roles in women's clothing with close friends. They were supported and fitted out by a neighbour.

In October 1940 he was denounced to the Gestapo, arrested and sent to prison for nineteen months under Paragraph 175. He was discharged on 21 June 1942 and deported by the Criminal Police to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. He died there on 28 July 1942 in the camp's clinker brick plant.

Paul O'Montis

Caption:

Paul O'Montis, photograph around 1932 with dedication in his own writing: "To dear industrious 'Rett'chen' in gratitude and in memory. Paul O'Montis. Cologne 32", Schwules Museum Berlin

Paul O'Montis (Paul Wendel) (1894 Budapest–1940 Sachsenhausen concentration camp)

The singer came to Berlin in 1919, where his career began – also thanks to his queer texts and performances. Arrested in 1935 during a guest performance at "Kaiserhof" in Cologne due to

offences under Paragraph 175, after serving his sentence Paul O'Montis fled to Switzerland, Austria and from there to Prague in 1938. After the German occupation in 1939, he was imprisoned, transferred to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in May 1940, where he was murdered in July. His death was covered up by the alleged cause "suicide by hanging".

Ilse Totzke

Photo

Caption:

Ilse Totzke identification photo by the Gestapo Würzburg, probably 1941, Staatsarchiv Würzburg, Gestapostelle 16015

Ilse Totzke (1913 Strasbourg–1987 Haguenau/France)

Ilse Totzke, a student at the School of Music in Würzburg, came to the attention of the Gestapo due to various denunciations: suspected to be a spy for France, on account of "interaction with Jews" and as "man-hater" who had "no normal orientation" were the reasons for the Gestapo investigations. Totzke was arrested during her attempt to escape to Switzerland, which she had undertaken together with Ruth Basinski (1916–1989). While Basinski, of Jewish descent, was deported to Auschwitz, the Gestapo transferred Totzke to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. The International Red Cross evacuated her to Sweden in 1945.



Klara Pförsch

Photo

Caption:

Klara Pförsch 1949, police office of the Leipzig Criminal Police, Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, 13471, VgM 10001, A 11

This photo was taken in Leipzig in 1949, before Klara Pförsch was transferred to the French military court in Rastatt. Pförsch is wearing a high stand-up collar as was already common in lesbian circles in the 1920s

Klara "Leo" Pförsch (1906 Hof–?)

Klara Pförsch, textile worker, joined the German Communist Party in 1924 and took part in street fighting between communists and Nazis in Munich. Twice convicted for high treason, she was transferred to the Ravensbrück concentration camp in 1940, where the SS appointed her camp senior. She also performed this role later in the Auschwitz, Geislingen an der Steige and Dachau concentration camps. Accused by former fellow prisoners after 1945, the French military court in Rastatt condemned her to death. The verdict was commuted to lifelong imprisonment in 1950. She was released early in 1957, physically and psychologically broken.

Quotation

"Leo's deep voice boomed: 'It is I.' [...] A stooped figure with the head pushed forward appeared in the door [...]. She leant the club in the corner and kissed Berta on both cheeks. 'Well, Mommy, got a fright, didn't you?' She took off the leather belt and men's jacket [...] and gave Berta a gentle tap on the nose. 'Ah, home at last.'"

Quotation signature:

Zofia Posmysz: *Ein Urlaub an der Adria*, translated from Polish by Hubert Schumann, Norderstedt 2009

Zofia Posmysz (1923–2022), Auschwitz survivor, here describes the evening return of the camp senior to her privileged accommodation in the Auschwitz concentration camp, which she was able to share with her lover, Berta. "Leo" is repeatedly described in the international camp literature as a lesbian, who as the camp senior did not hesitate to commit any act of violence.

Karl Gorath

Caption:

Karl Gorath, photo as concentration camp prisoner in Auschwitz 1943, Archive Jörg Hutter

Karl Gorath (1912 Bad Zwischenahn–2003 Bremerhaven)

After training as a nurse, Gorath received a one-year prison sentence in 1934 under Paragraph 175 on account of sexual interactions with adolescents; he was sentenced once again in 1938, now as repeat offender, to three years hard labour. Serving the sentence was followed in 1942 by preventive custody: in the Neuengamme concentration camp he initially wore the pink triangle. Deported to Auschwitz, where he once again worked as nurse, he succeeded in obtaining the red triangle. As a result, he was promoted to block senior. After the war forced the evacuation of the camp in January 1945, he was sent to the Mauthausen concentration camp, where he was liberated in May 1945.

Nadine Hwang

Caption:

Nadine Hwang (second from right) after her evacuation by the Swedish Red Cross from the Ravensbrück concentration camp to Malmö on 28 April 1945, Sveriges Television, Vitnesbördet SF 2480 (excerpt)

Nadine Hwang (1902 Madrid–1972 Brussels)

The daughter of a Chinese diplomat was deported to the Ravensbrück concentration camp in 1944, where she got to know Nelly Mousset-Vos (1906–1987), a Belgian mezzo-soprano, at a Christmas celebration in 1944. The resistance fighter performed there with an aria from Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*. Both women decided to spend their lives together. In 1950, the couple moved to Caracas, where they claimed to be cousins and ran a guest house. They returned to Brussels in 1969. Their relationship is the subject of the documentary film by Magnus Gertten *Nelly & Nadine*, 2022.

4.3 Concentration camps (2nd)

Survival in concentration camps (Text ONLY in Booklet)

Queer German prisoners could occupy privileged positions as kapos and instruction prisoners. At the same time, they were still exposed to the homophobic and transphobic accusations of the SS and fellow prisoners. Queer men were frequently accommodated in separate blocks or rooms.

Friendships arose along with sexual contacts now and then in exchange for better food.

Lesbian contacts were penalised with the punishment block in the Ravensbrück concentration camp.

The lesbians here and in the Auschwitz women's camp performed numerous functions and were therefore more conspicuous than others; being lesbian is also frequently termed the "German sickness" in international camp literature.

Queer men in concentration camps

From 1933 to 1945, about 10,000 queer men were interned in concentration camps, including prostitutes, transvestites and so-called seducers of youth, including members of Nazi formations. They were frequently deployed in strenuous labour task forces; their chances of survival were slight. Many were marked with the pink triangle and had little support and standing among fellow prisoners. Tormenting by fellow prisoners was also an everyday occurrence.

Kapos rewarded younger, so-called toy boys, with gifts for sexual favours. Fleeting sexual encounters were possible, love affairs also arose.

Queer women in concentration camps

They were repeatedly confronted with homophobic animosity in the camps, cursed as "men-women", "viragos" and "monsters" or ironically referred to as "julots" (pimps) and "well-nourished champions of theft". Lesbians from underprivileged classes faced special difficulties. They were unable to achieve advantages for themselves as a prisoner group. Some were relatively protected since they performed functions in the camp.

However, numerous friendships and love affairs also arose in the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp, of which many endured a lifetime.

Fritz Kitzing

Caption:

Fritz Kitzing in women's clothing he was forced to put on after it was seized in his flat, police photo 1936, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030-02-05 no. 169

Fritz Kitzing (Neuruppin 1905–around 1994 Berlin)

The son of a book seller, he lived from about 1925 in the queer Berlin district around Schöneberg's Motzstrasse. According to his Gestapo file, he went about in public in women's clothing and worked as a prostitute. Convicted in 1933 for "infringement of Paragraph 361 (6)", he was transferred after imprisonment to a workhouse. Due to renewed investigations on account of Paragraph 175, he was transferred by protective custody order in 1935 to the Lichtenburg and Sachsenhausen concentration camps, where he was discharged in 1937.

Protective custody order

Caption:

Gestapo protective custody order against the lawyer Dr Hubert Korsch (1893–1942) on account of "homosexual activities", July 1938, Landesarchiv NRW Rheinland RW 58/76677 p. 13

Korsch's housekeeper had already accused him in vain in 1936, because he had cheated on his wife in the marital bedroom with two young men. Investigations were in progress against one of these men in 1938 on account of sexual activity with 16- and 17-year-old adolescents. Korsch was incriminated in this connection and the protective custody order obtained. He was sentenced to one-and-a-half-years hard labour and the loss of civil rights for five years. He died in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in 1942.

Emsland camp Ernst Haug

"My life ended with the entry into the camp. I had lost everything: family, property, position, liberty and honour. I stood alone in ESTERWEGEN, which bore the name 'The hell at the forest edge'. [...] Nevertheless, 52 months of suffering and humiliation, inhumanities and hunger still allowed me to preserve a belief in human nature, in the justice of fate. [...] it was to be penance for my own deed that had brought me there, but also penance I had served this insane idea for years."

Quotation signature:

Report from the Soldiers' Concentration Camp Esterwegen on the Emsland moors about the period from December 1940 to April 1945, provided by former prisoner no. 1918/40 Ernst Haug, in: Ernst Haug denazification court file 1946, Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, StAL EL 902/7, Bü 5352 Ernst Haug (18971–1961) was an employee of the city Schwäbisch Gmünd, staunch party member, married and father of a daughter. During the western campaign of the Wehrmacht, during which he had the rank of a staff sergeant, he was convicted by a military court in France in 1940 on account of an offence under Paragraph 175 and sent to the Esterwegen VII penal camp.



Caption:

Illustration in: Bernard Aldebert, *Chemin de croix en 50 stations: de Compiègne à Gusen 2, en passant par Buchenwald, Mauthausen, Gusen 1*, Arthème Fayard, Paris 1946

Sexuality within the prisoner camps was and is a great taboo. Witness testimony confirms that sexual encounters occurred. These were often based on dependency relationships but are in part also described as a means of survival. If presented visually at all, this often only occurs in the form of defamatory caricatures.

Quotation:

"'Aunt Erna' – this was his nickname – was a sickbay clerk. [...] He was for the most part interested in his respective toy boys, whom he had admitted to the sickbay and spoon fed and spoilt them there with stolen dietary food until he got tired of them. Then he chucked them out and the game began anew with another object of his particular affections."

Quotation signature:

Pierre Petit, resistance fighter from Luxembourg, describes his recollections of Ernst Mittag (1892–?), sentenced under Paragraph 175, who was deployed in Bergen-Belsen in 1944 as sickbay clerk, later as camp senior of the prison camp. Quotation according to Rainer Hoffschildt/Thomas Rahe, "Homosexuelle Häftlinge im Konzentrationslager – Das Beispiel Bergen-Belsen", in: *Beiträge zur Geschichte der NS-Verfolgung in Norddeutschland* 5/1999

Quotation:

"Having sexual intercourse in Buchenwald was normal. [...] I had a young Frenchman with whom I was friends, that was also very strictly prohibited but everyone did it, there we were in the rubble of the Gustloff plant where I worked, so we were in some corner or other, God forbid that we got caught, but we kept finding somewhere private and did it, somehow a little quick quick quick."

Quotation signature:

Information from a former Buchenwald prisoner in an anonymised newspaper interview, 2014, in: Daniel Schuch/Jens-Christian Wagner (editors), *Rosa Winkel. Als homosexuell verfolgte Häftlinge in den Konzentrationslagern Buchenwald und Mittelbau-Dora*, Stiftung Gedenkstätten Buchenwald und Mittelbau-Dora, Weimar 2023

Quotation:

"Lesbian love spread like an epidemic. The number of these masculine women with stiff collars, shaved with high shoes and deep voices, sometimes even with beard stubble, kept increasing. These 'men' stood in front of the blocks, checked out the passing women and from time to time made cynical remarks. Real orgies took place on Sundays behind the blocks. Young gypsy girls danced while the 'men' – we called them 'Manny' – clapped in time."

Quotation signature:

Wanda Poltawska: *Und ich fürchte meine Träume*, translated from Polish by Eva Luhn-Geiger, fe-Medienverlag, Kisslegg 1993

Wanda Poltawska (1921–2023), Polish resistance fighter, was interned in Ravensbrück concentration camp from 1942 to 1945. Shortly after the liberation, she recorded her memories of the camp, published in German in 1993.



Eleonore Behar

Caption:

Proof of the arrest of Eleonore Behar, Stuttgart, December 1945, private collection via Anna Hájková

Eleonore Behar (1922 Stuttgart–2011 Santiago de Chile)

Born in Stuttgart as the daughter of a non-Jewish mother and a Jewish father, she was classified from 1935 as a "notional Jew". For a long time, this protected Eleonore Behar against persecution. In 1945, she was deported to Theresienstadt and deployed there as a nurse. As a fellow inmate reported, Behar fell in love with another prisoner there. After liberation, she emigrated with her mother to Santiago de Chile, where she worked in a Jewish business and supported her sister, who had also emigrated. According to her family, she was so traumatised by the experiences of her imprisonment that she could not establish any family of her own.

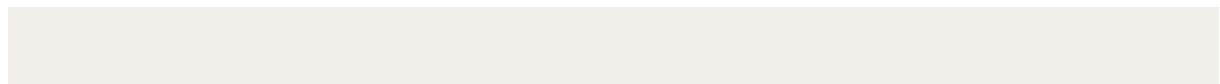
Getting a different triangle

Caption:

Max Müller's discharge document from the Sachsenhausen concentration camp on 27 April 1945, with attached red triangle, LABO Berlin, BEG file, reg. no. 342784

The pub owner Max Müller (1894–1962) was a prisoner in various concentration camps from July 1937 on account of offences under Paragraphs 175 and 183. Seeking compensation in 1957, he referred to the red triangle, which marked him as a political prisoner. He was given the reply: "The fact that the applicant obtained a red triangle in Sachsenhausen was [...] possible because due to the special internal persecution of homosexuals, disguise frequently succeeded by obtaining the red triangle."

4.4 Exclusion from the national community



People who did not correspond to standard gender norms were suspicious in general for the Nazi regime. Role infringements, a “dissolute way of life” or even a “degenerate sex drive” contradicted the ideal image of the German national community.

In the event of behaviour deviating from the norm, queer adolescents were subjected to mandatory care and interned in reform homes, “youth protection camps” or work re-education camps. Anyone who was committed to a mental institution ran the risk of being murdered as part of euthanasia measures.

If racist, criminal-biological or social hygiene-related persecution criteria also applied in addition to the failure of gender conforming, queer people were threatened with radical exclusion up to and including being killed.

Mary Pünjer

Caption:

Mary Pünjer's Gestapo identification photo in the Ravensbrück concentration camp, 1940, Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Wiesbaden, Best. 631a, no. 1619

Mary Pünjer (1904 Hamburg–1942 Bernburg mental institution)

After graduating from high school, Pünjer worked in her parents' fashion store, which was wrecked during the anti-Jewish pogroms of 1938. In 1940, she was arrested and sent to the Fuhlsbüttel police prison, later transferred to the Ravensbrück concentration camp on the imprisonment grounds of being “antisocial”. At the end of 1941, Pünjer became caught up in the murder campaign designated as “14 F 13”; an SS doctor involved in the selection of concentration camp prisoners classified here as “very active (‘saucy’) lesbian” who had continually visited “lesbian pubs” and exchanged “intimacies” there. Shortly thereafter she was murdered in the “Bernburg mental institution” with poison gas.

“Special treatment 14 f 13”

“14 f 13” was the designation for the selection and killing of concentration camp prisoners who were regarded as “ballast existences”. The action was intended to unburden the concentration camps from prisoners who were no longer capable of working. Medical assessors conducted the selections as a result of which victims were transferred to one of out of the total of six “mental institutions” in Germany, where they were killed with poison gas. Mary Pünjer was one of about 1,600 women from the Ravensbrück concentration camp who was murdered in Bernburg.

Viktor Ziller

Quotation:

“Moreover, he declared that it wouldn't be so bad if one exchanged embraces and kisses out of affection for a man and even had homosexual intercourse with him. The accused in addition stated that he heard voices from the other side that did not give him any orders but with whom he talked about homosexual matters. He also saw the end of world and had noticed that the men then had homosexual intercourse.”

Quotation signature:

From the 1938 court verdict that resulted in Viktor Ziller's transfer to a mental institution, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Rep. 358-02, no. 64724

Gemeinnützige Kranken-Transport GmbH

Caption:

The "Gemeinnützige Kranken-Transport GmbH", which was responsible for euthanasia deportations, gave notice in May 1941 upon enquiry the Berlin public prosecutor's office of Viktor Ziller's "transfer" – a year after his murder, Landesarchiv Berlin, A 358-02, no. 64724

Viktor Ziller (1893–1940), a masseur and naturopath, had felt vilified and persecuted due to his homosexuality since he was a young man. Accused of crimes under Paragraph 175 in 1938, a psychiatrist diagnosed him with schizophrenia and the court had him committed to the Berlin-Buch sanatorium and nursing home. Viktor submitted four applications for his release, which were all rejected. On 30 March 1940, he was taken to the Grafeneck sanatorium and nursing home and murdered there.



Sophie Gotthardt

Caption:

Sophie Gotthardt 1934, photo from her patient file from the Hadamar mental institution, LWV-Archiv, Best. 12/K4425, Hadamar Memorial Museum

Sophie Gotthardt (1912 Cologne–1961 Frankfurt/Main)

Gotthardt, who worked as a prostitute, was transferred to the Hadamar mental institution in 1934 and forcibly sterilised. After her discharge, she once again worked as a prostitute, including in Hamburg, where she stated she was friends with Johanna Kohlmann "on a lesbian basis". Due to a failure to report to the authorities, the Criminal Police sent her to the Ravensbrück concentration camp, later to Auschwitz. After 1945, she was once again imprisoned due to the accusation of a former co-prisoner and was extradited to Poland because she had committed crimes against humanity as a "camp instructor" in Auschwitz. She was convicted as a war criminal in Kraków and released early in 1957.

Johanna "Otto" Kohlmann

Caption:

Johanna "Otto" Kohlman, private photo from her patient file from the Hadamar mental institution, LWV-Archiv, Best. 12/K1824, Hadamar Memorial Museum

Johanna "Otto" Kohlmann

Caption:

Johanna "Otto" Kohlman 1935, photo from their patient file in the Hadamar mental institution, LWV-Archiv, Best. 12/K1824, Hadamar Memorial Museum

Johanna "Otto" Kohlmann (1918 Frankfurt/Main–1956 Cologne)

Kohlmann, who called herself Otto, was subjected to the social welfare authorities at the age of sixteen due to a "perverse orientation" and transferred in 1935 to the Hadamar mental institution, where she underwent forced sterilisation.

In 1937 she was working as a prostitute and fell in love with Sophie Gotthardt, with whom she shared a room in a street in Hamburg's red-light district. After failing to report as required to the public health office, both were taken into police preventive custody and in 1940 transferred to Ravensbrück, followed by other concentration camps.

After liberation in 1945, Kohlmann changed accommodation frequently and drew social security benefits. She died at the age of 38 from pulmonary tuberculosis.

Friedrich Paul Riemann

Caption:

Friedrich Paul Riemann, police photo from 1942, Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv Potsdam, 12C Berlin II 1280 – 1283

Friedrich Paul Riemann (1896 Essen–1943 Berlin-Plötzensee, where he was executed)

Riemann suffered from a walking impediment. Sexually abused by a man, he became depressed and attempts at suicide failed. In 1930, he was sent to a social welfare institution of the Inner Mission in Lobetal. Here he recovered, worked as an office assistant, made friends who provided him with makeup, now and then wore women's clothing and also travelled to Berlin to meet men. After investigations on account of spreading "unnatural fornication" in Lobetal, he was charged as a chief perpetrator, sentenced to death by a special court under Paragraph 175 and as "dangerous career criminal" and hanged on 8 September 1943.

Social welfare quotations

Female social welfare

"The Abendroth House, formerly Magdalenenstift, is a house of custody for girls [...] Both the care team as well as the management of the Abendroth House are aware that many of the occupants tend to female friendships. The girls are very carefully watched by the teachers and as soon as anything suspicious is noticed, a move to another ward is ordered."

Education measures against homosexual contacts of female social welfare wards. Report of the lawyer of the Abendroth House to the Hamburg public prosecutor's office.

Johannes Foundation Berlin

"The minors mentioned belong to a Comrades' Group and have already been punished by me by caning and put under enhanced supervision until further notice as well as distributed to other Comrades' Groups. In addition, they are being given increased military exercises by the trainers of an SA guard troop."

Educational measures against homosexual contacts of male social welfare wards. Report of the Director of "Ulmenhof", a "comrades' home for expelled boys" to the Protestant Johannes Foundation Berlin-Spandau.

Kowalewski

"I've been in the institution for a long time, have got to know everything there and didn't want to be accommodated there any longer under any circumstances."

Quotation signature:

From the interrogation of Herbert Kowalewski (1919–1938) at the Berlin Gestapo on 11 February 1937 Kowalewski had been in corrective education institutions since 1934; in 1936, he was sent to labour deployment in Ostprignitz. When his mother died and he was to return to the corrective

training home, he fled and earned his money as a rent boy to leave Germany. Arrested in 1937, he was once again put into corrective education institutions. On 9 January 1938, he committed suicide in the Berlin Johannes Foundation.

5. Life after 1945

5.1 Victims with caveats

The end of the war meant liberation for those persecuted by the Nazis. Many were facing the ruins of their existence and tried to make a new beginning – also many queer people. But any of them who tried to get help from the victim associations that were coming into being were rejected. After 1949, both German states adhered with differing intensity to the criminalisation of male homosexuality, tightened youth protection conditions and condemnation of lifestyles diverging from the norm. For decades, the queer Nazi victims had scarcely any advocates in politics and society. They were not regarded as “victims of fascism” but rather as criminals and received neither compensation nor rehabilitation. They became doubly “victims not talked about”, excluded from memory and almost all fell silent.

“The forgotten” (V.1.8)

Caption:

Georg Tauber, ‘*The burden of the problem ‘The forgotten!’*’, water colour and ink drawing 1946, created for the “Concentration camp work association ‘The forgotten’” and its magazine of the same name, Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Museum, DaA L 992/55/45111, loan by Tobias Hofer, Lisa Gobmeier and Simon Gobmeier

“The forgotten”, survivors who were imprisoned in the concentration camp as “antisocials” with the black triangle and as “career criminals” with the green triangle, thematised their social stigmatisation and their exclusion from compensation payments and commemoration activities. Pink-triangle prisoners are not visualised here and not explicitly mentioned, still appearing to have been such a taboo subject.

Odeman

Caption:

Olga Rinnebach (1899–1957) and Robert T Odeman (1904–1985), photograph around 1953, Schwules Museum Berlin

Robert T. Odeman

Robert T. Odeman (Robert Martin Odemann) (1904 Blankenese–1985 West Berlin)

The artist enjoyed the queer infrastructure of the Weimar Republic and moved in left-liberal artist circles in Hamburg and Berlin, from which he drew a lot of support. In 1952, he attempted to have the Nazi verdicts against him revoked and his entries in the criminal register deleted. He achieved – unusually enough – only a “restricted information on the criminal register” as a result of which he

could describe himself as “without prior convictions” vis-a-vis private individuals and non-official bodies. He did not receive any compensation.

Rinnebach and Odeman

Caption:

Robert T. Odeman, photograph around 1960 on the record *Verse eines dreisten Zeitgenossen*, Telefunken Berlin, Schwules Museum Berlin

The chanson singer and the musician, cabaret artist and lyricist worked together at the beginning of the 1930s. After his period of imprisonment, Robert T. Odeman was convicted of “racial defilement” due to Paragraphs 175 and 175a and was transferred to Sachsenhausen concentration camp for “preventive custody”. Olga Rinnebach then presented herself as his lover in letters to him, to protect him in this way. After the end of the war, they once again performed together.

Lindemann “Victim of fascism” identity card

Caption:

Cancelled “Victim of fascism” identity card of Edith Fiedler-Lindemann (1906–?), Landesarchiv Berlin, C Rep. 118-01, no. 2392

Edith Fiedler-Lindemann and her sister Herta Stern-Lindemann, Jewish survivors of the Auschwitz concentration camp, were accused in 1946 “of being inclined to lesbian love”. Since this accusation harmed the “reputation of victims of fascism”, both were to be denied this status. Herta Stern defended herself by pointing out: “What happened was by mutual consent. In my case, it is a camp sickness, which will hopefully disappear in the course of time.” Instead of waiting for further investigations, the sisters emigrated to the US.

Kurt Gudell

Caption:

Kurt Gudell, photograph 1950s, LABO Berlin, BEG file reg no. 7413

Dr Kurt Gudell (1898 Schultz/Solec Kujawsk/today Poland–1964 West Berlin)

Kurt Gudell was a business lawyer and up to 1933 managing director of the German People’s Party. In December 1934, he was sent to the Lichtenburg concentration camp for several months as a homosexual. In 1938, he was sentenced under Paragraph 175 to four months of imprisonment. His doctor title was revoked and he emigrated to Switzerland. Having returned in 1947, he lived from social welfare and a pension in Berlin, fought for a verdict revocation, acknowledgement as a Nazi victim and to reacquire his doctor title – with enervating stubbornness and success. In 1954, he was recognised as a Nazi victim and in 1962 got his doctor title back from the University of Greifswald.

Disallowed ODF identity card

Caption:

Disallowed and withdrawn “Victim of fascism” identity card of Karl Richard Ewald (1907–?) from his VdN file, Landesarchiv Berlin, C Rep. 118-01, no. 2111

The Hamburg citizen stated he had been convicted on account of a “pro-Jewish attitude” and “antifascist statements”. Research in the Hamburg-Fuhlsbüttel prison revealed that he had been

interned there on account of “unnatural fornication”. Although he had been taken to Theresienstadt after his imprisonment without being convicted, he was deprived of the identity card on account of “criminal offences”.

Karl Richard Ewald

Quotation:

“Richard Ewald [...] is registered with you as a “Victim of fascism” [...] He is Paragraph 175 (‘warm brother’) and may also have been interned for this in Hamburg and Theresienstadt. He is also a trafficker.”

Quotation signature:

Anonymous letter from 21 February 1947 to the Berlin Main Committee “Victims of fascism” from his VdN file, Landesarchiv Berlin, C Rep. 118-01, no. 2111

Due to this denunciation, investigations were launched against Richard Ewald. They did not just end with disallowance of the “victim” status. The Main Committee also brought criminal charges on account of fraud and making false claims to obtain public benefits.

Victims of fascism: “Political, racial, religiously persecuted”

Offices for “victims of fascism” (OdF) were set up in all four occupation zones of Germany to provide the survivors of the concentration camps and prisons with state assistance. This is because after their liberation, many had nothing more than their prisoner clothing, were sick and without accommodation. Individual case reviews began very soon; the group of recognised victims was limited to those persecuted on political, racial or religious grounds. Homosexuals were not included, were rejected or excluded if the reason for their arrest was known and occasionally even charged with fraud if they had not mentioned it.



Federal Compensation Act (BEG) and General War Consequences Act (AKG)

From 1953, the Federal Compensation Act (BEG) allowed privileged victim groups, i.e., those persecuted on political, racial or religious grounds, to receive compensation payments, monetary payments and pensions. Convicted homosexuals got nothing, their applications were rejected. Starting in 1958, only the General War Consequences Act (AKG) offered, at least in theory, concentration camp victims and those forcibly castrated there a chance of compensation – concealed under the misleading title of the legislation, more than 100 paragraphs and a short period for applications up to 1959. Only fourteen men submitted applications by then.

Otto Giering

Caption:

Otto Giering with wife, whom he had married in the 1950s to lead a “bourgeois life”, photo around 1960, private property

Otto Giering (1916 Hamburg–1967 West Berlin)

He worked in Hamburg as messenger and in the sex trade, was punished in 1933 and 1934 under Paragraph 175, in 1937 once again and sentenced to 21 months imprisonment, then transferred to Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Following accusations of having had sex there with other

prisoners, he was forced to “voluntary castration” in the camp in 1939, brought before the Berlin Regional Court in 1941 and sentenced to five years imprisonment. Liberated in 1945 and 50% severely handicapped, he sought compensation under the Federal Compensation Act (BEG) in vain from 1955 onward. In 1963, he was compensated under the General War Consequences Act (AKG) with 10,000 marks.

Margarethe Rosenberg

Margarete Rosenberg (1910 Stettin–1985 Hamburg)

She worked as a prostitute in Berlin until she was conscripted as a tram conductor in 1940. Since the colleagues “had homosexual intercourse with each other” and did not appear at work next day, Rosenberg was charged as the main offender and transferred to the Ravensbrück concentration camp the same year on account of “behaviour inimical to the state”. The intake list noted next to her name: “lesbian”. After 1945, the Hamburg compensation authority rejected her application for compensation since her imprisonment had been justified due to her work as prostitute and due to her lesbian behaviour.

5.2 Discrimination and persecution

Both German states retained special penal law provisions against queer men in 1949. East Germany punished “completed sexual-intercourse-like” actions under the version of Paragraph 175 that applied before 1935 and focused on protecting youth. West Germany took on Paragraphs 175 and 175a in the stricter Nazi versions of 1935. The prosecution pressure was much greater here than in East Germany: from 1950 to 1965, there were 45,000 convictions and almost 100,000 investigations.

Lesbian women were not criminally prosecuted on account of their sexual orientation, but social, church and family pressure nevertheless made an open lesbian life impossible. Securing their economic existence and independence and safeguarding the right of custody for their own children were major challenges.

Lesbian love as reflected in law, 1951

Cover picture of the brochure

Caption:

Cover of the brochure *§ 175 Homosexualität [Paragraph 175 Homosexuality]* with the article by the lawyer Thea Booss-Rosenthal *Die lesbische Liebe im Spiegel der Gesetze, [Lesbian love as reflected in law]*, in: Issue 3 of the special series of the magazine *Liebe und Ehe, [Love and Marriage]*, Regensburg/Vienna, Verlag für Sexualliteratur, 1951, Schwules Museum Berlin

“Lesbian love as reflected in law”

The article emphasised that “homosexual activity of women” was not prohibited but also not a “lawless sphere”. For the legislature, it was “fornication”. Therefore – with the exception of Paragraphs 175 and 175a – all other elements of the offence “lewd behaviour” or its promotion according to Paragraphs 174, 176, 180, 183 and 185 were applicable. In addition, there was a risk of

terminations by employers or landlords under particular circumstances. If lesbian relationships were a cause for divorce, this resulted in the loss of the right of custody of one's children.

Rita Thomas, Tommy

Caption:

Rita Thomas in East Berlin, photograph around 1952, FFBIZ – das feministische Archiv e.V., Berlin, C Rep. 40 Acc. 4 Nr. 460 Berlin-Ost 23, photo collection Rita Thomas

Rita "Tommy" Thomas (1931 Berlin–2018 Berlin)

Despite ridicule and animosity, Tommy only wore trousers from the age of fifteen, she was a "laddy", as women acting like men called themselves. Possession of a weapon and nonconformity resulted in her conviction and imprisonment in the East Berlin women's prison Barnimstrasse 10 in 1949/50.

After auxiliary work in the fairground exhibitor trade, she trained as an animal groomer and had her own dog parlour. Together with her life partner Helli (born 1933), she spent time in the West Berlin women's pub "Fürstenau" and, after the Berlin Wall was built, fitted out her own flat in Berlin-Friedrichshain as a meeting point for queer people.

Rosa Jochmann

Caption:

Rosa Jochmann, 1950s, postcard she posted herself. Photo 1366, Ravensbrück Memorial Museum/Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten

Rosa Jochmann (1901 Vienna–1994 Vienna)

The Viennese social democrat was deported to the Ravensbrück concentration camp in 1940. There she met Cilly Helten (1908–1974) with whom she formed a lifelong partnership. When after 1945 a fellow prisoner was suspected by other political prisoners of being a camp stooge and she saw her compensation payments at risk, the fellow prisoner denounced Jochmann in public, saying Jochmann had been known in the camp "'as Mommy' and her lesbian girlfriend as 'Daddy'". The political prisoners described them as a "lesbian clique". However, this fellow prisoner was unable to harm Jochmann, deputy leader of the Social Democratic Party of Austria, in this way.

Klaus Schirdewahn

Caption:

Klaus Schirdewahn in Ebertpark, Ludwigshafen around 1966, Klaus Schirdewahn, Mannheim

Klaus Schirdewahn (1947 Ludwigshafen) Discovered by the police as a seventeen-year old while having sex with a man, Klaus Schirdewahn was interrogated and then brought to his shocked parents. Thanks to a Youth Welfare Office assistant, he was "only" condemned to therapy. There he was encouraged to marry a young woman from his youth group to bring an end to "this homosexual phase". His wife attempted to accept his continuing homosexual desire; they had a daughter together. When Schirdewahn met his life partner, the couple divorced and he was forbidden to have contact to his child.

Wolfgang Lauinger

Caption:

Wolfgang Lauinger, photograph around 1952, Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt/Main, donation Bettina Leder

Wolfgang Lauinger (1918 Zürich–2017 Frankfurt/Main)

Having grown up as a "half-Jew" in Frankfurt/Main, Wolfgang Lauinger had to look after himself after the divorce of his parents and the emigration of his father and brother. In 1941/42 he served a multi-month Gestapo prison sentence on account of contact to the opposition swing youth of the "Harlem Club". In 1950, he was arrested on account of violating Paragraph 175, was in remand for eight months without charges and was then acquitted. The cause was the statement of a rent boy known to him, who provided the names of 200 men after being put under pressure and, as a result, unleashed the Frankfurt homosexual trials with dozens of convictions.

Peter Leibssle

Peter Leibssle (1935 Reutlingen–2007 Reutlingen)

The student of law at the University of Tübingen received a received a reprimand in 1958 after a trial for "fornication with men" and had to break off his studies after a renewed conviction under Paragraph 175 in 1964. He reacted to the criminalisation and professional disqualification with a constitutional complaint. He demanded that Paragraphs 175 and 175a be eliminated without replacement, his complete legal rehabilitation and financial compensation for every day since his first conviction – utopian sounding demands, which go beyond even the Rehabilitation Act passed in 2017.

Peter Leibssle

Caption:

Peter Leibssle, photograph Fotohaus Dohm, around 1975, Stadtarchiv Reutlingen, S 105/5 no. 9362/9-11

Federal Constitutional Court application

"In addition, application is made that Paragraph 175 of the German Criminal Code [...] be declared invalid. Paragraph 175 also infringes the social state clause (Article 20) of the Basic Law and the International Genocide Convention that the Federal Republic of Germany acceded to and which was adopted by Paragraph 220a of the German Criminal Code into federal law. Finally, infringement due to Article 3 (inhumane and degrading treatment) is also censured [...]."

Quotation signature:

Letter from Peter Leibssle to the Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe, 14 May 1965, Federal Archives Koblenz, B 237/13090, page 1, quoted according to Steinle: "Peter Leibssle gegen die Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Der juristische Kampf eines Homosexuellen", in: Exhibition catalogue *Queer durch Tübingen*, 2021

The Federal Constitutional Court decided "not to reject" the constitutional complaint. Only on 1 October 1969, the day of the entry into force of the liberalised Paragraph 175, was it rejected as "unfounded". Up to this point, Peter Leibssle buttressed his demands, with, among other things, expert opinions by the moral theologian Theodor Bovet (1900–1976) and the cultural scholar Hermann Bausinger (1926–2021).

"Charged"

Caption:

"Charged", linocut of Charles Grieger, in: *Die Freunde*, November 1951, Verlag Charles Grieger Hamburg

The artist and publisher Charles Grieger (1903–1972) visualised the threat and stigmatisation by Paragraphs 175 and 175a and their support by the ethical and moral conceptions of the two major confessions. He ran his publishing house with his partner Gustav Leue (1910–around 2000). Numerous indexing and court proceedings by the authorities forced the publisher to close in 1956.



Magazines

Caption:

Wir Freundinnen. Monatsschrift für Frauenfreundschaft [We Girlfriends. Monthly for Female Friendship], Year 1, no. 1, October 1951

A total of five issues of the magazine were published by the Charles Grieger Verlag in Hamburg. "Mary Ronald" is stated as the editor, of whom it was only reported that she had been active in queer Berlin in the 1920s. In November 1951, the publisher announced an independent newsletter for transvestites, but according to the publisher, it never appeared "due to lack of demand".

Caption:

Humanitas. Monatsschrift für Menschlichkeit und Kultur [Humanitas. Monthly for Humanity and Culture], Year 3, February 1955

Humanitas was published from 1953 to 1955 by Christian Hansen Schmidt (1909–1962) in Hamburg. Its editor-in-chief was Erwin Harmann (1915–1972), who had re-established the "Society for Human Rights" as whose mouthpiece the magazine functioned for a while.

5.3 Emancipatory new beginnings



The beginning of democratisation at the end of the 1940s created legal spaces that queer people used to meet, establish networks and express themselves. Clubs and associations were set up, places for sociability, publishing houses and magazines – signs of a resurgent self-confidence. The homophile movement arose – borne in the main by men with experience of Nazi persecution, who could only become active in West Germany. They wanted to experience the abolition of the still prevailing special Nazi penal laws against homosexual men. An awakening torn between protest and the experience of powerlessness, persecution and self-assertion in the face of social disdain, still threatened by criminal law, regarded with suspicion by the authorities, combatted by the churches, observed and prosecuted by the police.

Gesellschaft für Reform des Sexualrechts Berlin

Caption:

Kurt Grund's (1931–2005) membership card for the "Gesellschaft für Reform des Sexualrechts e.V.", private collection

The "Gesellschaft für Reform des Sexualrechts" [Society for the Reform of Sexual Law] was established in 1949 in West Berlin. It existed until 1960, provided legal advice and cultural talks, contradicted religious defamation campaigns, supported the struggle against Paragraph 175 and was networked throughout Germany with other homophile associations. Many of its fifty members were in prison as homosexuals during the Nazi era. The precision mechanic Kurt Grund was one of its youngest members.

Invitation to gentlemen's party 1960

Caption:

Invitation to a "Gentlemen's party" of the "Comrades' Group the round" and "The circle" on Ascension Day (Father's Day) 26 May 1960, Schwules Museum Berlin, die runde Collection

The Zürich homophile group "Der Kreis" is descended from a forerunner foundation in 1932. Due to many queries from southern Germany, it encouraged the foundation in 1950 of the "Comrades' Group the round" in Reutlingen and supported it. The joint "gentlemen's parties" always took place on the Ascension Day public holiday, Father's Day, to ensure that up to forty men out and about without any women did not attract undue attention.

Greeting card

Caption:

Christmas card from Harry Hermann and Willy (Bobby) Stiefel to members of the "Comrades' Group the round", around 1960, using the logo of the "Kreis" (Greek torch), enclosed in reverse-presented triangle of the concentration camp prisoners, underneath "suum cuique", "to each his own", which stood above the entrance gate of the Buchenwald concentration camp, another appropriation turned to the positive, Schwules Museum Berlin, die runde Collection

The Reutling homophile group around the two friends Harry Hermann (1919–1995) and Willy Stiefel (1924–1984) existed from 1950 to 1969, addressed only men, was informally organised and acted as a discreet network. In the 1960s, "die runde" acquired national importance and posted its hectographed magazine *Der Rundblick*, secretly produced in the office of the Württemberg forest administration, worldwide.

ICSE poster

Caption:

Poster of the Second ICSE Congress in Frankfurt/Main, around 1952, Schwules Museum Berlin

As a response to the Frankfurt homosexual trials of 1950/51, with their dozens of convictions and as a symbol of international solidarity, the congress of the "International Committee for Sexual Equality", based in Amsterdam, took place in the rooms of Goethe University in 1952. It was organised by the "Verein für humanitäre Lebensgestaltung" [Association for a Humanitarian Lifestyle], established in 1949 in Frankfurt/Main.

"(1) Anyone shall be punished with up to one year of imprisonment and with a fine of up to one thousand marks or with one of these penalties, who 1. offers for sale, sells, distributes, exhibits or puts up or otherwise distributes lewd publications, illustrations or representations at locations accessible to the public, manufactures them for the purpose of distribution or for the same purpose stores, announces or recommends them [...].

(2) Apart from the prison sentence, the loss of civil rights and the permissibility of police supervision may be adjudged."

Quotation signature:

Paragraph 184 of the German Criminal Code, known as "Filth and Trash Act", in: *Federal Gazette*, 1 September 1953

In East Germany, queer magazines were prohibited. The authorities in West Germany took action against all queer publications. Apart from the Filth and Trash Act from 1927, there was an additional law from 1953, the "Act on the Dissemination of Publications Morally Harmful to Youth". Over the course of the 1950s, investigations by the police, courts and Federal Examining Board led to the cessation of all queer magazines apart from *Weg zu Freundschaft und Toleranz*.



Collage

Caption:

Toni Simon, photo collage "My life in pictures", compiled by Toni Simon on her seventieth birthday, Kornwestheim 1957, Schwules Museum Berlin

"I'm a transvestite myself and have fathered five children, but have only studied sexual science in private and have come to the realisation [...] that it's impossible for a homosexual person to suppress their sex drive. [...] A homosexual must be free and this includes the sex drive in the truest sense. A very early elimination of the scandalous paragraph [...] is requested by your Toni Simon."

Quotation signature:

Submission of Toni Simon to the Federal Minister of Justice, Thomas Dehler (1897–1967), 20 July 1951, Federal Archives Koblenz B 141/4072, page 106/155, quoted according to: Julia Noah Munier: Von "Ausweisung, Aktfotografien und politischem Engagement: Der Homosexuellenaktivist Emil Scheifele", blog article, website www.lsbttiq-bw.de, January 2022

Quotation

Apart from the activity of the few homophile groups established after 1945, there were numerous activist initiatives of individuals or loose associations in the 1950s, which have only recently received attention in research. Toni Simon's submission is probably the first initiative of a trans* person who openly took a stand vis-à-vis the political representatives of West Germany.

Toni Simon

Toni Simon (1887 Lengenfeld unterm Stein–1979 Ludwigsburg)

Toni Simon was well-known due to the brochure "Man or woman?", published in 1932. In 1937, Toni Simon was convicted by the Stuttgart Special Court of "perfidy". The application for compensation for their imprisonment in the Rottenburg/Neckar prison and the police jail and Welzheim concentration camp was rejected. In 1950, Toni Simon organised the first queer meetings in Stuttgart, had contacts to the "Kameradschaft die runde" and at an advanced age still procured erotic magazines in Denmark that were on the index in West Germany. To the question whether her grandchildren said grandpa or grandma, Simon replied: "You know, they just say Toni".

Klimmer photo

Caption:

Rudolf Klimmer (left) and James Steakley (born 1946), Professor for German Culture from Wisconsin

and activist for transatlantic gay emancipation at a meeting in East Berlin in 1976, Schwules Museum Berlin

Rudolf Klimmer

Dr Rudolf Klimmer (1905 Dresden–1977 Wuppertal)

The Dresden doctor was sentenced to imprisonment twice during the Nazi era under Paragraph 175 and was able to work as a doctor again in 1945. In 1949, he attempted to obtain recognition of the homosexual Nazi victims in the Soviet occupation zone. His initiative was rejected by the "Association of the Victims of the Nazi Regime". His attempts as a member of the Socialist Unity Party of [East] Germany to advocate the deletion of Paragraph 175 and a change in the negative attitude towards homosexuality in the Central Committee of his party, also failed. At the same time, he became a sought-after expert, pioneer and model of homosexual emancipation in East Germany.

"Homosexuality"

Caption:

Cover of the book *Die Homosexualität [Homosexuality]*, Hamburg 1958, Verlag Kriminalistik, Schwules Museum Berlin

Rudolf Klimmer did not receive any permission to print his book *Homosexuality as a biological-sociological issue* in East Germany. Consequently, he published it in the Hamburg Kriminalistik-Verlag. Sent from there to East Germany, it also became a leading source of expertise and a reference for emancipation efforts.

5.4 Spheres of action

After the end of the war, places of queer culture and opportunities to go out soon reappeared. Localities that officially described themselves as homo, bi or trans* meeting places were prohibited in East Germany. In West Germany, the vice squads registered all queer locals that advertised themselves. Suspicion of "fornication" or prostitution resulted in investigations and raids. The landlords were informers and safety guarantors for their guests. They had to deal with legal reality and official conditions: the procurement paragraph 180 of the German Criminal Code punished the creation of opportunities for "fornication", in some areas there was a police ban on (close) dancing. Before there were state-financed institutions for queer people, pub owners were the only ones who created and defended public and protected spaces.

Zum Steinernen Kännchen

Caption:

Pub "Zum Steinernen Kännchen", known as "Steine Kännche", Cologne, Am Perlenpfuhl 12, photographs of Hermann Claasen 1949, LVR-Landesmuseum Bonn, Photography Collection, Hermann Claasen estate, Copyright: VG Bildkunst

The beer and wine pub from the 1920s was destroyed in the Second World War, reopened in 1948 and closed in the 1950s. The proprietor was Elisabeth Oberndorfer, known as "de Mamm", later her

daughter Paula. Kissing and intimacies were prohibited and a good relationship was maintained with the police, which prevented raids. There were repeated attacks by rowdies.

Ellis Bierbar raid

Caption:

Report on a raid in "Ellis Bierbar" in Berlin-Kreuzberg, Skalitzer Strasse 102, in: *Berliner 7 Uhr Blatt*, 10 November 1957, Police History Collection Berlin

"Ellis Bierbar" opened in 1946, had many guests from the East Sector until the Berlin Wall was built in August 1961. It had the first "leather evenings" towards the end of the 1960s and was the film location in 1970 for Praunheim's film *It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, but the Society in Which He Lives*. The landlord Elisabeth "Elli" Hartung (1902–1988) was supported in the pub by her friends Hertha Weidner "Whiskey Ruth" and "the nurse".

Wielandseck

Caption:

Party in "Wielandseck", photograph 1959/60, Private Archive Rainer Hoffschildt, Hanover

The "Wielandseck" in Hanover became a well-known attraction far afield for homosexual men, women and transvestites. They came from Bielefeld, Osnabrück and Braunschweig and even by bus from Hamburg to celebrate here. If there was a risk of a police raid, the guests could flee via the toilets across the courtyard. The landlord Ludwig Meyer had made the grille in front of it "movable".

Ludwig Meyer

Caption:

Ludwig Meyer, photograph 1957, Private Archive Rainer Hoffschildt, Hanover

Ludwig Meyer (1903 Bielefeld–1975 Hamburg)

Ludwig Meyer, who worked as butcher in his father's business, was arrested twice during the Nazi era in Bielefeld under Paragraph 175, sent to Buchenwald concentration camp in 1938, then to Auschwitz and Mauthausen, where he was liberated in 1945. When Ludwig Meyer was once again sentenced to a prison sentence under Paragraph 175, he was deprived of his recognition as Jewish Nazi victim and claims to compensation. He moved to Hanover in 1953, where he opened a queer pub "Wielandseck". In 1961, he went to Hamburg, where he was found dead on 1 April 1975. The circumstances of his death were never resolved.

Heiner Gerstner

"Everyone had their regular place [in 'Wielandseck'] and all at once the stool was empty! Suicide. One of the guys, who had the biggest haulage business in Hanover, the son – suicide. Manfred, a well-known business from Hanover, I don't want to mention names, an only son, took a pistol. His life partner, who had a very tough time afterwards, put his head in a gas oven. I've experienced bad things and seen arrests all round by the police."

Quotation signature:

Interview with Heiner Gerstner (1935–2020), barman in "Wielandseck", on 4 November 2015, Archiv der anderen Erinnerungen, Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld Berlin



Gerda Kelch

Caption:

Gerda Kelch, Joe Luga (1920–2002), Zarah, at the front: probably Häns'chen (Hans Wahn) , photograph 1954, in: Joe Luga: *So bin ich. Bekenntnisse von Inge und Joe*, Hamburg Himmelstürmer Verlag, 2000

In 1947, the proprietor and eponym of the "Gerda Kelch" created a fashionable address for queer cabaret for decades with her West Berlin nightclub. Little is known about her. According to a contemporary, the former dancer was "a resolute woman with a short haircut, [...] always in an expensive suit. She had a very beautiful girlfriend, who was often in the pub and was very ladylike."

Advert

Caption:

"Gerda Kelch", advert in: *Amicus-Briefbund*, January 1952

The "Kelch" advertised in relevant newspapers for queer customers. A contemporary witness: "You sat on 'elegant iron' stools, artistically bent, steel pipe painted white and delicate green, which had probably been pulled out of the rubble." The recipe for success: the regular guests included artists who themselves also performed. They had already been active in the 1920s or, as newcomers, could also use the "Kelch" as a starting point.

Ingrid Liermann

Caption:

Ingrid Liermann in a trouser suit with her girlfriend, Hamburg 1950s, private collection

Ingrid Liermann (1926 Hamburg–2010 Hamburg)

As the daughter of an unmarried domestic servant, she grew up with her mother and had a welfare official as legal guardian. She was regarded as "difficult", was put in welfare institutions, ran away, and was sent to prison as a result, in 1944 sent to a Gestapo "labour education camp" and was declared legally incapable on account of "moral idiocy".

In the 1950s, she worked as a waitress, including in the "Ika-Stuben" which she took over in 1963 and ran until 1980. She lived in an old-age home until her death and received a pension of 150 marks as a recognised Nazi victim.

Die Libelle: Chemnitz – Nuremberg – Stuttgart

Caption:

Bar room of the "Libelle", Nuremberg, Wiesenstrasse 42, probably photograph of the Criminal Police Nuremberg around 1962, Stadtarchiv Stuttgart, 102/2-92-11, Amt für öffentliche Ordnung

Kurt Salzmann (1911–?) had already worked in a dance club called "Libelle" in his hometown of Chemnitz. He transferred this name to his Nuremberg pub, which became a meeting point for homosexual men and was monitored by the police. When he also wanted to open a "Libelle" in Stuttgart, the local authorities made enquiries to the Nuremberg police and refused Salzmann a licence.

Roxi-Bar pub Hamburg

Caption:

Men dancing in "Roxi-Bar" in Hamburg, photograph around 1952, Staatsarchiv Hamburg, 331-1 2678

The "Roxi-Bar" belonged to the queer pub scene in St. Pauli, which was under constant undercover police observation of the "Homo" investigation commission. While it was still possible for men to dance with other men in the 1950s, "dancing bans" were issued in 1960, including for the "Roxi-Bar". Its landlord Werner Landers (1930–2001) then organised bus trips to the "Wielandseck" in Hanover, where dancing was permitted.

Visiting card

Caption:

"IKA-Stuben" in Hamburg, visiting card 1970s, private collection

The "Ika-Stuben" was a popular lesbian pub, known far beyond Hamburg, which even attracted visitors from abroad. It was disguised as a patisserie to protect itself against termination by the landlord and against attacks by passers-by. The pub existed until the 1990s.

Quotation

"And little Gitta from the Roxi-Bar, she was also in the concentration camp. Also survived the concentration camp well. And then she was also charged because of 175. She went to Harburg, the Elbe Lateral Canal must be there. And she drowned herself there. And the little Eva, who was also behind the bar in the Roxi-Bar. She hung herself in Sachsenwald. All after the war!"

Quotation signature:

Werner Landers on suicides of trans*people after 1945, in: Dorothee von Diepenbroick u.a., *Verzaubert. Lesben und Schwule erzählen Geschichte*, Trigon Film Hamburg 1994

Robby-Bar advert

Caption:

"Robby-Bar", advert in: *Der Weg zu Freundschaft und Toleranz*, April 1956

Robert Hillmann opened the "Robby-Bar" in 1955 for gay customers. The "demonstration fights" in which young men clothed only in "triangle swim trunks" wrestled with each other became famous. When the landlord advertised this nationally, investigations and police raids occurred that forced him to close. The pub in today's Fuggerstrasse 3 has been known as "Tabasco" since 1961 and is a pub for sex workers.

Hand-drawn police sketch

Caption:

Hand-drawn sketch by the West Berlin police in preparation for a planned raid in the "Robby Bar", 15 November 1957, Police History Collection Berlin, Signatur 55.25

These instructions were the result of undercover investigations: the police officials to be posted are marked, windows, front and back entrance to be secured on account of the risk of flight; telephone and electricity meters to make it impossible to warn associated pubs or escape in the dark and the storage location of prohibited erotic photographs. In the raid on 27 November 1957, 71 people were encountered, of whom 39 were "taken into custody".



"Chez Nous" ensemble

Caption:

Ensemble of the "Chez Nous" at a guest performance in the "Bar Celona" in Hamburg, photograph around 1965. From left to right: Ramonita Vargas (Raymond Vargas, born 1924), Marcel André (Walter Endres, 1912–1980), his friend Oswald Drescher, unknown, La Domino (René Devingnac/Duvingnac, ?–2011), front: unknown, Pepa Darena (Maurice Abadie, 1926–2022), private collection, donation by Madame Kio (Cornél Hédli, 1942–2019)

The "Chez Nous" opened in 1958 in West Berlin. It became Germany's best known drag queen theatre with an inhouse and guest performance ensemble, international artists and its own series of vinyl records. The artists pictured defied everyday repressions against behaviour deviating from the norm, homosexuals and trans* persons. The Berlin Gestapo had conducted investigations against an ensemble member in 1941 and 1943, the Austrian Walter Endres (second from left), with an unknown outcome. After 1945 he was convicted under the Austrian homosexual paragraph 209.

Epilogue

Thanks to the cooperation with many researchers, the exhibition can present numerous new research results. Nevertheless, it is only a snapshot of the historical examination of the queer past. More research is required in archives and estates, especially regarding biographies.

This also includes the history of the long-lasting effects of Paragraph 175. For example, any discussion of its amendment was associated with renewed considerations of the criminality of homosexual relationships of women and the privileged status of heteronormative family models.

In addition, the continued application of Paragraph 175 not only hindered and delayed remembrance of the Nazi victims but also queer emancipation efforts. This paragraph repeatedly blocked the achievement of equal social rights. The special penal law for homosexuals was abolished in East Germany in 1988, in the reunified Germany only in 1994 as part of the harmonisation of laws. The exhibition demonstrates just how much the rejection of sexual and gender diversity is also linked to other forms of discrimination, such as racism, antisemitism and xenophobia. Since the 1990s, social awareness of sexual and gender diversity has grown and with it the realisation that queer history is part of German history.

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Content Biography Folders

Adele Haas

9 September 1907 Strassenhaus near Neuwied—after 1943

Housekeeper, concentration camp prisoner, person of ambiguous gender

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Adele Haas, undated photo Landesarchiv NRW, Gerichte Rep. 300/249

Adele Haas was born on 9 September 1907 in Strassenhaus near Neuwied into a family of actors with many children. She identified as a girl and later as a woman. From a medical perspective her gender was ambiguous.

Sexual contact with men in August 1935 led to an indictment under Paragraph 175 of the German Penal Code. A physician and the Public Prosecutor's Office wanted Adele to be deemed a man for the purposes of Paragraph 175. The court disagreed and acquitted her.

In 1940 Adele was placed in "preventive custody" by the Criminal Police for continuing to wear women's clothing. She was deemed to be "antisocial" and placed in the men's concentration camp in Sachsenhausen, before being taken to Flossenbürg. In 1942, Adele was released on the condition that she undergo gender reassignment surgery. She pursued this goal until 1943 and then disappeared without a trace.

What we know about her life was kept in a Nazi file at the "Forensic Biology Records Office" (Kriminalbiologische Sammelstelle) in Cologne.

Being a woman

Adele had identified as female since her childhood and rejected the role of boy that was assigned to her. She broke off a hairdressing apprenticeship. Then Adele, her sister and her brother-in-law, who was an actor, moved to Koblenz, where Adele ran their household. From 1926 onwards she only wore women's clothing. She had obtained a licence to do that from the Koblenz police, who decided that her gender was "ambiguous" at the pre-licence examination. The consensus was that her physical constitution was "more female than male".

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Copy the curriculum vitae that Adele Haas wrote.

Landesarchiv NRW, Gerichte Rep. 300/249, p. 19 (Forensic Biology Records Office file, Cologne)

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Excerpt from a letter from the Koblenz Police Commissioner to the local court dated 12 September 1935.

Landesarchiv NRW, Gerichte Rep. 300/249, p. 4 (Forensic Biology Records Office file, Cologne)

Summer 1935

In the warmer months of the year, Adele accompanied her brother-in-law, who operated a caterpillar ride at fairs and other village festivals. In the summer of 1935 they came to Dümmlinghausen in the Bergisches Land region near Cologne. At the Dümmlinghausen fair Adi met two men. In a later police interrogation they stated that they had sex – “intercrural intercourse”. The men contracted gonorrhoea after the fair, blamed Adele and reported her to the police. She was arrested upon her return to Koblenz.

Under arrest

At the beginning of August 1935, Adele was transferred from the remand prison in Koblenz to the “Lindenburg” in Cologne (today: Cologne University Hospital) and examined for sexually transmitted diseases. No sexually transmitted disease was detected. In the police interrogation Adele stated that she only had sex with the two men at the fair to protect herself – the men had been pushy and that was the only way she could get rid of them. To prepare an indictment under Paragraph 175 of the German Penal Code, the public prosecutor’s office enquired about the gender of the accused.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Memo from the Cologne Public Prosecutor’s Office in the preliminary proceedings against Adele Haas.

Landesarchiv NRW, Gerichte Rep. 300/249, p. 2 (Forensic Biology Records Office file, Cologne)

The memo from the Public Prosecutor's Office illustrates the attempt by the prosecuting authority to gender Adele as a man in order to make a prosecution under Paragraph 175 possible.

At the psychiatric clinic

On 5 August 1935, Adele was also examined by psychiatrists at the "Lindenburg" clinical institution in Cologne on suspicion of having a "psychopathic personality". The psychiatrist described her appearance, even her perfume, but also her self-confidence and her resistance to imprisonment.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Landesarchiv NRW, Gerichte Rep. 300/249, p. 23 (Forensic Biology Records Office file, Cologne)

"Forensic biology examinations"

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Excerpt from the "forensic biology questionnaire" on "information provided by person under investigation", Landesarchiv NRW, Gerichte Rep. 300/249, p. 10 (Forensic Biology Records Office file, Cologne)

During the forensic biology examination, Adele spoke of an existing "hermaphroditic disposition", which had given her parents cause for great concern. She initially refused to answer any further questions.

Reasonable doubt

In November 1935, the court acquittal and the result of the forensic biology examination were filed at the Forensic Biology Records Office by the head of the Records Office and prison medical officer Dr Kapp. The file states: "female stigmata", and "does not consider himself a homosexual, but a woman".

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Landesarchiv NRW, Gerichte Rep. 300/249, p. 18 (Forensic Biology Records Office file, Cologne)

Forensic biology clinics

In November 1937, by order of the Reich Ministry of Justice, a central “Forensic Biology Service” was set up with 73 existing “forensic biology clinics” and 9 superordinate “forensic biology records offices”. The records offices were tasked with “recording hereditary dispositions and personality traits” of prisoners and convicts in the justice system.

The forensic biology records offices became a source of information for psychiatric and surgical clinics that enabled them to expedite sterilisations and castrations.

Concentration camp imprisonment

After her court acquittal in 1935 Adele continued wearing women’s clothing, which resulted in her being placed in “preventive custody” by the Criminal Police in 1940. She was deemed to be “antisocial” and placed in the men’s concentration camp in Sachsenhausen, before being taken to Flossenbürg. Her release was conditional upon Adele undergoing gender reassignment surgery. Adele set all her hopes on that surgery, but the police pressured her to wear men’s clothing and find a job, something which proved impossible however, because nobody was willing to employ her.

Desperation and hope

After failing to find work Adele was at risk of being re-imprisoned in a concentration camp. Then a medical examination by the labour exchange in Koblenz gave her hope for optimism because it certified that Adele was not a man, and that she would be able to integrate into working life after gender reassignment surgery. In 1942, she contacted the head of the Forensic Biology Records Office in Cologne, who had examined her in 1935.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Letter from Adele Haas dated 26 December 1942 to the Government Medical Officer Dr Kapp,
Landesarchiv NRW, Gerichte Rep. 300/249, p. 44 (Forensic Biology Records Office file, Cologne)

This letter, in which she asks for a “cost estimate” for gender reassignment surgery, is signed “Ady Haas”. Two photographs of her wearing women’s clothing are enclosed. Her request to return the photos was not complied with, and her wish to have gender reassignment surgery was not fulfilled.

Government Medical Officer Dr Kapp

Franz Kapp (1898–1980), an active Catholic and trained psychiatrist, became a resident physician at the Klingelpütz prison in Cologne in 1931, where he set up a forensic biology investigation centre. As head of the Forensic Biology Records Office, he called for the sterilisation of prostitutes, vagrants and petty criminals and was a sought-after “expert witness” in court.

Retired in 1948 and categorised as a “Nazi sympathiser” in the denazification process thanks to influential advocates, he continued his medical career as head physician at the Franz Sales House in Essen until 1955. He then became head of the Family Counselling Centre in Essen.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Adele Haas, undated photo contained in a letter to Government Medical Officer Dr Kapp in Cologne, Landesarchiv NRW, Gerichte Rep. 300/249

Anticipation

In March 1943, Adele contacted the resident physician at Klingelpütz prison in Cologne and Head of the Forensic Biology Records Office, Dr Kapp, again. She needed documents from him for the upcoming gender reassignment surgery at Kemperhof Hospital in Koblenz.

This letter is the last written account of Adele’s life.

[PICTURE]

Caption: Landesarchiv NRW, Gerichte Rep. 300/249, p. 46 (Forensic Biology Records Office file, Cologne)

Author: Marcus Velke-Schmidt

Further reading:

Klöppel, Ulrike (2014): “Intersex im Nationalsozialismus. Ein Überblick über den Forschungsbedarf” [Intersex under National Socialism: an overview of research requirements], in: Michael Schwartz (Ed.): *Homosexuelle im Nationalsozialismus* [Homosexuals under National Socialism], Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag (publisher), p. 107–114

After the editorial deadline for the accompanying booklet (November 29, 2023) detailing the persecution story of A. Haas, a person born intersex, new research findings emerged. The Magnus Hirschfeld Foundation considers the previously unknown details compiled by Jako Wende about Adele Haas's life during National Socialism and the postwar period to be relevant findings. They justify this addendum and a change to the name of Adele Haas.

In 1948/49, the Koblenz District Court granted the request to correct the first name and gender entry in the civil registry: Adele Haas, female. – According to these documents, naming someone with a name other than Adele Haas is an act of degradation.

On March 5, 1943, the police issued an "order for systematic police surveillance": Adele was not allowed to leave her neighborhood without permission, was not allowed to wear dresses or skirts in public, was required to leave a key to her apartment at the police station, and was required to report to the police station every Sunday morning at 6:00 a.m. After a few weeks, the police declared they no longer had the capacity to monitor her and interned her in the Schirmeck-Vorbruck security camp. Her mother's request for release was unsuccessful.

On May 24, 1943, Adele was transferred to the Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp, where she reported torture and inhumane conditions.

On August 7, 1943, she was deported again, this time to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, where she was forced to perform theater labor and experienced torture and sexual violence. Attorney Wilhelm Meyers attempted to free Adele from Sachsenhausen and agreed with a senior police officer that she would be released if she submitted to forced sterilization in the camp. However, a letter to this effect never reached Adele because it was concealed by the SS.

On February 10, 1945, she was transferred to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, where she contracted typhus.

After her liberation by the British, she was cared for in the former SS buildings and finally released in July 1945.

From September 8, 1945, to August 23, 1948, the French military government again held her in custody because, as she herself reported, she was accused of killing French prisoners in the concentration camp. During this time, Adele survived physical and psychological violence. Three applications for so-called reparations (in 1951, around 1960, and in 1977) were rejected. In 1951, she wrote, "I was persecuted as a hermaphrodite for racial reasons."

On July 25, 1979, Adele Haas died of a heart attack in Trier

Roman Igler

(1913 Posen/today Poznań/Poland–1965 Poznań)

"... afflicted by the German disease":

Auschwitz – Buchenwald – Mittelbau-Dora – Ravensbrück

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Police photograph contained in Roman Igler's prisoner's file, Auschwitz Concentration Camp 1943, APMAB Museum (Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau), Oświęcim, Sign. DBu 3a/10/52. p. 99–100

Roman Igler was one of the Polish men sentenced by a German court under Paragraph 175 of the German Penal Code. He endured imprisonment at a total of four concentration camps.

In 1941, the Posen Local Court sentenced Roman, who was 28 at the time, to two years of imprisonment for "three incidents" of fornication with men. When he had served his sentence, the Gestapo arrested him again and transported him to the Auschwitz I concentration camp in September 1943. He was made to wear a red triangle badge, which marked him as a political prisoner.

In June 1944 Roman was taken by the SS to the Buchenwald concentration camp, and from there he was transferred to the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp. In April 1945, just before the end of the war, he was transported to Ravensbrück concentration camp. After his liberation from the camp, he returned to Posen.

Roman served time in two jails, one penal colony and four concentration camps for masturbation with other men. He kept the real reason for his arrest in 1941 secret because homosexuals were also extremely ostracised in Poland after the war.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

The court decision in the criminal case against Roman Igler on 27 March 1941, Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu, Zakład Karny we Wronkach, Sign. 14221, p. 9–10

Roman was sentenced together with Leo Zyburtowicz, who was six years older. The court decision documented in detail the places where the men had “participated in reciprocal sexual acts”: on the banks of the river Warthe, in apartments, in a corridor and in public lavatories. The fact that the “acts of fornication” had taken place in public places meant that the court could impose a harsher sentence.

“Poles and Jews shall also be punished if they violate the German penal laws or commit an offence that deserves punishment in accordance with the basic principles of a German penal law according to the requirements of the incorporated eastern territory states. [...] Poles and Jews may be sentenced to jail, fined or have their assets seized.”

Excerpt from the Decree on the Application of Criminal Law to Poles and Jews in the annexed eastern territories, German Reich Law Gazette (RGBl.) 1941 I, p. 759f.

The decree entered into force on 30 December 1941 and was effective for the occupied eastern territories, which included the city of Posen. When Roman was sentenced on 27 March 1941 for three incidents of fornication with men, the decree had not yet entered into force. However, this did not stop the German courts from sentencing Polish citizens according to German law on the basis of the “Poland Decrees”.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, photographer unknown, APMAB Museum (Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau), Oświęcim

Auschwitz concentration camp

Auschwitz concentration camp opened in 1940. Between then and the beginning of 1945 the SS deported 1.3 million people to what had become a death camp for European Jews.

One hundred and thirty-nine of the around 400,000 registered prisoners had been sentenced under Paragraph 175, and 14 of them were Jews. The youngest was only fifteen years old at the time of his sentencing. He was murdered at the camp at the age of eighteen.

When Roman arrived in Auschwitz in September 1943 he was made to wear a red triangle, not a pink triangle, which denoted that he was a political prisoner, not a homosexual – a circumstance that may well have saved his life.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Police photograph in the prisoner's file, Auschwitz concentration camp 1943, APMAB Museum (Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau), Oświęcim, Sign. DBu 3a/10/52. p. 99-100

Roman was designated a "Polit[ical] Pole" on his prisoner record at Buchenwald concentration camp. Record cards like these were created for all prisoners at the main concentration camps. They were like personal profiles and also included a description of the prisoner. For example, Roman's record card states that he is 172 cm tall and blonde with a slim build. The "character traits" field is empty.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Buchenwald concentration camp 1945, Buchenwald Memorial Collection

Buchenwald concentration camp

When Roman was taken to the Buchenwald concentration camp on 22 June 1944, the majority of prisoners were malnourished and many of them were afflicted by sickness and disease. Buchenwald, near Weimar, opened in 1937 and could accommodate a total of around 280,000 prisoners at its satellite camps. From 1942 onward, these camps were primarily used for the war economy.

Red triangle prisoners, most of whom were German Reich citizens, were housed in the punishment battalion barracks and assigned to heavy forced labour at the quarry.

Mittelbau Dora concentration camp

On 22 September 1944, Roman was taken to the Mittelbau concentration camp in northern Thuringia. The prisoners there were housed in underground tunnel facilities. They worked on assembling the V2 rockets or were assigned to mining tunnels for the underground protection of armaments production facilities.

Mittelbau was one of the few camps where homosexual prisoners were permitted to hold official positions, presumably due to their language skills. When armaments production ceased in March 1945, the SS transported the prisoners to other camps, including the men's camp at the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

The Ravensbrück women's concentration camp, probably ca. 1940, photographer unknown, Ravensbrück Memorial Site/Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten, photo no. 1642

The Ravensbrück men's camp

The men's camp, consisting of five dormitory barracks and one utility building, opened in 1941. It accommodated an average of 2,000 male prisoners. Most prisoners were assigned to construction work for the neighbouring women's camp. When the camps in eastern Germany were evacuated in 1944/45, the number of male prisoners in Ravensbrück increased to around 20,000, 168 of them Germans who had been persecuted for homosexuality.

Roman was one of the 3,900 prisoners from Mittelbau-Dora who arrived in Ravensbrück on 14 April 1945. He was transported there with other prisoners on fifty open freight cars and spent a total of nine days travelling. By the time the train arrived at Ravensbrück the prisoners were so weak that many of them collapsed.

"The 'cat and mouse game' that began on the first day at the camp generally ended with the victim's death. The poor creatures were showered with disgust. They were not warlike by nature and, well aware of their natural weakness, so they retreated at the first blasphemy. When the abuse began, they were no longer able to distinguish between cowardice, guilt or shame."

"Karl M., a former bookseller, felt that he belonged to 'the special variety of the third sex'. He tried to justify his 'ethical view' with examples from history and literature. He was not a bad person and trudged through the yellow, emaciated sand with a tenacious will. [...] Three months later, the camp also flushed this sinner into obscurity with an invalid transport."

"K [...], the bashful boy, twirled around on the barrack floor like a Germain Degas ballerina, waving his tulle skirt, which came from the warehouse. The soul of a flirtatious, self-confident personality. Was this the shy worker, clever and without guile? For many years afterwards, he remained the workhorse, eking out a living as best he could. After his first play on the Ravensbrück stage he was employed in the kitchen as a potato peeler and withdrew inconspicuously."

Karl Gerber: *KZ Lagerbuch. [Concentration Camp Stock Ledger] Welzheim – Dachau – Ravensbrück*, unpublished manuscript, Nürtingen 1949, Ravensbrück Memorial Site, p. 35, 34f and 58

Karl Gerber (1906–1983) is regarded as the chronicler of the Ravensbrück men's camp. Persecuted as a communist from 1933 onwards, he was a prisoner in Ravensbrück from 1941 to 1945. During his time at the camp he worked as a block senior and a labourer. His reports on homosexual fellow prisoners are more differentiated than others. His manuscript, completed in 1949, remains unpublished to this day.

Authors: Insa Eschebach and Joanna Ostrowska

Further reading:

Joanna Ostrowska (2023): *Jene. Homosexuelle während des Zweiten Weltkrieges*, [Those People: Homosexuals during the Second World War] Berlin, Metropol Verlag, p. 129 ff.

Elsa Conrad née Rosenberg

9 May 1887 Berlin–19 February 1963 Hanau

Club proprietor – concentration camp prisoner – emigrant

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Elsa Conrad at the Moringen women's concentration camp, probably at the time of her arrival there on 14 January 1937

Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv Hannover, Hann.158 Moringen, Acc.105/96 no. 47

Elsa Conrad

Elsa Rosenberg was born out of wedlock on 9 May 1887 as the daughter of Bertha Rosenberg (1861–1940), a Jewish seamstress. Nothing is known about Elsa's father. In 1910 she married the waiter Wilhelm Conrad (1881–1941), who went on to become a pubkeeper. They divorced in 1931.

Elsa was an important protagonist in Berlin's lesbian sub-culture of the 1920s. Together with her business partner and friend Amalie Rothaug (1890–1984), she ran several establishments for lesbian women, the ultimate one being the chic "Mali und Igel" club. It was closed down by the police shortly after the Nazis came to power. Arrested for allegedly making statements opposing the regime, Elsa was given a prison sentence in December 1935 and then placed into "protective custody". She was released in February 1938 after spending over a year at the Morigen women's concentration camp on the condition that she left Germany before the end of the year. Due to a lack of available options and because other destinations such as Palestine were not accessible to her, she emigrated to East Africa, initially to Tanzania. From 1943 onwards she lived in Nairobi (Kenya), where she worked in various jobs including as a nanny and a salesperson. In 1961 she returned to West Germany, severely ill, and passed away two years later.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Advertisement in *Die Freundschaft*, no. 18, 1922 and no. 19, 1926, Schwules Museum Berlin

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Advertisement in *Die Fanfare*, no. 47, 1924, Schwules Museum Berlin

As these advertisements in the gay and lesbian press confirm, Elsa ran these three establishments for a while, though they probably didn't exist for long. The emergence of the Weimer Republic brought with it new opportunities to create lesbian meeting places. Elsa appears to have been an active participant in this process from the very beginning. The fact that she had completed a commercial apprenticeship was probably an advantage.

From 1921 to 1925 she ran the "Verona-Diele" club at Wilmersdorfer Strasse 77 in Berlin. Known as the "Diele", it was originally an establishment frequented by homosexual men, but soon became popular with lesbians.

Elsa – and presumably also Amalie Rothaug – took over the "Meyer-Stube", a little wine bar on a Kurfürstendamm side street which also had famous artists among its regulars, in 1925.

Amalie Rothaug née Röhrs (1890 Hamburg–1984 Orlando/Florida)

Amalie Röhrs was born on 8 February 1890 in Hamburg and raised in a family of Protestant merchants. Her marriage at a young age to the artist Georg Rothaug (1877–1941) ended in divorce a few years later. In 1907 Amalie moved to Berlin and completed a commercial apprenticeship. She and Elsa must have met by 1919 at the latest, because they shared a house in the Charlottenburg district of Berlin from then on.

Amalie and Elsa, former girlfriends and business partners, probably didn't cross paths again after their arrest in 1935. Amalie emigrated to New York in 1936. She settled in Boston, applied for American citizenship after the war and died in Florida at the age of 94 in 1984.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Collage published in *Der Notschrei* magazine, Vienna, May 1933

Schwules Museum Berlin

This collage of queer pubs, clubs and bars in Berlin was published in the Vienna Nazi magazine *Der Notschrei*. Bottom right: "Mali und Igel" (view of the exterior with the name sign next to the door).

In 1927, Elsa and Amalie took over this club in West Berlin, using their own nicknames, "Mali" and "Igel", to form the name. "Mali und Igel" was located at Lutherstrasse 16 (today Martin-Luther-Strasse 2).

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Aleister Crowley, Mali and Igel, 1931 (oil painting)

Copyright Ordo Templi Orientis, John Zorn Collection

One of the rare male patrons of "Mali und Igel" was British occultist, writer and painter Aleister Crowley (1875–1947), who lived in Berlin between 1930 and 1932. Aleister's oil painting – which probably depicts Mali on the right – was one of around seventy of his works shown at an exhibition hosted by art dealer Karl Nierendorf (1889–1947) in autumn 1931.

Berlin's lesbian women

The establishment had two rooms and a small dance floor. It was the location of the exclusive women's club "Monbijou des Westens" which had around 600 members and was described by author Ruth Roellig (1878–1969) as "by far the most interesting gathering of lesbian women in Berlin. [...] The club can be found in the upmarket location of West Berlin – skilfully managed by two smart friends, Mali and Igel, one a real garçonne type, fine and cognisant, the other more of a wanton street urchin, [...]. The large windows are all covered on the outside [...]. This is a place where the elite of the intellectual world mingle with movie stars, singers, actresses, artists and female academics," wrote Roellig in her club guide *Berlins lesbische Frauen* [Berlin's lesbian women] (1928).

Destruction of livelihoods

When the Nazis took over power, it was not long before they put an end to the business activities of Elsa, Amalie and many other club operators. An order issued by the Prussian Minister for the Interior Hermann Göring on 23 February 1933 provided the police with the tools to "tackle sleazy districts and homosexual establishments". By early March 1933, fourteen Berlin clubs had been closed down, including "Mali und Igel". As a consequence, the two club proprietors lost their means of making a living. Amalie apparently worked as a housekeeper in the years that followed, while Elsa lived from her savings and by subletting a room in her apartment.

Protective custody and concentration camp sentence

Elsa made no secret of her dislike of the new regime. Both her subtenant and a person she had met on her travels reported her because under Nuremberg Race Laws she was classified as a "half Jew".

On 5 October 1935 she was arrested and on 18 December 1935 sentenced to 15 months of imprisonment by Berlin's Special Court I under the Treachery Act of 1934 for "speaking out against the Reich government". She served her sentence at the women's prisons on Barnimstrasse and Kantstrasse in Berlin. When she was released on 4 January 1937, the Gestapo immediately placed Elsa into "protective custody". On 14 January she was taken to Moringen, the first women's concentration camp that opened in Prussia (today Lower Saxony) in autumn 1933. The prisoners there were political opponents of the Nazi state, Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses and women who had been discredited by the authorities as "antisocials" or "career criminals".

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Elsa Conrad at the Moringen women's concentration camp, probably when she arrived there on 14 January 1937

Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv Hannover, Hann.158 Moringen, Acc.105/96 no. 47

Elsa was one of the prisoners who had her photograph taken at the Moringen women's concentration camp. This is the only surviving photo of her.

Excerpt from the protective custody order dated 5 January 1937:

"Conrad has lesbian tendencies. Both during her marriage and afterwards, when she ran a branch of the Hermann Meyer & Co. spirits company on Xantener Strasse and later the "Monbijou des Westens" establishment at the intersection of Lutherstrasse and Wormserstrasse, she had relationships with lesbian women; among other things she had a fourteen-year-long affair with a certain Bertha Stenzel."

Nazi opponent, "half Jew", lesbian

The protective custody/concentration camp order stated: "It is the combination of Conrad's political opposition, notoriety as the lesbian proprietor of a club that was famous beyond Berlin and her so-called 'half Jew' status that led to her concentration camp sentence." Elsa "obviously pretended to be Aryan and insulted the Führer and other members of the government in a callous way." She also concealed her sexual orientation. The Gestapo was clearly well informed about her intimate relationships. That would suggest that Elsa was included in the police authorities' "Homo Register", even though women were not subject to Paragraph 175 of the German Penal Code.

Further reading:

Schoppmann, Claudia (2018): "Die weitaus interessanteste Vereinigung lesbischer Frauen Berlins". Die Clubwirtin Elsa Conrad (1897–1963), ["The most interesting gathering of lesbian women in Berlin by far." Club landlady Elsa Conrad (1897–1963), in: MANEO (Ed.), *Kiezgeschichte* [Neighbourhood Tale] Vol. 2, Berlin, author's edition, p. 102–119.

Author: Claudia Schoppmann

Margot Johanna Liu, née Holzmann

16 January 1912 Ratibor/today Racibórz/Poland–1 June 1993 London/England

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Margot Liu, David Uri Private Collection, USA

Marta Halusa

3 July 1910 Brunsbüttelkoog/today Brunsbüttel/Dithmarschen–24 July 1999 London/England

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Marta Halusa, David Uri Private Collection, USA

Non-conformity – persecution – solidarity

Margot Holzmann and Marta Halusa were dancers who met and fell in love during a performance of "Alcazar" at a Hamburg vaudeville theatre in the early 1930s. They moved to Berlin as a couple. When the Nazis came into power they were persecuted: Margot for antisemitic reasons, and both of them for prostitution, "lesbian activity" and anti-fascism. When Margot married a waiter named Chi-Lan Liu (1906–1951) and took on his surname, obtaining Chinese citizenship in 1941, she at least gained some measure of protection against antisemitic persecution. Margot and Marta remained a couple despite the marriage; they were repeatedly denounced and arrested. They were both very lucky to survive Nazism. In 1949 they emigrated to England, where Marta later converted to Judaism. After years of fighting for "compensation" payments, they spent the rest of their lives in a small house in London. They are buried in a double grave at Edgwarebury Cemetery.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Promotional card featuring Margot Holzmann as the dancer "Pepita", approx. 1936/1937, photographer unknown, Margot Liu's compensation file, no. 64829

A montage of several photos of Margot served as a promotional card for her future career as a solo dancer. The picture series was presumably produced in English specifically for the international

market. Margot may have been considering emigration for quite a while, but Switzerland rejected her application for an entry and residence permit on 16 February 1939.

[PICTURE]

Caption: Promotional card for Margot Holzmänn, ca. 1936/1937, photographer unknown, David Uri Private Collection, USA

Margot let herself be photographed as an eccentric dancer performing unconventional acrobatic figures with mid-length hair and wearing a slit dress. Even in her teens Margot dreamed of becoming a dancer, but she had to train as an infant nurse before her father would give her permission to attend ballet school.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

3) Promotional card for Marta Halusa as "Peter", ca. 1936/1937, photographer unknown, David Uri Private Collection, USA

Marta Halusa, who was called "Peter" by Margot and used the pronoun "she", presented herself – in the same style as Margot's advertising card – as an androgynous dancer with a tailcoat, top hat and short-cropped hair. The slogan "acrobatic & step unheard" could refer to an artistic version of tap dancing.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Promotional card featuring Margot Holzmänn and Marta Halusa as "Pepita & Peter", ca. 1936/1937, photographer unknown, Margot Liu's compensation file, no. 64829

The promotional card, which combines Margot's and Marta's photo series, shows them performing as a couple, with Margot appearing to take on the role of a woman in a heterosexual context through her female clothing. Marta portrays a masculine interpretation of herself in a tailcoat and top hat.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Marta Halusa and Margot Holzmänn on 15 April 1939 on their balcony in Berlin, probably in the Schöneberg district, photographer unknown, David Uri Private Collection, USA

This photo documents the couple's everyday life in their shared flat, a place where they felt safe, at least for a while. Sitting on a balcony chair, Margot is holding her dog in front of her, while Marta sits

casually with one leg on the armrest, leaning on her partner's shoulder. Both are smiling at the camera. Photos like these were taken deliberately – as mementos and also as signs of courage.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Marta Halusa, Margot Liu, Chi-Lan Liu (left to right), wedding on 13 November 1941 in Berlin, photographer unknown, David Uri Private Collection, USA

Margot gained Chinese citizenship through her marriage. As a result, the order to join the forced labour system on 13 November 1941 was revoked. In the wedding photo it looks as if Margot Liu has married two people, with Marta and Chi-Lan as the grooms, facing each other, assuming similar physical stances behind the bride, who is seated between them.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Record of the Criminal Inspection M II 2 dated 21 October 1942, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Pr. Rep. 030-02-02, no. 90

Even though female homosexuality was not criminalised by law under the Nazi dictatorship, women were still persecuted for their lesbian lifestyles. In Margot's police record, for example, "suspicion of lesbian activity" is referred to as a "criminal act". The so-called "Homosexual Department" tried to construct a prosecutable offence for lesbian women. (417)

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Peter and Margot at "Femina-Palast" in Berlin, 1946, photographer unknown, David Uri Private Collection, USA

Margot and Marta's photo album contains pictures showing the couple as survivors of the Nazi era: in 1946, the two women visited "Femina-Palast" in Berlin. They were familiar with the wild, legendary nightlife location from previous visits, and also from their own performances there before their persecution by the Nazis. (334)

[PICTURE]

Caption:

The grave shared by the couple at Edgwarebury Cemetery, London 2010, photo David Uri, David Uri Private Collection, USA

Margot and Marta expressed their wish to document their lifelong bond even after death by arranging to be laid to rest in a double grave. To make this possible, Marta converted to Judaism in the 1980s. They are buried together at Edgwarebury Jewish Cemetery in north London. "Mocki" is the rather rarely used pet name for Margot.

Denounced by neighbours

Denunciation was a powerful instrument used by the Nazis to force potentially lesbian women into the focus of persecution to which they were not explicitly exposed under criminal law. Margot and Marta were repeatedly reported to the police by people in their neighbourhood: because a Jewish woman was being harboured by a non-Jewish woman, because the two were in a lesbian relationship and because they were distributing anti-fascist leaflets. As a result of the denunciations, Margot and Marta were interrogated and repeatedly imprisoned, harassed, monitored and/or blackmailed for sexual favours.

Protecting the lesbian relationship

Margot and Marta pleaded guilty to "commercial fornication" (prostitution) – both were convicted and sentenced. However, both women emphatically denied being in a lesbian relationship. This was probably the only way they could protect their relationship and ward off attacks. Other criminal files dealing with lesbianism show that the police would make them describe sexual acts in great detail. Margot and Marta made no secret of the fact that they belonged together to their friends and relatives.

Persecution under the Nazis

Margot was primarily persecuted by antisemites for being Jewish. Together, they were persecuted as prostitutes, as lesbians and as anti-fascists for distributing "anti-state propaganda". Marta was also accused of being a non-Jew helping a Jewish woman. The police used to put cards in a special card index documenting women accused of homosexual behaviour that could be used for later prosecution if necessary. The information on those cards had both racially and morally objectionable overtones.

No entitlement to compensation

Margot and Marta spent many years attempting to get their claims for restitution and reimbursement recognised by the so-called Compensation Office in Berlin, and they had to provide detailed evidence of the persecution they had suffered. The Compensation Office employees didn't believe that the health problems both women suffered were the result of imprisonment or abuse. Lesbians who may also have been involved in prostitution would probably not have been eligible to claim any compensation at all for injustices suffered, so Margot and Marta took care to ensure that was kept secret.

Text: Ingeborg Boxhammer

Further reading:

Boxhammer, Ingeborg (2015): Marta Halusa und Margot Liu – Die lebenslange Liebe zweier Tänzerinnen, [Marta Halusa and Margot Liu – the lifelong love of two dancers], Jüdische Miniaturen, Berlin: Hentrich & Hentrich

Kurt Brüssow

(9 December 1910 Stettin/today Szczecin/Poland–14 March 1988 Penzberg/Bavaria)

Actor, concentration camp prisoner, family man

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Kurt Brüssow, ca. 1947, Jürgen Wenke Collection

Kurt Brüssow worked as a pastry chef in Greifswald until 1931, when he began working as an actor at the local theatre. He became a confident homosexual man. After being denounced by the theatre's janitor in 1937, he was prosecuted under Paragraph 175 of the German Penal Code, lost his job and became a travelling salesman. Further criminal proceedings followed. He was locked up, jailed and spent time at a "Moorlager" labour camp. After that, in 1941, he was sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where he underwent a forced "voluntary castration". Thanks to the vehement efforts of his parents, he was released and returned to his family in March 1944.

In 1946 Kurt married. He was recognised as a victim of fascism on the island of Rügen. An attempt to relaunch his acting career ended in failure. Then he and his family moved to Munich. Kurt was asked to stand as a witness in the Auschwitz trials of the 1960s, but was denied any compensation in West Germany for his concentration camp imprisonment due to his homosexuality.

End of his acting career

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Greifswald Theatre, November 2022, former workplace of the actor Kurt Brüssow, photo Jürgen Wenke

In 1937, the actor lost his job at the Greifswald Theatre due to his Paragraph 175 conviction and was expelled from the Imperial Theatre Chamber (Reichstheaterkammer). This meant a professional ban for the passionate theatre man that deprived him of his livelihood. Brüssow eked out a living as a travelling salesman until he was convicted again for homosexual contact in 1939.

Criminal proceedings

The first time Kurt was sentenced under Paragraph 175 in 1937 he was given a six-month jail sentence. A second sentence was imposed under Paragraph 175a for the seduction of minors in Stargard in December 1938. He was sentenced to one year and six months at the "Zuchthaus" labour camp. During his time at the labour camp Kurt was charged again in Stettin in June 1939 under Paragraph 175 for having intimate relations with a 22-year-old whom he had met during his first jail sentence and had also been convicted under Paragraph 175. He was also charged under

Paragraph 175a, 3, for masturbating with a 17-year-old youth and being a "repeat offender". The two sentences added up to two years and six months at the Zuchthaus labour camp.

Preventive custody in Auschwitz concentration camp

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Stettin April 1941, preventive custody order against Kurt Brüssow, Arolsen archives, document no. 10835422

"Preventive custody" dated back to an order issued by the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police in July 1940: *"In future, homosexuals who have seduced more than one partner are to be placed in preventive police custody after their release from prison."* Kurt was taken to the Auschwitz concentration camp in May 1941.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Photograph of prisoner Kurt Brüssow, Auschwitz concentration camp, May 1941, Jörg Hutter Collection, Bremen

Prisoners arriving at the Auschwitz main camp were photographed and a number was tattooed on them. Kurt became number 16642. His step-granddaughter recalled in 2020: *"He was my grandfather. I saw the number on his arm, but I didn't know anything about his persecution."*

Forced castration in Auschwitz concentration camp

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Application by the camp doctor to castrate Kurt Brüssow, January 1943, Arolsen Archives, document no. 10835465

Kurt also sought intimate contact with his fellow prisoners in the Auschwitz concentration camp, which is why the decision was made to castrate him. He refused to consent to "voluntary castration" and the surgery was carried out forcibly by camp doctors.

"And now to the tragedy of my life"

wrote Kurt Brüssow on 18 November 1948.

Castration with the removal of the testicles is a very serious intervention with both physical and psychological implications. It does not change the sexual orientation, but has many harmful effects,

such as listlessness, a loss of body hair, a decrease in libido or even impotence, profound personality changes, mental illness and even severe depression, osteoporosis, obesity with metabolic disorders, diabetes and high blood pressure. Visible "feminisation" is often the result.

His parents visit Auschwitz

In their campaign to save their son's life, Kurt's parents, Platoon Sergeant Hermann Brüssow and his wife Ida, achieved the unbelievable: they were permitted to travel from their hometown of Stettin to Auschwitz and speak to their son in the concentration camp for fifteen minutes on 16 January 1944.

"In November 43 I had informed my father of my emasculation in an illegal letter, whereupon he sent one request after another, with the result that I was released on 6 March 44. I was placed under police surveillance and was no longer allowed to work in my profession."

Kurt Brüssow in a letter dated 2 March 1946 to the Mecklenburg Lower Pomeranian state administration, Landesarchiv Greifswald, Rep. 200/9.2.1

At home with the family: marriage

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Greifswald 1944, the widow Margarete Gutjahr with her two sons Helmut (born in 1938) and Lutz (born in 1939), Jürgen Wenke Collection

Margarete Gutjahr, a childhood friend of Kurt's, was widowed in 1943 when her husband, a soldier at the front, died at the age of 30. She and Kurt married in 1946. Margarete wrote: *"I have been through a lot of suffering. [...] He had told me about the torments of his imprisonment. I decided to share my life with him so that we could bear the burden of his mental torment together."*

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Munich July 1947, Kurt Brüssow and Margarete Brüssow, née Gutjahr, with sons Lutz (left) and Helmut Gutjahr, Jürgen Wenke Collection

At the time this photo was taken in 1947, Kurt had given up on his attempt to relaunch his acting career and had to leave his theatre management job in Putbus. The family fled from Rügen to Munich, where they found both parents again and began a life in war-ravaged Munich under difficult conditions.

Nazi victim with caveats

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Correspondence between the state of Mecklenburg (Soviet zone) and the state of Bavaria (American zone), Landesarchiv Greifswald, Rep. 200/9.2.1, no. 71, p. 14

Kurt was recognised as a victim of fascism in the Soviet zone in 1946. However, after moving to Munich, he was denied recognition as a victim of persecution under the Nazi regime and denied any compensation. His case was dismissed by the Munich Regional Court in May 1951.

The Auschwitz trials

The judicial prosecution of Nazi crimes committed at the Auschwitz concentration camp began at the end of the 1950s. Attorney General Fritz Bauer (1903–1968) prosecuted and secured the convictions of perpetrators of crimes at the Auschwitz camp in several trials in Frankfurt am Main. Kurt was questioned several times as a witness, in 1960 at his home in Munich and most recently in 1977 at his home in Seeshaupt, where Kurt, by then a pensioner, was living a reclusive life with his wife. More than 33 years after his release from Auschwitz, his memories caught up with him again.

[PICTURES]

Caption:

Transcript of Kurt Brüssow's witness testimony, May 1960, in connection with the Auschwitz trials in Frankfurt am Main, Hessian Central State Archives, Best. 461, no. 37638/37

Late commemoration

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Greifswald November 2022, theatre entrance, polishing the stumbling stone commemorating the former actor Kurt Brüssow, photo Jürgen Wenke

On 9 December 2020 – which would have been Kurt's one-hundred-and-tenth birthday – the first public commemoration of the man of theatre was organised at the initiative of researcher and biographer Jürgen Wenke with the financial support of "stumbling stone sponsor" Lars Kramer.

Posthumous tribute

Dear Kurt,

Unfortunately, I never met you in person. I first encountered you as a young man with a proud, almost defiant expression on your face in the three Auschwitz photos. I was very impressed by your courage, your will to live, your fighting spirit and your clarity in your many documents, letters, statements and transcripts, and my conversations with your granddaughter Eva Jenny; by your almost brutal honesty, your abilities and your commitment to justice, as well as the way you cared for your wife and stepsons. I have discovered many things that have brought you closer to me. I am proud to pay tribute

*to you with a biography and a stumbling stone.
Thank you. Jürgen Wenke*

Author: Jürgen Wenke

Further reading:

Wenke, Jürgen (2020): "Was bleibt, wenn der Vorhang fällt? Der Auschwitz-Überlebende Kurt Brüssow" [What remains when the curtain falls. Auschwitz survivor Kurt Brüssow], detailed report with photo gallery, family photos, letters and illustrations of original documents and explanations of contemporary history, www.stolpersteine-homosexuelle.de/kurt-bruessow [08.10.2023]

Käte Rogalli

17 September 1903 Berlin–11 April 1943 Wittenau Sanatorium Berlin

Technical draughtswoman, concentration camp prisoner, psychiatric inpatient

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Portrait drawing by Tomka Weiss, inspired by a photograph of Käte Rogalli in: Nunn, Xavier (2023): "Trans Liminality and the Nazi State", in: *Past and Present* 260, Oxford University Press

Käte Rogalli was born in Berlin on 17 September 1903 to Oswald Rogalli, a merchant, and Alice Rogalli. She described herself as a "transvestite" and "masochist" and identified as a woman. In the mid-1920s, she was presumably examined by Magnus Hirschfeld, received a "transvestite licence" in 1926 and changed her name. In 1929, she married her girlfriend Gertrud, who was already pregnant with twins.

At the end of 1936, Käte was forbidden by the Gestapo to wear women's clothing. She was imprisoned in Sachsenhausen concentration camp for almost a year for non-compliance. This was followed by two court cases for "causing a public nuisance". While serving her first sentence she was assigned by the camp to a road construction crew. She also lost custody of her children. When she was convicted for the second time in 1941, the court had her forcibly admitted to Wittenau Sanatorium, where she committed suicide in April 1943.

The biographical compilation and reconstruction of the persecution history follows a publication by Xavier Nunn (2023) and a master's thesis by Kai Brust (2022).

Only gender-neutral names

Alex, Toni, Gerd and Theo were four names available in the 1920s in Berlin for people who had been classified as "transvestites" and wanted to change their name. So Käte was denied her favourite name when she applied for a name change in 1924. Instead, in 1928, she was only given permission to use "Gerd" as a second name after her real name. Nevertheless, the name change opened up new possibilities for Käte. She was able to marry her wife Gertrud in 1929 at the registry office wearing women's clothing.

The transvestite licence – permit or surveillance?

A transvestite licence was obtained by undergoing a medical examination and certified that the holder was known to the police as a "transvestite". Cross-dressing as such was not illegal at the time, yet the licence cautioned transvestites not to attract public attention. It served the purpose of creating a register of transvestites and keeping them under surveillance. Under Nazism, the licences

were gradually withdrawn. Käte's license was taken from her by the Gestapo in 1936. She was "reassigned" and forced to wear only men's clothing from then on.

Denounced and sent to the concentration camp

Shortly after her "transvestite licence" was withdrawn, Käte began wearing women's clothing again, which led to her denunciation, followed by a four-week period in protective custody. She suspected that her wife and even her own mother were regularly denouncing her. After being denounced again in 1937, probably for wearing women's clothing, the Gestapo sent Käthe to Sachsenhausen concentration camp where she was imprisoned for ten months. The initial registration record that was created when Käthe arrived at the camp stated that her prisoner category was "transvestite". It was later changed to "political prisoner".

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Curriculum vitae written by Käte Rogalli in connection with the first criminal proceedings on 11 July 1938, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Rep 358-02, no. 116723

In the curriculum vitae Käte attempted to explain what had prompted her to climb into her apartment house's dumpster bin naked. Her neighbour had reported her to the police twice for it and brought criminal charges for "causing a public nuisance". Käte wrote that she had developed a compulsory behaviour pattern after being called "dirt" on multiple occasions by the Gestapo and by her wife.

Involuntary hospitalisation at the Wittenau Sanatorium in Berlin

The second court proceedings ended with Käte being involuntarily hospitalised at the Wittenau Sanatorium. Lawyer Julius von Weltzien attempted to obtain an expert appraisal from the "Göring Institute". The institute was run by Matthias Göring (1879–1945) with the purpose of uniting psychiatrists and psychotherapists under Nazism. Weltzien believed that a positive appraisal would be Käte's only way to escape involuntary hospitalisation at a psychiatric facility.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Letter from lawyer Julius von Weltzien to the Public Prosecutor's Office, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Rep 358-02, no. 19328

To lend weight to his application for an expert appraisal by the "Göring Institute" Julius von Weltzien alleged that Käte had been "ruined" through "incorrect treatment" by Magnus Hirschfeld. He continued that treatment by the Göring Institute for Psychological Research and Psychotherapy could turn her into "a useful member of society".

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Copy of Käte Rogalli's psychotherapeutic report by neurologist and psychoanalyst Dr Marie Elisabeth Kalau vom Hofe dated 29 July 1942, Landesarchiv Berlin, A-Rep 358-02, no. 19328

Käte had been an inpatient at Wittenau Sanatorium for eight months when her lawyer managed get her appraised by the "Göring Institute". The appraiser was Dr Marie Elisabeth Kalau vom Hofe, a specialist in the "treatment" of homosexuality. However, Dr Kalau vom Hofe's negative appraisal destroyed Käte's chances of being released from the psychiatric facility in the near future.

"Patient R. cried for around two minutes early on. When asked for the reason, he said: You know, my honour has been taken, such chit-chat up there. Just because I'm not interested in women most people think that I have other tendencies. But that's not true. You know that and the other nurses know it, too."

Excerpt from a nursing report dated 5 March 1942, quoted by Xavier Nunn (2023): *Trans Liminality and the Nazi State, Past and Present* 260, Oxford University Press, p. 151

Käte had been held at the Wittenau Sanatorium since November 1941. Her hair was cut off and her women's clothes were confiscated. The nurse's notes indicated that Käte felt confronted by suspicions of homosexuality in her daily routine at the psychiatric hospital. Without hope of being released, she took her life on 11 April 1943.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

A stumbling stone commemorating Käte Rogalli, laid outside Hagelbergerstrasse 21 in Berlin, the last place she lived as a free citizen, on 31 August 2023, photo educat e.V.

What's missing?

A name, a face, a biography and a place of commemoration for the persecuted. For decades this has been a remembrance policy issue in connection the process of coming to terms with Nazi crimes. We would have like to have shown the only surviving photo portrait of Käte Rogalli here. It's in her Wittenau Sanatorium patient file, which is kept at the Landesarchiv Berlin. We were refused it under Paragraph 8, subsection 2, sentence 2 in conjunction with Paragraph 8, subsection 9, no. 5 of the Berlin Archives Act. The "protection period" doesn't end until 31 December 2038 – 95 years after Käte Rogalli's death.

Author: Kai* Brust

Further reading:

Nunn, Xavier (2023): "Trans Liminality and the Nazi State", in: *Past and Present* 260 (1), p. 123–157.

Brust, Kai*: Die Zuschreibung von Gender-Nonkonformität als Werkzeug zum Erhalt der nationalsozialistischen „Volksgemeinschaft“. Gender-Performance zwischen Politisierung und Pathologisierung [Assigned gender non-conformity as a tool to uphold the National Socialist "Volksgemeinschaft" society. Gender performance between politicisation and pathologisation], unpublished master's thesis: the Technical University Berlin's Center for Research on Antisemitism, Berlin, 26 November 2022.

Reissner, Joy/ Meier-Brix, Orlando (Eds.) (2022): "tin*stories. Trans | inter | nicht-binäre Geschichte(n) seit 1900" [tin*stories. Trans | inter | non-binary (his)stories since 1900.

Josef Martus

(1909 Kirrlach–1942 Stuttgart)

Policeman in Baden and in annexed Alsace, sentenced to death

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Undated photo, Archives d'Alsace, 1134W20

Josef Martus was born in Baden into a large family that lived in modest circumstances. In 1929, he passed his police exam and embarked on a career in the police force. In 1936, he married Charlotte S., who was expecting his child. His profession and marriage enabled him to lead a bourgeois existence. He was popular with his superiors for his level-headedness and diligence. After the occupation of France and the annexation of Alsace, he was transferred to Strasbourg in 1940. There, at the beginning of 1941, he met the Alsatian accountant Eugène E. (1912–2003), with whom he had an intimate relationship until their arrest in March 1942. Being a policeman, Josef was sentenced to death by the SS and Police Court XI in Stuttgart for "sustained unnatural sexual offences" and executed in August 1942. His Alsatian friend Eugène was sentenced to two years in prison by the Strasbourg Regional Court and, after serving his sentence, was sent to the Vorbruck "Security Camp" in April 1944.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Josef Martus (left) as policeman, ca. 1942, Archives d'Alsace, 1134W20

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Eugène E. as prisoner, April 1942, Strasbourg, Archives d'Alsace, 757D85

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Declaration by Police Chief Constable Josef Martus on his knowledge of Hitler's order on "keeping the SS and police clean", 10 February 1942, Strasbourg, Archives d'Alsace, 1134W20

In February 1942, Josef had to confirm that he was aware of the secret order issued by Adolf Hitler on 15 January 1941. It stated that the death penalty would be imposed on members of the SS and police

for homosexual acts. Three months later, Josef was sentenced to death for continuing his relationship with Eugène even after signing the declaration.

A marital dispute triggered the persecution

Josef, who had moved in with Eugène, only returned sporadically to his wife and son, but continued to pay for their upkeep. In the hope of winning her husband back, his wife Charlotte went to his superior on 31 March 1942 and asked for Josef to be transferred to Baden. She knew the nature of his relationship with Eugène, but initially kept quiet about it. However, when Josef blamed her for the quarrel she showed the police a letter from Eugène to his lover, which led to the arrest of both men.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Confirmation of non-denunciation, 18 August 1942, Strasbourg, Archives d'Alsace, 1134W20

The Commander of the Protection Police confirmed that Charlotte did not initially report her husband for homosexuality, but merely asked for him to be transferred to Baden. Charlotte returned to Bavaria after her husband was sentenced. The Reich Ministry of the Interior decided to grant their son financial support until he was eighteen years old.

Attempt to flee

Thanks to the possibly deliberate inattention of his guard at the police prison, Josef escaped on the same evening of his arrest. He also managed to free Eugène by deceiving the guards at the court prison. Both men found refuge with a friend of Eugène's and hatched a plan to flee to unannexed France. However, when they tried to raise money, they were denounced by one of Eugène's work colleagues and arrested again on 1 April 1942. Josef, who knew what would happen to him, tried to slit his wrists.

Death penalty for Josef Martus

On 15 May 1942, the Stuttgart SS and Police Court XI tried Josef at a "field court" in Strasbourg. In the judges' opinion he had been "seduced" by Eugène. At the same time, they claimed that he had become so homosexual as a result that a change in behaviour was not foreseeable. They sentenced Josef to death on the basis of Hitler's order to "keep the SS and police clean". His petition for clemency was rejected. He was dismissed from the police service and shot on 10 August 1942 at the Dornhalde shooting range near Stuttgart.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

The SS and Police Court XI decision in the case of Josef Martus, 15 May 1942, Strasbourg, Archives d'Alsace, 1134W20

Josef was sentenced to death by the SS court for homosexual acts. He was also sentenced to three years in prison and the permanent loss of his civil rights for breaking out of jail, stealing a bicycle while on the run, freeing his lover Eugène from jail and usurpation of authority. The prison sentence did not mean a stay of execution.

Grounds for the particular “severity of crime”

“The accused is a citizen of the German Reich. He has been educated in Nazism since 1933 and was aware of the battle being waged by the Nazi regime against the vice of same-sex activity since it came to power. The accused is also a policeman. He thus belongs to a profession that is required to uphold the irreproachable behaviour of every single member of the population. It goes without saying that such a man must have an especially high degree of moral purity. Moreover, the defendant was married; his family had been in Strasbourg since 1 July 1941; it was therefore particularly easy for him to separate from E.”

Partial transcript of the decision of the SS and police court in the case of Josef Martus on 15 May 1942, Archives d’Alsace, 1134W20

Grounds for the death penalty

“On the issue of sentencing, there was actually no doubt in the mind of the SS and Police Field Court that the accused was to be given the death penalty. The SS and Police Court were of the opinion that the accused was so addicted to unnatural intercourse that he could not be expected to change his ways again. The defendant’s demeanour in the trial was so soft and his attitude so feminine that the defendant gave the impression of a typical homosexual.”

Partial transcript of the decision of the SS and Police Court in the case of Josef Martus on 15 May 1942, Archives d’Alsace, 1134W20

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Josef Martus, undated photo, Archives d’Alsace, 1134W20

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Place of execution and Dornhalde cemetery near Stuttgart, Bertram Maurer Private Collection

Josef was shot in Dornhalde near Stuttgart on the evening of 10 August 1942 at 7.22 p.m. Built in 1934 as a machine-gun shooting range, Dornhalde was used during the Second World War to carry out military court death sentences. In the 1970s, the shooting range was demolished and replaced by a cemetery.

Eugène's persecution

Eugène was tried at the Strasbourg Regional Court on 4 November 1942. The judges found that he and his friend were "typical homosexuals [...] and therefore a danger to the public due to their long-standing relationships". They sentenced him to two years in prison under Paragraph 175 of the German Penal Code. After his release in April 1944, the German Criminal Police in Strasbourg transferred Eugène to the Vorbruck "Security Camp" near Schirmeck, where he faced much harsher conditions than he had in the judicial system's prisons.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Eugène E. as prisoner, April 1942, Strasbourg, Archives d'Alsace, 757D85

Application of Paragraphs 175 and 175a in Alsace

The illegal introduction of the German Penal Code in Alsace meant that the Nazi's special criminal law against homosexuals was also applied there. The accused were considered to be "ethnic Germans". From 1941 to 1944, the Strasbourg Regional Court alone demonstrably handed down 54 sentences under Paragraphs 175 and 175a.

In occupied Alsace, several hundred men were convicted of homosexual offences by the courts, deported to security or concentration camps or expelled to unoccupied France.

Convictions under Paragraphs 175 and 175a at Strasbourg Regional Court

Statistical survey and graphic by Frédéric Stroh

[GRAPH]

Texts within the graph:

Introduction of the German Penal Code in Alsace at the Special Strasbourg Tribunal*

Replacement of the French Penal Code by the German in all of Alsace

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Prisoners at the Vorbruck camp near Schirmeck, undated photo, Mémorial d'Alsace-Moselle Collection, fonds Riedweg

Schirmeck-Vorbruck "Security Camp"/Camp de Schirmeck

Set up in 1940 by the German police to accommodate oppositional and "undesirable" Alsatians, the camp was used for "re-education", which involved the prisoners being exposed to brutal prison conditions. Many homosexuals like Eugène were made to wear a light-blue square badge. The fate of one of those men, Pierre Seel (1923–2005), came to light in the 1980s when he became the only Alsatian contemporary witness who dared to speak publicly about his imprisonment as a homosexual in Schirmeck.

Author: Frédéric Stroh

Further reading:

Frédéric Stroh, *Justice et homosexualité sous le national-socialisme. Étude comparée du pays de Bade et de l'Alsace [Justice and Homosexuality under Nazism. A comparative study of Baden and Alsace]*, PhD thesis at Strasbourg University, 2018.

Frédéric Stroh, "Being homosexual in Alsace and Moselle during the de facto annexation from 1940 to 1945", in: Régis Schlagdenhauffen (Ed.), *Queer in Europe during the Second World War*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2018, p. 63–77.

Raid at the popular Hamburg establishment "Stadtkasino", 1940: arrest and deportation of women to the Ravensbrück concentration camp

[PICTURE]

Caption:

"Stadtkasino" advertisement in: *Liebende Frauen*, year 3, no. 24, 1928

Ida Heineke

Ida Heineke was born in 1907 as the daughter of a miller in the small town of Sulingen, Lower Saxony. Ida's parents died young and she was raised by foster parents until the age of fourteen. After that, she had to earn her own living. She worked as a domestic help in Bremen for around ten years and moved to Hamburg in 1939, where she worked as a grocery shop assistant.

From time to time, she visited the "Stadtkasino", an establishment that was popular with homosexual men and women. On 7 August 1940, Ida was arrested during a raid on "Stadtkasino" along with more than sixty other women. After being subjected to numerous interrogations, she was deported along with eleven other prisoners to the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp in October for being a lesbian. Ida was released in April 1941 after a remand hearing. From that time on she was afflicted by severe health problems and died in 1955 without having received any compensation for her imprisonment.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

"Stadtkasino" advertisement in: *Liebende Frauen*, year 3, no. 24, 1928

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Floor plan at the time when "Stadtkasino" was taken over in 1926. Staatsarchiv Hamburg 324-1, K6871

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Exterior view of the building at Neuerwall 103, 1920s. Staatsarchiv Hamburg 324-1, K6871

The "Stadtkasino" on Alsterfleet had a separate entrance at Schleusenweg 2 (today: Am Alsterfleet).

The premises were located in the basement behind the three windows with the inscription "Kloster-Diele!" which dated back to the time of the previous owner.

"Stadtkasino" had been a popular "meeting place for friends and girlfriends" since the mid-1920s and it specifically targeted lesbian women in its advertising. Most establishments like this in Hamburg were closed in 1936 – when a Gestapo task force from Berlin arrived. Although "Stadtkasino" survived until it was destroyed by air raids in 1943, a visit to the establishment, which was known to the police, could have fatal consequences.

"Manhunt" for homosexual women

Ida was warned against going to "Stadtkasino" by her lesbian friend, Emmy Kessler: Emmy had heard a police officer say that "a campaign against homosexual women was planned and that several establishments in the St. Pauli district of Hamburg would be raided". Despite the warning, Ida and several of her acquaintances, including Ella Lutringer, visited the dance club on 7 August 1940. There were men seated at some of the tables. Shortly before 11 p.m. they stood up and identified themselves as Gestapo or plainclothes officers of the Criminal Police. More than sixty of the female guests were arrested and taken to the nearby police headquarters.

Harsh interrogations – forced confessions

The "Stadthaus", as it was known, was notorious as a "terror headquarters". It housed the Gestapo and the Criminal Police until 1943. The arrested women were first processed for identification purposes. "Harsh interrogation" techniques were used to obtain forced confessions, although female homosexuality, unlike male homosexuality, was not a criminal offence at the time. The police wanted to know exactly why the women went to the establishment and whether they were regular patrons. Handbags were searched for incriminating material. Ida claimed that she had a "birth defect", i.e., that her lesbianism was innate and she therefore felt different than heterosexual women. However, her attempt to exonerate herself failed.

"Preventive custody"

The Criminal Police put twelve of the detainees into "preventive custody" at the Hütten police prison – a sentence that the police had been able to hand down for an indefinite period of time and without a court order since the end of 1937. Of these women, only Ida, Ella Lutringer (née Puls, 1909–1979), a mother of two small children, and Elisabeth Schulz (1909–?) are known by name. Further interrogations followed and eight weeks later, the twelve women were taken to the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp. Their names appear on a list of fifty new arrivals dated 12 October 1940, including Lotte Heier (1921–?) and Erika Ngando (1915–1996), daughter of Ekwe Ngando from Cameroon. Lotte was on record as a prostitute, as was Elisabeth. After the war, Ida named these three women as witnesses to her concentration camp imprisonment. So far, however, it has not been possible to establish whether Lotte and Erika were also victims of the raid on the "Stadtkasino".

[PICTURE]

Caption:

List of new arrivals at the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp dated 12 October 1940; Arolsen Archives, DocID: 129642926

Among the "new arrivals" on 12 October was Mary Pünjer (née Kümmermann, 1904–1942), who had already been arrested in July 1940 – apparently also during a local raid. After being selected by the SS doctor Friedrich Mennecke, the Jewish woman from Hamburg was murdered at the Bernburg "mental institution" in 1942. Johanna "Otto" Kohlmann (1918–1956) and her friend Sophie Gotthardt (1912–1961) were also registered as new arrivals on the same day.

Stigmatised with the black triangle badge

All the women arrested in during the raid and taken to the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp were probably registered as "antisocial" and made to wear a black triangle badge on their prison clothes. The camp management separated the women from each other by housing them in different cell blocks, presumably to prevent or at least make it difficult for them to stick together. They became mere (prison) numbers, were made to perform forced labour, suffered from hunger and were subjected to harassment by the guards.

Permanently damaged by the camp

Ida Heineke, Ella Lutringer and Elisabeth Schulz were released from Ravensbrück in April 1941, as was Karla Ahlers (1917–?) after a remand hearing, which was mandatory for the prisoners in "preventive custody". The self-confident young woman was repeatedly sent to state institutions because of her "lesbian tendencies". Karla's official guardian, welfare officer Dr Käthe Petersen, approved her transfer to Ravensbrück. Karla may also have been one of the women arrested during the raid on "Stadtkasino". Eight months after her arrest, Ida returned to Hamburg. While in prison she contracted a serious heart condition that did not improve even after several hospital stays. She was unfit to work and lived in a nursing home in Hamburg-Bahrenfeld from 1947 onwards.

Exclusion from welfare and compensation benefits

People who were imprisoned by the Nazi regime as "antisocials" – because their sexuality deviated from the norm or because of alleged antisocial behaviour – continued to be stigmatised after the war. They were not considered eligible for compensation under municipal reparations legislation, the 1953 Federal Compensation Act or the laws of East Germany. It was not until February 2020 that the German Bundestag recognised those persecuted as "antisocial" under Nazism as Nazi victims.

Lesbian love not recognised as a ground for persecution

In 1949, Ida applied for compensation under the Hamburg Compensation Act. It was rejected because the legal requirements – persecution on the grounds of political opposition or on racial, ideological or religious grounds – were not met. Despite her poor state of health and without legal representation, Heineke lodged an appeal. Since there were apparently no police records of the arrest, she asked her former fellow prisoner Ella Lutringer for help. Ella testified to the authority in 1952: "During the interrogation at Hütten prison, we were told that we had been arrested for lespican [sic!] love and that we were being sent to the concentration camp for that same reason."

[Exhibit 5]

Sworn statement by Ida Heineke, 2 March 1953. Staatsarchiv Hamburg 351- 11, 31875, p. 36.

In her application for compensation, Ida described the events surrounding the raid on "Stadtkasino" on 7 August 1940. The statement was taken by Gerda Martens, a fellow resident of the care home, who supported Ida in her correspondence with the authorities on many occasions. After years of proceedings, the Restitution Office conceded in 1953 that Ida Heineke had "undoubtedly [...] been wrongly imprisoned. Her behaviour did not constitute grounds for taking such measures." Nevertheless, compensation was refused as she had not been persecuted "for her political convictions". Some two years later, on 17 September 1955, Ida died of physical ailments stemming from her time in prison.

Postscript

I found the first reference to Ida's arrest in the 1990s in the "Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 1945–1966" [Collected German Court Sentences for National Socialist Criminal Killings 1945–1966]. The concentration camp survivor was heard as a witness in one of the trials, but her real name was not given. Her acquaintance Emmy Kessler (née Esselsgroth, 1895–1964) and her former partner Hertha Langhoff (1906–?) were charged in Hamburg in 1952 because they had denounced an acquaintance, who died as a result, for "subversive statements" in 1944. Only recently, in the summer of 2023, was I able to identify Ida and carry out further research. I would particularly like to thank Ulf Bollmann (Staatsarchiv Hamburg) and Alyn Šišić (Foundation of Hamburg Memorials and Learning Centres) for their support, as well as Monika Schnell (Ravensbrück Memorial Site) for information.

Author: Claudia Schoppmann

Further reading:

Schoppmann, Claudia (2012): "Elsa Conrad – Margarete Rosenberg – Mary Pünjer – Henny Schermann. Vier Porträts", [Elsa Conrad – Margarete Rosenberg – Mary Pünjer – Henny Schermann. Four Portraits.] in: Insa Eschebach (Ed.), *Homophobie und Devianz. Weibliche und männliche Homosexualität im Nationalsozialismus* [*Homophobia and Deviance. Female and Male Homosexuality Under National Socialism*], Berlin, Metropol, p. 97–111.

Friedrich Wilhelm "Fritz" Spangenberg

(1914 in Marburg/Lahn—missing in Mjaklovo/today Belarus since 1944—declared dead in 1970)

A homosexual in the Wehrmacht: convicted – missing – covered up

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Friedrich Spangenberg in the writing room at Torgau Military Prison, September 1943, Klaus Dieter Spangenberg, Berlin

Friedrich Wilhelm Spangenberg's fate is a rare example of military justice used against homosexuals in the Wehrmacht and their persecution. His biography has only been possible thanks to the memoirs of his great-nephew Klaus Dieter Spangenberg.

Friedrich, known as Fritz, was born on 9 May 1914 in Marburg/Lahn, where he also grew up. His father Carl was a master confectioner who ran the traditional *Café Spangenberg* in the city centre with his wife Emmy. After completing his military service and pharmacy studies, Fritz was conscripted to a medical unit of the Wehrmacht in 1942 and worked as a medic at the Gera Reserve Hospital and on the Eastern Front. He rose up through the ranks from medical corporal to medical sergeant of the Reserve.

In 1943, he was sentenced under section 175a to nine months imprisonment by the Frankfurt am Main Military Court for attempted seduction of minors. He served his sentence at Torgau Military Prison. Demoted and no longer able to serve as a medical orderly due to his "weak character", he was remanded on probation to a "convalescent division" on the Eastern Front in January 1944 and has been missing in action since 3 February 1944.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

The Spangenberg family on an excursion in ca. 1930, (left to right): Fritz, Elfriede, Lotti, mother Emmy, father Carl, Rosel, Ernst and Ilse, Klaus Dieter Spangenberg, Berlin

Friedrich was raised in a patchwork family: with his siblings Elfriede and Carl from the marriage between his father and his mother Lina, who died young, and his stepsiblings Lotti, Rosel, Ernst and Ilse from his father's marriage to his stepmother Emmy. He felt closest to his older siblings Elfriede and Carl, who was an apprentice chef at the time the photo was taken.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Carl Spangenberg with Friedrich Spangenberg wearing a polar bear costume, Wiesbaden ca. 1936, Klaus Dieter Spangenberg, Berlin

During the semester holidays, Friedrich worked as an assistant chef in large hotel kitchens. His brother Carl arranged the jobs for him at the hotels where he was employed as a chef. The brothers spent several summer seasons together in spa towns and holiday resorts.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

"The beautiful Helena!" and "That's going too far!" Friedrich Spangenberg in his stepmother Emmy's dress. Two captioned photographs taken in 1933/34, Carl Spangenberg's photo album, Klaus Dieter Spangenberg, Berlin

The carefree photos of Friedrich Spangenberg as "Helena" were taken in the family's large garden plot near Marburg, with a view of the Lahn valley. Carl Spangenberg put many of his brother Friedrich's photographs into a photo album, which was passed on to his grandson Klaus Dieter Spangenberg.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Friedrich Spangenberg with Emil in Bacharach am Rhein, ca. 1938, Klaus Dieter Spangenberg, Berlin

There are no autobiographical records of Friedrich's homosexual desires. Little is known about his friendship with Emil, who is shown here, or about his other love affairs. However, correspondence between Friedrich's sister Elfriede Hahn and her husband Hans, in which she hints at male relationships and mentions letters that were burnt because of their intimate content, proves that they existed.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Excerpt from the penalty book of the 5th (Cadre) Company, Medical Replacement and Training Battalion, Dept. 9, Hofgeismar, p. 88, with reference to Friedrich Spangenberg's conviction on 30 March 1943 for breaching section 175a III (front side), Federal Archives Berlin, Personal Documents of Military Provenance, II D 313.

Friedrich was sentenced to nine months in prison by the military tribunal in Frankfurt am Main. The reasons for the sentence are not known because Friedrich's case file in the Freiburg/Breisgau Military Archive and his prison file in Torgau have been lost. According to family accounts and letters from siblings, a denunciation triggered an investigation and incriminating letters were found at Friedrich's home.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

The former Brückenkopf Military Prison in Torgau, photograph taken in 1990, Saxon Memorial Foundation Archives/Torgau Memorial Site

During the Second World War, Torgau was a key location for Wehrmacht justice. It had two military prisons "Brückenkopf" and "Fort Zinna" as well as the highest military court, the "Reichskriegsgericht", which was relocated from Berlin to Torgau in August 1943. Prisoners typically endured harassment, abuse, poor food and constant overcrowding in the prison cells.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Friedrich Spangenberg in the writing room at Torgau Military Prison, September 1943, Klaus Dieter Spangenberg, Berlin

During his time in prison, Friedrich was presumably employed in the typing pool for a long period of time for "good behaviour". This coveted position gave him the opportunity to compose letters, poems and drawings, which he sent to his siblings and cousins. It is not known whether he also corresponded with friends during this time.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Excerpt from the penalty book of the 5th (Cadre) Company, Medical Replacement and Training Battalion, Dept. 9, Hofgeismar, with reference to the withdrawal of Friedrich Spangenberg's eligibility for medical service due to weakness of character, Federal Archives Berlin, Personal Documents of Military Provenance, II D 313

The note on the back of the release papers documents the system of sanctions against convicted homosexual soldiers. Military physician Dr Remus denied Friedrich the right to work as a medical orderly because of his "character". He was then transferred to one of the particularly dangerous "probation units" on the Eastern Front.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Transfer of Friedrich Spangenberg to a marching company to serve parole, letter from the Deputy General Command IX.A.K Kassel, 4 January 1944 from the muster roll of Friedrich Spangenberg, Federal Archives Berlin, Personal Documents of Military Provenance, II D 313.

Friedrich was released on 17 December 1943. He was stationed in Hofgeismar until he was transported to the Eastern Front, which meant he was able to visit his family in Marburg. Officially, the “probation units” gave previously convicted and demoted soldiers the opportunity to prove themselves at the front “by going to extremes” – but they were often a death sentence in disguise, because the poorly trained and equipped soldiers were used as cannon fodder.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Letter from Fritz Spangenberg to his sister Elfriede Hahn, written shortly before his transport to be deployed on the Eastern Front, Aschaffenburg, 9 January 1944 (excerpt), Martina Hahn, Frankfurt am Main

The letter to his trusted sister is the last sign of life from Friedrich. He was obviously expecting mail and seeking assurance that it would be in safe hands, because he wrote: “Promise you’ll do as I ask and take any mail I receive to your place in Wettergasse at lunchtime?” At the end of the letter he attached a match with the instruction to burn the letter after reading.

Private remembrance

Many queer people convicted in the Nazi era continued to be persecuted and stigmatised after 1945, which is why Friedrich’s homosexuality remained a secret within his own family. It took persistent enquiry to uncover information about him, as well as an unexpected number of photographs and letters. The reason why all this “came to light” was the coming out of Friedrich’s great-nephew Klaus Dieter Spangenberg. When he told his relatives they said, “You’re not the only one in the family.” Klaus Dieter’s tenacious research into his gay great-uncle was self-published in 2014 and republished by Büchner-Verlag Marburg/Lahn in 2024.

Wehrmacht justice against queer soldiers

The practice of persecuting homosexuals in the German Wehrmacht has not yet been researched, and very few cases have been analysed. The possibility of same-sex acts resulting from constant close contact in troop units was particularly frowned upon: “I have pointed out on several occasions that during the war, the toughest measures must be taken to maintain manliness within the troops...,” reads an order from Hitler dated 21 December 1940. In 1943, the Wehrmacht High Command instructed that the death sentence should be imposed “in particularly serious cases”. Between the outbreak of the war in September 1939 and the end of July 1944, almost 7,000 men were sentenced under sections 175 and 175a by military courts; no data is available for the final year of the war.

Transfer to probation units

The military courts handed down sentences under sections 175 and 175a and the other relevant penal provisions. The fate of the soldiers depended on the conviction and the harshness of the

sentence. Military doctors were often also involved. If the courts established an “incorrigible disposition” the “offender” would be sentenced to “preventive police custody” at a penal camp. If, like Friedrich, the accused was categorised as “seduced” or “strayed as a result of sexual overstimulation”, they could be granted “probation on the enemy front” after serving their sentence.

Research options

Many of the fates of Wehrmacht soldiers are uncertain, and almost a million people are still listed as missing in action. As is the case with Klaus Dieter Spangenberg, it is often the grandchildren’s generation that questions the taboos and gaps in the family narratives. Contact points for research include the “Personal Documents of Military Provenance” at the Federal Archives Berlin, with the “Military Archive” Department in Freiburg/Breisgau, the “Personal Information” Department in Berlin-Tegel and the “Provision of Services for Use” Department in Berlin-Lichterfelde, the German Red Cross Tracing Service and the “Verein zur Klärung Vermisster und Gefallener” [Association for the Clarification of Missing and Fallen Persons].

Author: Karl-Heinz Steinle

Further reading:

Spangenberg, Klaus Dieter: *Wo ist Fritz? [Where is Fritz?] Friedrich Wilhelm Spangenberg*, Marburg/Lahn: Büchner-Verlag, 2024.

Dr Käte Laserstein

27 May 1900 in Prussian-Holland (today Pasłęk/Poland)–9 August 1965 in West Berlin

“Three years of living illegally with the Gestapo at my heels”

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Käte Laserstein, around September 1945, Landesarchiv Berlin, A Rep. 001-06 no. 17574

Käte Laserstein was born in East Prussia as the daughter of Meta (née Birnbaum, 1867–1943) and Hugo Laserstein (1858–1902). The family moved to Berlin in 1912. Käte studied German language and literature in Berlin and Munich and was awarded a doctorate in 1924. She published three essays on the history of literature before becoming a German and English teacher in Berlin. Dismissed from the state school service in 1933 for racial reasons, she continued to teach at the private Jewish schools Zickel and Goldschmidt until their closure.

Facing imminent arrest, she went into hiding in July 1942 and survived the persecution – together with her friend Rose Ollendorff (“Olly”) and Lucie Friedlaender – in various hiding places: with acquaintances and relatives, and even in a garden allotment. In 1945, she moved back into her old flat with Olly and worked as a teacher again; in 1946, she moved to Sweden to live with her sister Lotte Laserstein. In 1954, she returned to Berlin, where she taught at the Gertrauden School until her death in 1965.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

First page of a three-page letter to Lotte Laserstein in Stockholm dated 15 May 1942,

Lotte Laserstein’s estate, Künstler_innenarchiv, Berlinische Galerie

Käte wrote a letter to her sister, a painter two years her senior who was living in exile in Sweden: To “Affi from Kanin” – the sisters’ nicknames for each other. Written at the height of the Second World War and opened by a censor, it is the last (surviving) letter before she went into hiding and her mother was arrested in December 1942.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Refusal of entry to Sweden for Meta and Käte Laserstein, 1938, Riksarkivet, Stockholm

Lotte Laserstein spent years in Sweden trying in vain to obtain exit visas from Germany for her mother, sister and sister's friend Rose Ollendorff. Their attempts to emigrate to the UK and the US also failed, as did plans to flee to Switzerland in 1942.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Käte Laserstein's Jewish identity card, year unknown, LABO Berlin, BEG file reg. no. 63462

Despite her Protestant denomination, Käte Laserstein was subjected to persecution as a "three-quarter Jewish woman", which steadily got worse when the Nazis seized power in 1933. This is the only surviving photo in which she can be seen wearing a tie and with her hair combed back.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Postcard from Käte Laserstein to an unnamed professor, 18 September 1945,

Landesarchiv Berlin, copy: Vajswerk Archive

The postcard documents one of Käte's efforts to return to work as a teacher when the war ended: "Three years of living illegally with the Gestapo at my heels have not improved my financial situation," she stated. She continued: "I keep on hearing and reading that Hitler's victims will be given priority when it comes to employment. That has not been my experience."

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Käte Laserstein's curriculum vitae, 1952, LABO Berlin, BEG file reg. no. 63462

In the compensation proceedings, Käte wrote reports documenting her persecution and survival; in this case how she only escaped arrest by chance in July 1942 and went into hiding from that time onward. According to Käte, the fear of being discovered in the allotment by neighbours "weighed far more heavily on my life than all the bombing raids on Berlin".

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Käte Laserstein seated at the centre, Gertrauden School, ca. 1957, today: Gail S. Halvorsen School, Berlin-Dahlem, Vajswerk Archive

Käte taught German and English at the Gertrauden School from 1954 until her death in 1965. The photo shows her with the class of girls graduating in 1957. Most of her students only found out about her persecution story many years later.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Lotte and Käte Laserstein, place and year unknown, Lotte Laserstein's estate, Künstler_innenarchiv, Berlinische Galerie

After Käte returned to Berlin in 1954, the two sisters only saw each other on holidays or on visits to Sweden or Berlin. This photo could be Rose Ollendorff during a two-week holiday to Sweden with Käte in 1957.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Letter dated 17 December 1962. "Self-portrait" by Käte Laserstein, subtitled with the Swedish words: "Think of me". Lotte Laserstein's estate, Künstler_innenarchiv, Berlinische Galerie

When Käte returned from Sweden to Berlin in 1954 the two sisters continued to write to each other regularly. Lotte Laserstein stayed in Sweden, the country she had been able to emigrate to in 1937 after being invited to host an exhibition there. Although she didn't save her own letters, Lotte preserved most of the letters she received.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Käte Laserstein, presumably in the 1960s, Lotte Laserstein Krausse Archive, Berlin

The photo shows Käte in a private setting, perhaps preparing for class, in her apartment at Immenweg 7, Berlin-Steglitz. On the back she noted: "More likeness than beauty" and sent the photo to her sister in Sweden.

[PICTURE]

Caption:

Vajswerk flyer, graphic: Steffen Ullmann, 2022. Collage of photos of Lucie Friedlaender, Rose Ollendorff and Käte Laserstein as well as the actresses Greta Galisch de Palma and Laura Mitzkus, Vajswerk e.V.

Vajswerk has been working on the biographies of the Laserstein sisters since 2019. In 2022, the art collective conducted research into the three women who had survived persecution under Nazism together. No image showing all three women together has survived.

Life in Berlin 1942

Shortly before the seventy-fifth birthday of her mother, who was to die a year later in Ravensbrück concentration camp, Käte wrote to her sister, referring to her sister's recent exhibition in Stockholm and describing her secluded life in Berlin. Her mother, who as a "half Jew" was not marked with a Jewish star, ran the errands and Käte had to remain within her "own four walls". After being dismissed from state school service and the closure of the private Jewish schools, home schooling became increasingly difficult. Although the author of the letter had not lost her sharp sense of humour, her life situation did seem hopeless.

Living Underground

Elisabeth Wust from Berlin wrote about the three women in hiding in her diary on 9 February 1945: "They live in an allotment shed! And they can only go in and out in darkness! They wash in restaurants and secretly dry their laundry on the chairs they are sitting on. This will stop now. They should sleep in real beds again and no longer have to walk from the railway station to the restaurant because they have to stay somewhere. No more sitting around on cold park benches to somehow fill the day." Wust's diary later served as the basis for the book and the film "Aimée & Jaguar!"

Jewish Museum Archive, Berlin

Life and death after the war I

Rose Ollendorff ("Olly"), also a teacher, had been living with another partner since around 1946, but she and Käte continued to go on holiday, celebrate birthdays and other holidays together. Her death

in 1960 affected Käte deeply. She wrote to her sister on 6 November 1960: "For the last three hours, my hand was on Olly's little hand, which was already getting cold. [...] I was so clearly aware that this was the last tenderness that life had in store for me, and I was almost happy." In her letter dated 30 October 1960 she wrote: "I have to learn to live again here."

Life and death after the war II

In another letter after Rose Ollendorff's death, she wrote: "I'm falling back into the void. It's the same constellation as before, when I learnt of Mulli's [her mother's] death and lived with the 'bird woman', 4 flights of stairs in Moabit, alone and locked in, because the bird trader had had bad experiences with illegal immigrants who let themselves be seen far too often. But Olly's little hands squeezed a piece of cake through the much too narrow letter slot on 27 May [Käte's birthday], which arrived in atoms; and we were able to stroke each other's fingers." (6 November 1960). And: "She's been saying 'My Katja' a lot lately. And 'there's so much only the two of us understand'. Time had probably turned back for her, too [...]" (2 November 1960).

Käte died of a heart attack in 1965.

Author: Felicitas Braun

Further reading:

– Braun, Felicitas: *"Kanin an Affi" – Briefe von Dr. Käte Laserstein (1900–1965) an ihre Schwester Lotte Laserstein. Ein Leben vor & während & nach der Verfolgung durch das NS-Regime.* ["Bunny to Monkey" – Letters from Dr Käte Laserstein (1900–1965) to her sister Lotte Laserstein. A life before & during & after persecution by the Nazi regime] master's thesis, Vienna University, 2023

– Kublitz-Kramer, Maria: "Ich habe arbeiten gelernt, aber nicht leben. Über Werk und Wirkung der Germanistin Käte Laserstein. Eine Fallstudie 2011" [I have learned to work, but not to live. The life and times of Germanist Käte Laserstein. A case study 2011.] In: *Alma Maters Töchter im Exil. Zur Vertreibung von Wissenschaftlerinnen und Akademikerinnen in der NS-Zeit.* [Alma Maters' daughters in exile. On the expulsion of women scientists and academics during in Nazi era.] Ed.: Inge Hansen-Schaberg and Hiltrud Häntzschel; Text und Kritik edition, Munich, 2021, p. 166–184

Käte Laserstein's story of persecution is inextricably linked to Rose Ollendorff and Lucie Friedlaender. Short biographies of the two women can be found here (written by Vajswerk 2022):
https://vajswerk.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/L-O-F_PH_Bio_hp.pdf

Further listening: Vajswerk podcast episodes

Laserstein Ollendorff (Friedlaender)

<https://soundcloud.com/vajswerk/sets/laserstein-ollendorff-friedlaender>

Gertraudens Kinder [Translation: Gertrauden's Children] (from 30.11.23)

<https://vajswerk.de/projekte/gertraudens-kinder/>

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