

Nationalsozialistischer Terror gegen Homosexuelle. Verdrängt und ungesühnt. Burkhard Jellonnek, Rüdiger Lautmann (Eds.). Paderborn: Schöningh. 2002. Pp. 428. \$ 34.80. ISBN 3-506-74204-3

Following the example set by Justinian, Christian rulers have often persecuted Jews or sodomites whenever they wanted to rob or scapegoat them. So it should have come as no surprise that Hitler by 1935 had sacked Jews from State jobs, banned them from popular beaches, and punished intermarriage with gentiles. He also made it easier to imprison homosexual men -- confession to or proof of overt sexual acts was no longer necessary. The old sodomy law, Paragraph 175, punished "unnatural intercourse" (*widernatürliche Unzucht*) in these words: "An unnatural sex act committed between persons of the male sex or by humans with animals is punishable by imprisonment...." The Nazis broadened Paragraph 175 by substituting "sex offence" for "sex act"; under this broader and vaguer term a kiss, a gesture, a touch or a lewd glance was enough. After the war, Allied and West-Germany authorities kept this "improved" version of Paragraph 175 Penal Code -- in the view of the German Supreme Court it was "not typical of Nazi ideology." Sex acts committed between women were never illegal in Germany -- before, during, or after the Nazi period.

After 1969, when Paragraph 175 no longer applied to couples over 21, gay activists told about hundreds of thousands of gay inmates who wore the Pink Triangle on their striped uniforms. Although Rüdiger Lautmann in 1977 calculated the number to be

less than 15,000 some lobbyists still cling to the idea of the *Homocaust*. Since the repeal of Paragraph 175 in 1994, hundreds of articles on homosexuals under the Nazi dictatorship have been published -- some by local historians, others by the research centers of holocaust museums -- many state-financed, only a few by universities. The material unearthed still awaits a general evaluation and comprehensive account.

This book contains 26 papers, which were delivered at a 1996 conference in Saarbrücken, plus the editors' introduction; it shows what has been achieved so far and what still has to be done. Some contributors see the persecution of gays as part and parcel of "Nazi racism" while others see it as part of the normal German homophobia between 1871 and 1969. They succeed in giving a rich and diverse picture of gay life in Germany, and even throw some light on lesbians in Germany (Claudia Schoppmann) and Austria (Angela H. Mayer), gays in the Netherlands (Pieter Koenders) and France (Mario Kramp). The paper on Italy delivered by Giovanni Dall'Orto is not included in the book, and there is nothing on Axis-controlled Europe, nor anything about gay bashing or blackmail.

Wolfgang Benz places gay men among the overlooked groups of victims. In the West the "good victims" were the Jews, the Protestant refusniks, Catholic priests and the conservative resistance. In the East the good victims were the three million murdered Red Army prisoners of war and the Communist resistance. The other victims -- Gypsies, Jehovah's witnesses, Afro-Germans, the "work-shy" and the feeble-minded -- were relegated to second

rank, not only by state and society, but by the "privileged" victims as well.

Lautmann lists fifteen explanations for the persecution of gays and gives his own: the SS as "executioners of societal homophobia." James D. Steakley argues that German and especially American gay intellectuals created a myth of gays and Jews as structurally equal holocaust victims. Georg Hansen writes about "the production of scapegoats" as rational state policy, and Geoffrey J. Giles highlights the role of homoeroticism in SA and Hitler Youth, and the use of denunciation to get rid of rivals.

Four authors focus on the role of medicine and psychiatry in the definition of Nazi policy (Harry Oosterhuis, Marc Dupont, Günther Grau, Peter von Rönn), and four articles discuss compensation (R. Lautmann, Rainer Herrn, Hans-Georg Stümke, Jörg Hutter). The last five articles are concerned with "remembrance": in the camps (Thomas Rahe), through a national monument (Albert Eckert), about archival losses (Micheler & Terfloth), and about testimonies (both Lutz van Dijk and Klaus Müller). Johannes Wasmuth writes about the law in the two post-war Germanies. Burkhard Jellonnek finds a far from coherent picture about the Gestapo. John C. Fout's research in court archives (some of them destroyed in the meantime) is fascinating: most of the victims had had sex with minors or in public places, many frequented the few gay bars that continued to function in the great cities right through the war, but some were caught in rural areas far from the gay sub-cultures, unaware of their existence and their vocabulary.

Manfred Herzer outs four opponents to Hitler, and he reminds us of texts written by gay émigrés about the predominance of homosexuals among Nazis: books by Wilhart S. Schlegel and Hans Siemsen, and an article by Magnus Hirschfeld, published on 20 July 1933 in the *Pariser Tageblatt*: "The masses of urnings, who couldn't praise Hitler enough for tolerating Röhm & Co. and who therefore changed sides, now feel betrayed and disappointed."

Also glimpsed from the book: the persecution of homosexuals, blackmail, the danger of social ostracism (and hence suicide) increased only slightly in the Nazi period, and peaked in 1935/6 and under Adenauer in 1958/9. Whereas under Wilhelm II and in the Weimar Republic only 1% of the victims of state persecution had been aristocratic or upper-middle class, under the Nazis about 10% were. While under Paragraph 175 prior to 1935 only overt sexual acts ("all sleeping-together acts") were punishable, under the new Nazi version of Paragraph 175, which lasted until 1969, even a touch or a lewd glance could bring you into prison. Measures against Jews became harsher in 1941, changing from economic and social restrictions (all of which had in prior times been enacted by Christian rulers, as documented by Raul Hilberg in *The Destruction of the European Jews*) intended to "convince" the Jews to leave Germany, to incarceration and killings. At the same time the persecution of gay men decreased because of the war-time need to use them for canon fodder -- notwithstanding the regulations that still stipulated the death penalty for homosexual seducers in the SS, the police, and later the Wehrmacht.

Only a handful of the "men with the pink triangle" are still alive. Some of them have applied repeatedly for reparations, but up to the end of the last century not one succeeded in getting it. In contrast, the "good victims" have received literally trillions of dollars.

While two gay bars remained discreetly open throughout the war in Berlin, and some perhaps in other cities, I wish to report what two survivors answered to my question on sexual activities in the camps (posed at a session on children in the camps, chaired by Sybil Milton, at the planning conference for "the others" at the Holocaust Museum in Washington). One shouted, "We were all too tired to do anything." Another said: "Every Kapo had his harem of Jewish boys." I believe both statements to be true. Kapos were often "asocials", that is, common criminals who were used to homosexual activities in jails. They could supply themselves and their boys with extra food, less work, etc., and of the teenage boys in the sex-segregated camps, almost all were Jewish.

The issue of how many gay men died under the Nazis may never be resolved; it could run from a low of 15,000 to somewhere in the hundreds of thousands. The total number of homosexual men who died would have to include those worked to death in the camps, those executed with or without trial in the military, those murdered by gay-bashers and those driven to suicide. In addition, it goes without saying that tens to hundreds of thousands of gay men perished while fighting in the German military; or as part of the "mentally sick", the homeless, the

"work-shy" killed by the Nazis; or as part of the 40,000 men executed by German military tribunals; or as civilian victims of the Allied carpet bombing of German cities; or from disease and starvation in the hideous aftermath of the war.

However, in one sense we have suffered a loss far greater than any experienced by the "good victims": the annihilation of our culture, our heritage. The tens of thousands of books, the huge collection of manuscripts, pictures, photographs, etc. from the Institute for Sexual Science, which were destroyed by the Nazis, can never be replaced. It is no more than fair that the gay community should get compensation for the "destruction of institutions, publishing houses and infra structure" (Lautmann). Such compensation could help to support the gay archives of the present.

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