

THE 'DIFFERENT' IN GERMANY OF THE 1930s

Homosexuals in Germany

“At that time there were several arrests of homosexuals in our town. One of the first to be arrested was my friend, with whom I had had a relationship since he was 23 years old.

One day the Gestapo came to his house and took him. There was no point in reporting his disappearance. Those who dared were in danger of themselves being arrested. Knowing them was enough to make someone a suspect. After my friend was arrested, the Gestapo broke into his house and searched it. The worst thing was the address books. Anyone whose name appeared in the books or who was connected to them was arrested. I as well.

We had to be especially careful with regard to all our acquaintances, and I was forced to cut off all contact with all my friends. We used to pass each other in the street without a sign of knowing each other so as not to endanger ourselves. Homosexuals no longer had anywhere where they could meet...”

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The Story of the Gypsy Wrestler

“In June 1933 two wrestlers competed against each other. In one corner was Adolf Witt, an “Aryan”, and in the other corner was Johann Trulmann.

The Nazi wrestling federation was not happy to have Trulmann competing for the title, because he was a Gypsy. However, Trulmann, nicknamed “the Gypsy”, was one of the most popular wrestlers in Germany. The Nazis, who were sensitive to public opinion, forced the federation to permit an exception. The federation chose Witt, a pure “Aryan”, to compete against him.

However, on June 8 Witt was humiliated by his opponent. For 12 rounds the 26 year old Trulmann jumped and stamped on Witt and completely defeated him. The organizers were embarrassed and announced that it was a tie. The audience was enraged – for many minutes they objected out loud and threatened to break the stadium. Finally the organizers gave in and announced that Trulmann was the German middleweight champion. The newspapers and magazines immediately attacked him and described his style as “Gypsy, jumping and unexpected”, and him as “the alien”, “the dangerous”. Eight days later his title was denied him and his career ended forever.

However, another bout was organized, in which Trulmann appeared with his hair dyed blond. This time he didn't jump but stood in the middle of the arena like a block of wood and absorbed blow after blow. At the end of the fifth round “the Gypsy”, wounded and bleeding, fell and was removed from the arena.”

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Treatment of Political Opponents

The leader of the Workers Association in a Berlin suburb, together with his sons resisted an SA patrol when it broke into his home one night to arrest him. The man shot two of the SA men in self-defense, and that same night an expanded SA unit came to his house, overcame the man and his sons and hanged them in a storage shed in the yard of the house. The next morning the SA unit again showed up in the Kapnick quarter, broke into the homes of all those known to be social-democrats and liquidated them on the spot. No one ever knew how many were killed.

(Sebastian Haffner, "Defying Hitler: a Memoir")

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The Jewish Doctor and the Arian Secretary

“I met my former secretary today. I looked carefully into her short-sighted eyes, and she turned away. I felt a trembling that caused me to spit into the piece of paper I was holding.

This secretary had been one of my patients. I encountered her by coincidence in the street after her boyfriend had abandoned her. She was unemployed and destitute.

I treated her, taught her for many years and even arranged for her to work for me, until the end came and I was fired.

She has changed greatly. Today she can't even say hello to me. And I was the one who saved her.

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Distancing Oneself from the Jews

From 1933 on, Jewish students were consistently pushed out of German schools, and were humiliated in lessons by Nazi ideology.

(In the picture you can see the writing on the blackboard: “The Jews are our greatest enemy – watch out for Jews!!!”)

...For Hilman Geffen-Ludomer, the only Jewish student in the beautiful Berlin suburb, the law “against overcrowding in German schools” completely changed her life. She was evicted from the school, and also “the pleasant neighborhood that I knew, changed all at once... Suddenly I no longer had any friends. My neighbors were afraid to talk to me. Some of the neighbors whom I used to visit told me: ‘don’t come here any more, because I am afraid. We are forbidden any contact with Jews’.”

Another student, 11-year old Laura from Nürnberg, was allowed to remain at school in 1933 because her father was a war hero. Nevertheless “the non-Jewish children began to say to me: ‘we can’t go home from school with you any longer. We are forbidden to be seen with you any more’. With every passing day under the Nazi regime, the distance between us and our neighbors increased. Our closest friends, with whom we had had close relations for years, no longer recognized us. They suddenly discovered that we were different.”

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Anna W.

Anna W. was born in 1916 in Mullheim, in the Ruhr. When she was one year old she was put in an orphanage in Assen.

As an adolescent she began to steal, and was put under the charge of the municipal welfare-services. Attempts to provide her with a job as a house-maid failed. In the welfare-services records Anna W. is described as 'bad tempered, withdrawn and unstable.' The records also state that she engages in sexual relations with older men.

When Anna W. was 21 she was withdrawn from the welfare-services care. On the 4th of November 1937 she was hospitalized at the psychiatric hospital in Hadamar – one of the six centers which carried out the 'Euthanasia Program'. She was diagnosed there as 'imbecile from birth, socially suspicious'. The hospital appealed to the court to have Anna W. sterilized, for the benefit of German society.