



Andreas Pretzel and Gabriele Roßbach:

"In view of the anticipated severe penalty"

The persecution of Homosexuals in Berlin 1933-1945

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With essays by Carola Gerlach, Ursula Meinhard, Andreas Pretzel, Gabriele Rossbach et al. and a foreword by Günter Grau

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This book presents a comprehensive overview of the persecution of homosexuals in the Third Reich's capital city. The case files of more than 2,000 prosecutions before the Berlin State Court have been systematically worked through, and more than 17,000 cases registered in State Prosecutor indexes have been examined. Nearly every hundredth Berliner of adult (prosecutable) age was charged with having "come to the attention of the authorities as a homosexual".

In comparison with the periodic crackdowns that occurred throughout the Third Reich, persecution in Berlin was particularly unrelenting and intense: here the Gestapo had exclusive authority between 1935 and 1940. This book goes beyond those years and thus offers for the first time a regional study that also includes the war years, when the Criminal Police continued what the Gestapo had begun. As late as March 1945, police officers of the homosexual division were still underway as a special squad to track down homosexuals.

Case files of investigations and prosecutions offer an insider view of the practice of persecution as implemented by the police and the justice system, making it clear to what extent the announced goals of homosexual persecution were realised. Despite the sweeping Nazi slogans about "wiping out homosexuality", a differentiated apparatus of persecution was employed against those men who were charged with and found guilty of homosexual acts. Fear had many faces.

The authors have made an effort to let the case files largely speak for themselves. The quotes document with what contempt and business-like routine, with what vehemence and with what motivations homosexuals were terrorised by police and court officials. It becomes apparent that inhumanity also has many faces.

Part One of the book treats the devastating role played by reports

and denunciations to the police, illuminating the methods of investigation and interrogation employed by the Gestapo and the Criminal Police as well as the sentencing practices of the judiciary. Prosecutions in the years 1939 - 1941 dealing with homosexual acts in the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp also receive detailed consideration.

Part Two reconstructs the prosecutorial histories of seventeen individuals, shedding light on their everyday lives as well as their loves, happiness, and sufferings. The fate of these individuals stands for the many others who are recalled today only by their case files. These source materials enable us to imagine „gay" life in Nazi-era Berlin.

Since the memoir "From my Concentration Camp Diary" by Classen von Neudegg and Heinz Heger's report "The men with the Pink Triangle", no text about gay persecution in the Third Reich has engaged, excited and infuriated me as much as this one. We have here not just a report on the inhumane system of the Nazis, their tortures and murders: here everything is documented with case files and records. - Egmont Fassbinder