

# The Jewish Connection to Homosexuality in the Third Reich

Carol Dunn  
Masters,  
University of Sydney

This article examines the Jewish connection to male homosexuality in the Third Reich. It does so by looking at prominent Jewish figures in the homosexual rights movement and by examining the Nazis' methods of persecution towards Jewish homosexuals. The field of sexology and the homosexual rights movement in Germany in the early twentieth century had a significant Jewish influence. Once the Nazis came to power they used this connection as a way to persecute both homosexuals and Jews. The goal of this article is to show how the Jewish connection to sexology and the homosexual rights movement affected the Nazis' outlook on male homosexuality and their persecution of homosexuals and Jewish homosexuals. Several significant events in the Nazi persecution of homosexuals will not be explored here, including events such as, the Röhm affair and the *Sturmabteilung* (SA) purge, as well as Himmler's view of homosexuality in the *Schutzstaffel* (SS). Although these events are important when looking at the Nazi's persecution of homosexuals as a whole, they have no significant bearing on the Jewish connection with homosexuality and will therefore be avoided.

## Homosexual Rights Movement

When the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, homosexuality among males was not just a taboo subject, it was effectively illegal. Paragraph 175 of the German criminal code, the anti-sodomy law, had been established in 1871 and held a firm place in German law. This paragraph did not make homosexuality illegal per se, however, it did make the physical act of sexual intercourse between males illegal. Once the Nazis took control of the state they were quick to amend the paragraph. This new paragraph not only made the physical act of penetration illegal but all acts that could suggest homosexuality, such as a kiss, hug, touch or a look that was deemed inappropriate. The revised paragraph was promulgated on 28 June 1935 and became effective on 1 September. It states, 'A man who commits sexual indecencies (*Unzucht*) with another man

---

---

or lets himself be abused for sexual indecencies shall be punished with imprisonment'.<sup>1</sup> It is important to note here that female homosexuality was not addressed within the original law or in the subsequent reform of the paragraph. Lesbians were not seen as a real threat to German society since they were still able to produce offspring. Male homosexuality posed a larger threat to National Socialist ideology. The Aryan masculine ideal was one of physical and mental strength that put German society before their own desires. In the Nazis' view male homosexuals were the antithesis of this ideal. They were seen as weak and effeminate, as slaves to their physical urges, and as unlikely to fulfill their duty to German society and reproduce.<sup>2</sup>

Despite Paragraph 175, homosexuality began to flourish in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century. Berlin had become the epicenter of an openly gay culture, with approximately forty gay bars located throughout the city. This was permitted due to the tolerance of the Berlin police force.<sup>3</sup> As long as the culture stayed to itself and remained invisible to the public eye then they were allowed to live relatively unharmed. It was in the midst of this subtle tolerance that the homosexual rights movement began to gain strength. At the forefront of this movement and the campaign to remove Paragraph 175 was Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld.

As a Jewish homosexual and sexologist, Hirschfeld had been an active participant for homosexual rights since the late nineteenth century. In 1897 he created the first gay liberation organization in Germany known as the *Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee* (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee). The Committee became the first face of the rights movement in Germany. In the foreword of the first publications of *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (*Yearbook for Intermediate Sexual Types*), the Committee presented itself and the publication as having three main goals: working towards the abolishment of Paragraph 175, informing opinion on homosexuality and as a source of interest to not only doctors and lawyers, but also homosexual men and women.<sup>4</sup> These goals aligned with Hirschfeld's personal motto, *Per scientiam ad justitiam*, 'justice through knowledge'.<sup>5</sup> Hirschfeld wanted to use science as a means to create a wider understanding of homosexuality and to end discrimination and homophobia.

In the same year that the Committee was formed, it immediately orchestrated an active petition campaign to amend Paragraph 175. If they had succeeded, the amendments would have legalized homosexual acts among consenting adults, while cases involving the use of force or coercion, minors under the age of sixteen, and public displays would still remain illegal.<sup>6</sup> Despite nine hundred signatures, the petition failed when brought to parliament in 1898. Only one party in the

---

1 The paragraph goes on to say that in specific cases where the infraction is considered to be minimal and the accused is under the age of twenty-one then the court may refrain from punishment. Original text translated from the German by the author. 'Der Paragraph 175: Wortlauf der Fassung gem. RStGB von 1871 und der Neufassung von 1935' in *Homosexualität in der NS-Zeit: Dokumente einer Diskriminierung und Verfolgung*, ed. Günter Grau, (Frankfurt am Main: S.Fischer Verlag, 2004), 95.

2 Stefan Micheler and Patricia Szobar, 'Homophobic Propaganda and the Denunciation of Same-Sex-Desiring Men under National Socialism', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, (1/2), Special Issue: Sexuality and German Fascism, (Jan.-Apr., 2002), 96.

3 James D. Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany* (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 27.

4 Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitee, *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Homosexualität* (Leipzig: Max Spohr, 1899), 2.

5 Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany*, 30.

6 Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitee, *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, 241.

Reichstag supported the Committee's objectives, the Social Democrats, led by August Bebel. The Social Democrats were the only party who did not see the petition and its aim as contemptible. The petition went to the Reichstag once more in 1905 with Bebel's support, yet once again it failed. The petition ran for several more years and continued to gain support. By 1914, several thousand signatures, many of which were from doctors and university professors, had been added.<sup>7</sup> Many of the Jewish academic elite supported homosexual rights. Among the signatures to be found on the petition were several prominent Jews including, Max Brod, Martin Buber, Albert Einstein, Grete Meisel-Hess and Stefan Zweig.<sup>8</sup>

When active, the Committee was permeated with a strong Jewish influence. Kurt Hiller, a Jewish homosexual with a doctorate in law, joined the Committee in 1908. Ten years later he joined the board of directors and became co-chairperson in the late twenties. Hiller, like Hirschfeld, was a strong presence in the Committee and prominent in the fight for homosexual rights. Due to his commitment, the SS stormed and searched Hiller's home on 7 March 1933. Several days later, on the twenty-third, he was arrested and sent to the Oranienburg concentration camp, near Berlin, where he was severely mistreated and tortured.<sup>9</sup> Under unknown circumstances Hiller was released from the camp nine months later. He immediately left Germany and eventually arrived in London. Richard Plant suggests that Hiller's incarceration at Oranienburg was the first step in the campaign to rid Germany of its homosexuals.<sup>10</sup>

When Hiller became more prominent in the Committee, Hirschfeld took a lesser role and started on his next endeavour, the *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft* (Institute for Sexual Science), which he opened on 1 July 1919 in Berlin. Hirschfeld bought the building for the Institute using his own money, which allowed him full range on how it was organized and managed. The Institute was not connected to the Committee and therefore operated independently, although the Committee did have an office in the Institute's building. The Institute was used in a variety of ways and was opened to the public. It functioned as a research institute, clinic, lecture hall, library and archive for an invaluable collection of biological, sociological, anthropological, ethnological, medical and statistical documentation relating to sexology. With this Institute, Hirschfeld continued to educate the public on homosexuality through science until it was abruptly closed. On 6 May 1933 at 9:30am a crowd of students raided and destroyed the Institute. Over 10,000 books and documents from the Institute's library and archives were stolen.<sup>11</sup> Four days later the stolen books and documents were brought to Opernplatz and were burned alongside other works that Nazi ideology deemed degenerate. Hirschfeld had just completed a world tour and was in Paris when the Institute was broken into. A week later he watched the destruction of his life's work on a newsreel in a Paris theatre. He chose not to return to Germany and died of heart failure on 14 May 1935, his sixty-seventh birthday.

---

7 Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany*, 31.

8 John Lauritsen and David Thorstad, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement (1864-1935)*, (New York: Times Change Press, 1974), 14

9 The SA established Oranienburg Concentration Camp in 1933. In the aftermath of the 'Röhm *putsch*' and SA purge the camp was taken over by the SS and closed down in July 1934. In 1936, Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp was built nearby (Richard Plant, *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War Against Homosexuals* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1986), 50-51)

10 Ibid.

11 'Wie Hirschfelds Sexualwissenschaftliches Institut demoliert und zerstört wurde (6. Mai 1933): Bericht' in Grau, *Homosexualität in der NS-Zeit*, 63.

---

Although an influential figure in homosexual rights, Hirschfeld was often seen as controversial when it came to sexology and the science of homosexuality. His *Zwischenstufentheorie* (intermediate stage theory) of sexuality held that there were four clearly distinguishable sexes.<sup>12</sup> Hirschfeld argued that homosexuals made up a third sex, neither male nor female. They were biologically distinct and contained aspects of both genders. Hirschfeld's theory was not well received among his academic peers and was in disrepute with many other scientists and sexologists. According to Max Hodann, one of Hirschfeld's colleagues:

Hirschfeld's work was more unwelcome to the political reaction in Central Europe than even Sigmund Freud's. He was simply labeled as a "propagandist for homosexuality," and the anti-Semitism so strongly developed in Germany, even before Hitler's advent, was also an element in consolidating opposition to his work.<sup>13</sup>

The conservative sexologist Albert Moll, who was also Jewish, took a particular dislike towards Hirschfeld's problematic nature and progressive views. Despite their opposing ideas, their field eventually fell into discredit because of their Jewish background. According to Erwin Haeberle, 'When Hitler finally took over the government, all sexological work, progressive and conservative, suffered restrictions, because it was largely conducted by Jews.'<sup>14</sup> While several fields in Germany suffered losses with the expulsion of their Jewish practitioners, the fields themselves were still considered creditable.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, the field of sexology lost its creditability and suffered due to its Jewish practitioners.<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately, this connection between the Jews and homosexuality only proved to be detrimental to both. The link between the two gave the Nazis ample opportunity to degrade both groups by using one against the other. For those 'Aryans' who were anti-Semitic, yet had no particular feelings towards homosexuals, the Nazis used propaganda to show that homosexuality was a Jewish perversion. On 2 August 1930, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, a Nazi newspaper, wrote:

Among the many evil instincts that characterize the Jewish race, one that is especially pernicious has to do with sexual relationships. The Jews are forever trying to propagandize sexual relations between siblings, men and animals, and men and men. We National Socialists will soon unmask and condemn them by law. These efforts are nothing but vulgar, perverted crimes and we will punish them by banishment or hanging.<sup>17</sup>

---

12 The four sexes can be distinguished as such: (1) 'absolute' males and 'absolute' females, those who hold all biological characteristics of their respective sex; (2) hermaphrodites, males who have female physical traits and females who have male physical traits; (3) homosexuals and bisexuals and (4) transvestites, those who are 'natural' males or females however live as and hold all other characteristics of the opposite sex; see Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* (Berlin: Louis Marcus, 1914), 354-360.

13 Max Hodann, *History of Modern Morals*, trans. by Stella Browne (London: William Heinemann (Medical Books), 1937), 49-50.

14 Erwin J. Haeberle, 'Swastika, Pink Triangle and Yellow Star: The Destruction of Sexology and the Persecution of Homosexuals in Nazi Germany', *The Journal of Sex Research*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (August 1981), 273.

15 A few examples of this type of loss to various German fields include the theoretical physicist Albert Einstein and the filmmaker Fritz Lang, see Doris Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 97.

16 The phasing out of Jews from various professions began on 7 April 1933 with the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, which prohibited Jews from working in the public sector, and the Law Regulating Admission to the Bar, which meant that Jews could have their admission to the bar revoked. See Wolfgang Benz, *A Concise History of the Third Reich*, trans. Thomas Dunlop (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 141-142.

17 Alfred Rosenberg, *Völkischer Beobachter* (2 August 1930) quoted in Plant, *The Pink Triangle*, 49.

The Nazis were able to use this 'logic' in reverse as well. For those who were homophobic and had no radical opinion about the Jews, the Nazis were able to argue that the disease of homosexuality was rampant in Judaism. The regulations of Paragraph 175, laid out in Paragraph 175a, further stipulated punishment for a man who coerces other men through force and threats, abuses a relationship of dependence or seduces boys under the age of twenty-one for sexual indecencies.<sup>18</sup> Paragraph 175b condemns human and animal sexual relations. Using Paragraph 175 of the penal code to persecute homosexuals and label them as degenerates, it was an easy step for the Nazis to use propaganda, such as the *Völkischer Beobachter* article above, to show that Jews were the seducers of the young and innocent and held the same perversions as homosexuals. For those who were not homophobic or anti-Semitic, these corrupt associations could be used as a way to scare the society into hostility towards both groups or at least foster a dangerous indifference to their fates.

### Persecution of Homosexuals

The connections that the Nazis made between Judaism and homosexuality served as further justification for the persecution of both groups. Jews, according to the Nazis, were unwanted vermin and were eventually targeted for complete annihilation. Homosexuality was like a disease that needed to be cured. Therefore German homosexuals were to undergo rehabilitation to rid them of their desire for other males and turn them into 'real' men. This program of sexual correction used different methods to turn homosexuals into heterosexuals. One theory was that increased heterosexual activity would be able to cure homosexuality. To this end, brothels were put in some concentration camps and homosexual prisoners were required to go and spend time with one of the 'prostitutes'.<sup>19</sup> Another theory proposed that castration could rid a homosexual man of his desire. As early as 1935 a person suspected of degenerate acts could volunteer for castration in the hope of receiving leniency with their sentencing.<sup>20</sup> Heinrich Himmler took this same stance in 1943 with homosexual prisoners in the concentration camps by offering them release from the camps to work in war-essential factories if they agreed to castration.<sup>21</sup> Although not targeted for sexual rehabilitation, those people who were both Jewish and homosexual suffered extensively for their dual identities before they were killed as a result of their Jewish background. These Jewish homosexuals were the epitome of everything that the Nazis despised, holding both the degenerate traits of homosexuals and Jews. To understand their fate as homosexuals it is necessary to examine the persecution and suffering of all homosexuals who landed into the clutches of the Nazi concentration camp system. With this information, the particular circumstances of Jewish homosexuals can be put into proper perspective.

Once the Nazi's amendments to Paragraph 175 were put into effect on 1 September 1935, homosexuality became much harder to hide. The authorities no longer needed to be in possession of proof that indecent activities occurred. The mere suggestion of anything remotely homosexual

---

18 'Der Paragraph 175' 95.

19 To make sure that the homosexual prisoners were actually performing as required, the SS drilled holes into the doors so that they would be able to watch. According to Heinz Heger, the 'prostitutes' that were used at the Flossenbürg concentration camp brothel were actually female prisoners, either Jews or Gypsies, from the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp (Heinz Heger, *The Men with the Pink Triangle: The True Life-and-Death Story of Homosexuals in the Nazi Death Camps*, trans. David Fernbach (Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 1980), 98-99).

20 Geoffrey Giles, "'The Most Unkindest Cut of All': Castration, Homosexuality and Nazi Justice,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 27, No.1 (January 1992), 45-46.

21 Heger, *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, 101; and Plant, *The Pink Triangle*, 202.

---

was enough to get someone arrested. When suspicion was cast upon someone for participating in homosexual acts it became quite difficult to disprove the allegations. If they were convicted under the Paragraph, the chances of being sent to a concentration camp increased significantly. According to Eugen Kogon, a political prisoner in Buchenwald, the fate of homosexuals in the camps was horrific:

The fate of homosexuals in the concentration camps can only be described as ghastly. They were often segregated in special barracks and work details. Such segregation offered ample opportunities for unscrupulous elements in positions of power to engage in extortion and maltreatment.... If anything could save them at all, it was to enter into sordid relationships within the camp, but this was as likely to endanger their lives as to save them. Theirs was an insoluble predicament, and virtually all of them perished.<sup>22</sup>

A prisoner hierarchy system was established in the concentration camps to promote certain inmate groups. This system effectively pitted prisoners against each other as they tried to work their way to the top. Some groups would gain more power and obtain positions as camp 'dignitaries'. These were often positions with supervisory functions, such as a Kapo. To facilitate the camp hierarchy the SS created an elaborate colour coded triangle patch system to identify the reason for incarceration; Jews were marked with a yellow triangle, political prisoners with red, convicts and criminals with green, gypsies with brown, a-socials with black, Jehovah Witnesses with purple and homosexuals were marked with a pink triangle. According to Heinz Heger, a homosexual prisoner in Sachsenhausen and then Flossenbürg, the pink triangle 'was about 2 or 3 centimeters larger than the others...'.<sup>23</sup> The reasoning behind the larger triangle was to make homosexual inmates more recognizable from a greater distance. The pink colour and the larger size of the triangle made homosexuals stand out and they became an easy target for hostile inmates and guards. Even before the triangle patch system began, prisoners convicted under Paragraph 175 were marked with an identifying symbol on their clothing. The most vulgar of these symbols was the letter A, which stood for as *Arschficker* (arse-fucker).<sup>24</sup>

Upon entering a concentration camp, a homosexual's chance of death outweighed their chance of survival. According to Raimund Schnabel in an account of Dachau: 'The prisoners with the pink triangle never lived long. They were exterminated by the SS quickly and systematically.'<sup>25</sup> In a comprehensive study on homosexual persecution in concentration camps, Rüdiger Lautmann found that the death rate for homosexuals once they entered the camp was sixty per cent.<sup>26</sup> This high death rate is due to the low stature of the homosexuals in the concentration camp's prisoner hierarchy. Homosexuals were seen on the same level as Jews in the minds of the other prisoners, especially the Kapos and guards. They were perceived as degenerates and pedophiles that were corrupting the 'Aryan' race. They were the weak link in the perfect German nation. These thoughts took verbal and physical form in the camps. At every opportunity homosexuals were referred to with derogatory names. *Warmer Brüder*, which literally translates to 'warm brother',

<sup>22</sup> Eugen Kogon, *The Theory and Practice of Hell: The German Concentration Camps and the System Behind Them*, trans. Heinz Norden (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1950), 35.

<sup>23</sup> Heger, *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, 32.

<sup>24</sup> Rüdiger Lautmann, 'The Pink Triangle: The Persecution of Homosexual Males in Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany', *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol 6 (1) (Fall/Winter 1980), 148.

<sup>25</sup> Raimund Schnabel, *Die Frommen in der Hölle* (Frankfurt: Roederberg, 1967), 53 quoted in Plant, *The Pink Triangle*, 167.

<sup>26</sup> Lautmann, 'The Pink Triangle', 156.

was a slang term for queer and was often used in a variety of puns.<sup>27</sup> When Heger first arrived at Sachsenhausen in January 1940 with other prisoners convicted under Paragraph 175, they were forced to stand outside naked when a guard made this pun, 'You queers are going to remain here until you cool off.'<sup>28</sup> This was only one of many verbally abusive terms used to address homosexual inmates. With these verbal attacks often came physical aggression. The smallest infraction of camp regulations could lead a Kapo or guard into a rage that would result in a potentially deadly beating. Not all beatings had to have a logical reason behind them. Some guards would abuse and harass prisoners because it gave them enjoyment. SS guards on duty would often amuse themselves with torturing and killing prisoners. It was a frequent pastime for them to grab a prisoner's cap and throw it towards the barbed wire. The prisoner was then ordered to retrieve his cap. Once he was within a certain distance of the barbed wire, he was shot under the pretense of escaping. This 'game' was a favourite among the guards and they even received rewards for their participation, three days leave for killing every man who 'attempted to escape'. Their favourite pawns for these 'games' were Jews and homosexuals.<sup>29</sup>

In his study, Lautmann states 'homosexual prisoners were eight times less likely to obtain the light duties'.<sup>30</sup> Light duties gave the prisoners the opportunity for better health and a longer life in the camps. For a homosexual prisoner, getting work in the kitchen, laundry or administration, all of which were considered light duties, was extremely difficult. Instead, homosexual prisoners often received work assignments within some of the harsher labour commandos, such as the gravel pit in Dachau and the clay pit in Sachsenhausen, which was known as the 'death pit' to prisoners.<sup>31</sup> Many men feared these labour assignments and would do all they could to be assigned elsewhere. If a prisoner knew whom to bribe and had the right contacts, getting reassigned was possible, although difficult. Due to the low status of the pink triangle inmates and the contempt most prisoners felt towards them, arranging to be moved to a light labour commando was next to impossible. Every homosexual inmate in Sachsenhausen worked in the clay pit, for example.<sup>32</sup> Of those who were forced to do this type of work, many did not return to the camp at the end of the day.

### **Persecution of Jewish Homosexuals**

This was the life of homosexual inmates in concentration camps: hard labour, beatings, and the constant threat of death. To be marked with the pink triangle meant a life of despair. One of the only things worse than this was to be marked with the yellow triangle for Jews. This equated to a death sentence. Jewish homosexuals held both these symbols and as a result suffered extensively in the concentration camps. The pink triangle was placed on top of the yellow triangle to form the Star of David, a prominent Jewish symbol. Both identities were clearly marked and equally punished. In his memoir, Heger describes the tormented situation of a fellow prisoner in Sachsenhausen:

---

27 The term 'warmer Brüder' came from the unscientific assumption that the skin of homosexuals was softer and warmer than heterosexuals. Giles, "The Most Unkindest Cut of All", 56.

28 Heger, *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, 33.

29 This 'game' is spoken about in many survivor testimonies. For two such accounts see Heger, *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, 50-51, and Kogon, *The Theory and Practice of Hell*, 92-93.

30 Lautmann, 'The Pink Triangle', 152.

31 Heger, *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, 37.

32 Lautmann, 'The Pink Triangle', 152.

---

He had to suffer twice-over the chicanery of the SS and the “green” Capos, for being not only queer, but a Jew into the bargain.... Our SS block leader... was well aware that “his” Jewish queer had an enormous fortune abroad. After evening roll call, during what little free time remained to the prisoners, and very often even at night, he would send for “his” Jew and make him stand for a couple of hours in the snow, or make him do dozens upon dozens of knee-bends in the icy cold in his nightshirt, until the poor devil collapsed of exhaustion and passed out.<sup>33</sup>

According to Heger, this prisoner was beaten so badly due to his double status in the camp as a homosexual and Jew that he was a ‘mental and physical wreck’.<sup>34</sup>

In the book *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution 1933-39*, Saul Friedländer speaks of another Jewish homosexual who was tortured at the hands of the Nazis due to being both a Jew and a homosexual. Leopold Obermayer, a Swiss, who had obtained a doctorate of law from Frankfurt University, was arrested while in Germany for crimes against Paragraph 175 and was imprisoned in Dachau and later in Mauthausen. Obermayer is a unique case because he attempted to legally fight his incarceration as a homosexual. Friedländer suggests that this was allowed due to his Swiss background. Obermayer, however, did not succeed and eventually died in Mauthausen. The letters that he wrote to his lawyer survived. They give glimpses at the tortures he went through. Friedländer writes, ‘In his report Obermayer alludes many times to his tormentor’s boundless hatred of the Jews.’<sup>35</sup> This suggests that Obermayer was victimized due to his Jewish identity. Friedländer also states: ‘Under interrogation Obermayer was pressed to give details about his lovers; he refused and was beaten up.’ It is obvious in this example that this beating occurred because of his homosexual nature. These suggest that Obermayer suffered extensive physical persecution at the hands of the Nazis because he was being punished for both his identities separately.

At the end of the war, despite the Nazis having been defeated, Paragraph 175 still remained part of the German criminal code and homosexuality was still considered illegal. Due to the continued fear of being persecuted for their sexual orientation, very few homosexuals gave testimonies or wrote memoirs. As a result, not much is often known about the individual lives of homosexual prisoners in the concentration camps. One such case is that of Paul O’Montis, a homosexual Jew. O’Montis was a Berlin cabaret singer. Like many others, his career was cut short when the Nazis took power. In 1933 he went to Vienna to escape Nazi persecution. He then went to Prague in 1938 after the *Anschluss*, the annexation of Austria by the Nazis. He was eventually captured by the Nazis and sent to Sachsenhausen. Not much is known about O’Montis’ time in the camp. What is known is that in July 1940, approximately six weeks after his arrival in Sachsenhausen, he died, presumably by suicide.<sup>36</sup> O’Montis’ attempts to avoid Nazi persecution for so long shows that he had a will to live. To presumably commit suicide so soon after arriving in the camp suggests that the situation he was faced with was too much for him to handle. Given the examples shown above, the fact that O’Montis was both homosexual and Jewish might have had a significant influence on the factors that led him to his supposed suicide. If O’Montis did not kill himself, then it is likely that he died by another’s hand.

33 Heger, *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, 39-40.

34 Ibid, 40.

35 Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume 1: The Years of Persecution 1933-39* (London: Phoenix Giant, 1997), 114.

36 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, ‘Personal Histories’, *Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals 1933-1945*, accessed November 6, 2011, <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/hsx/>.

## **Conclusion**

At the beginning of the twentieth century the homosexual rights movement was growing stronger under the guidance of Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld and the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee. By 1920 Berlin had a booming gay community and it looked as if Paragraph 175 would be removed from the German criminal code. These hopes, however, were soon dashed with the rise of Nazi power. All the work and progress made towards homosexual emancipation was quickly washed away and years of work destroyed. Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Science was ransacked and its library burned during the book burning at Opernplatz on 10 May 1933.

The Jewish background of several homosexual rights activists and sexologists was quickly turned against them and used as a means of negative propaganda and persecution. This created a redundant circle that played to the Nazi ideals. Homosexuality was wrong because it was a sick perversion of the Jews, while Jews were bad because they were sodomites and pedophiles just like homosexuals. These connections helped lead to the others' destruction. The Jewish academics that helped move the homosexual rights movement forward ultimately became one of the reasons for the persecution of homosexuality. Subsequently, those who were Jewish and homosexual suffered extensively for their identities in the concentration camps. They were marked as homosexual Jews for all to see and thus they suffered twice, both as Jews and as homosexuals in the Third Reich.