



QUEER IN EUROPE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Edited by
Régis Schlagdenhauffen

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

QUEER IN EUROPE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Edited by
Régis Schlagdenhauffen

*The opinions expressed in this work
are the responsibility of the authors and
do not necessarily reflect the official policy
of the Council of Europe.*

All rights reserved. No part of this
publication may be translated,
reproduced or transmitted, in any form
or by any means, electronic (CD-Rom,
internet, etc.) or mechanical, including
photocopying, recording or any
information storage or retrieval system,
without prior permission in writing from
the Directorate of Communication
(F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex or
publishing@coe.int).

Cover design: Documents
and Publications Production
Department (SPDP), Council of Europe

Cover photo: Anonymous;
used with permission of the
Musée de la libération, Paris
Layout: Jouve, Paris

Council of Europe Publishing
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
<http://book.coe.int>

ISBN 978-92-871-8464-1
© Council of Europe, August 2018
Printed at the Council of Europe

This work has been published with the
support of the Laboratoire d'Excellence
Écrire une histoire nouvelle de l'Europe
(LabEx EHNE).

ÉCRIRE UNE HISTOIRE NOUVELLE DE L'EUROPE

Contents

INTRODUCTION	5
<i>Fabrice Virgili and Julie Le Gac</i>	
1. QUEER LIFE IN EUROPE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR	7
<i>Régis Schlagdenhauffen</i>	
2. PUNISHING HOMOSEXUAL MEN AND WOMEN UNDER THE THIRD REICH	21
<i>Régis Schlagdenhauffen</i>	
3. THE ANSCHLUSS – ALSO A SEXUAL ANNEXATION? THE SITUATION OF HOMOSEXUAL MEN AND LESBIAN WOMEN IN AUSTRIA UNDER NAZI RULE	39
<i>Johann K. Kirchknopf</i>	
4. LEGAL IMBROGLIO IN THE PROTECTORATE OF BOHEMIA AND MORAVIA	53
<i>Jan Seidl</i>	
5. BEING HOMOSEXUAL IN ALSACE AND MOSELLE DURING THE <i>DE FACTO</i> ANNEXATION FROM 1940 TO 1945	63
<i>Frédéric Stroh</i>	
6. HOMOSEXUALS AND THE LABOUR SERVICE SYSTEM IN HORTHY'S HUNGARY	79
<i>Judit Takács</i>	
7. FASCISM, WAR AND MALE HOMOSEXUALITY	89
<i>Lorenzo Benadusi</i>	
8. SWEDEN – SUBTLE CONTROL AND GROWING HOMOPHOBIA	101
<i>Jens Rydström</i>	
9. THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR – SOME RESPITE IN THE USSR	119
<i>Arthur Clech</i>	
10. PUNISHING HOMOSEXUALS IN THE YUGOSLAV ANTI-FASCIST RESISTANCE ARMY	129
<i>Franko Dota</i>	
ABOUT THE AUTHORS	143

Introduction

Fabrice Virgili and Julie Le Gac

The pink triangle, or *Rosa Winkel* in German, has become a symbol of the fight for gay rights since its adoption by gay activists in the 1970s, first in West Germany and then in the United States. It was their way of inverting the infamous Nazi symbol and remembering the Second World War. After falling into oblivion for three decades, the pink triangle worn by detainees in Nazi concentration camps because of their homosexuality came to be emblematic of the fate of homosexuals during the war. Tens of thousands of men paid for their sexual orientation with their lives and their story became one to remember among gay and lesbian movements in their quest for recognition. There is an abundance of literature nowadays on the persecution of homosexuals under the Third Reich. But much less is known about the daily lives in those times of the millions of homosexual men and women all over Europe living in Axis, Allied or even neutral countries, in the heart or on the fringes of the war.

It was only logical, therefore, that the project *Writing a New History of Europe (Écrire une histoire nouvelle de l'Europe – EHNE)*¹ should take an interest in their story. It is a “new history” because of its scale, deliberately embracing the whole European continent, approaching the subject from every angle, including gender and, in particular, areas in which there has been little research. It is our opinion that history at the national level, like a close-up shot in a film, leaves too many factors out of the picture that are essential to our understanding of historical events.

It is a “new history” also because in addition to international relations, exchanges between states, population movements, and cultural, technological or other types of exchanges and transfers, we want to consider relations from a sexual standpoint, movements in terms of gender, transfers in the private sphere. For some time now, research on the war years has taken an interest in the gender issues involved, be it the absence of so many men, sent off to war; sexuality as an object of violence to the point of becoming a weapon of war; or the encounters triggered by people's movements, often imposed, that while they may have resulted in death, sometimes also resulted in love. Thus far, research into the effects of the war on people's private lives has focused mainly on heterosexual relations. It was important, therefore, to extend the focus to include homosexuality. What happens at a time when the usual social context, the peacetime environment, is altered, when circumstances increasingly throw men together and many people are tempted to seek escape from deathly reality and shun Thanatos for Eros?

1. Conducted by five Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) laboratories and three French universities (Nantes, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris-Sorbonne) and their international networks.

These are important questions. Opening up a whole new field of knowledge is an exciting prospect, both for the study of populations in times of war and to understand the attitude of our societies towards the sexual orientations of the individuals that form them. Like any pioneering work, it is an example of history in the making, a look inside the historian's workshop. For such a task shows us exactly where research on the subject stands, with its discrepancies, its advances and its occasional doubts. First, there are the sources, the different deposits of the "raw material" used by historians: easily accessible archives of declassified and carefully catalogued information or, on the contrary, scattered references that are difficult to assemble and require lengthy, patient efforts to collate. We present some initial case studies, always indispensable when looking into a new subject, and other, more extensive works that help to sketch a broader initial picture on a regional scale.

With this book, Régis Schlagdenhauffen, a member of the Gender & Europe team of the EHNE project known for his works on how homosexuals under the Nazi regime are remembered, has managed to bring together a team of researchers from different backgrounds. With the assistance of the Council of Europe, this collective approach has helped to compare notes, make surprising new comparisons and address new questions. The result of this research is set out in this volume. It helps improve our knowledge of the Second World War, of homosexual men and women and of private life. We are confident that these new pages of the history of Europe are a promise of more to come.

Chapter 1

Queer life in Europe during the Second World War

Régis Schlagdenhauffen

Following on from the Roaring Twenties, and despite the economic crisis, the 1930s began with a relatively carefree attitude towards homosexuals in Europe. Nearly every town had music halls, dance halls, bars and discreet cafés that were also meeting places for men who liked men and women who liked women. Across the continent, thanks to advances in transportation, homosexual tourism continued to increase from the Mediterranean to the Baltic, via the Atlantic and the North Sea. Lesbianism was not to be outdone, and the year 1931 was marked by the huge success of *Mädchen in uniform* (Girls in uniform), the first commercial lesbian film in the history of cinema, directed by Léontine Sagan. More generally, times were changing, especially sexually. The World League for Sexual Reform, founded in 1928 by a sexologist from Berlin, Magnus Hirschfeld, sought to have a progressive influence on the governments of European nations. The league demanded that they have “a rational attitude towards sexually abnormal persons and especially towards homosexuals, men and women” (Tamagne 2005). However, the ideas conveyed by the reformists were soon jeopardised by the rise to power of extremist parties that announced the advent of totalitarian regimes in Europe.

The wind changed in several countries from 1933. Sexuality, particularly homosexuality, was again a focus of debate (Domeier 2015; Praetorius 1909; Schlagdenhauffen 2015). As had been the case on the brink of the First World War, homosexual scandals broke out and were used for political gain. In France, the Dufrenne Affair, from the name of a theatre director found dead in 1933 and whose killer was suspected of being a male lover (Tamagne 2006a), illustrates the shift that occurred during this period: the homosexual, associated with feminine traits, embodied the nation's decline. The “inverts”, as they were called, symbolised treason and justified the urgent need for a moral turnaround. In Germany, the young Marinus van der Lubbe, who was allegedly homosexual and an anarchist communist, was accused of setting fire to the Reichstag in February 1933. He was sentenced to death for high treason. On 6 May, it was the turn of the Institute of Sexology, founded by Magnus Hirschfeld in 1919 in Berlin, to be destroyed by the Nazis as part of the operation against “non-German” thinking (Schlagdenhauffen 2005: 155-7). The following summer, Ernst Röhm, the openly homosexual chief of staff of the Sturmabteilung (SA), was assassinated during the Night of the Long Knives (June 1934). Immediately afterwards, roundups and arrests of homosexuals multiplied across the whole of Germany. More repressive legislation followed with, in June 1935, an increase in the severity of paragraph 175 of the German Criminal Code, whereby all types of homosexual

relationships between men were punishable by sending the perpetrators to concentration or re-education camps, effective immediately. In the Soviet Union, the crime of sodomy, abolished in 1917, was reintroduced in 1934, making homosexuality punishable by five years in a forced labour camp (Gulag). In Italy, the chief destination of exiled German and Austrian homosexuals, Mussolini also authorised in 1938 the arrest of homosexuals and their imprisonment on the Isole Tremiti in the Adriatic Sea.

During the interwar period the condemnation of homosexuality was predominantly focused on men. Ways of expressing disapproval of female homosexuality were more subtle and less common, especially as a result of the gender hierarchy, whereby it was deemed that women, if they were lesbians, would cause less harm to the nation and to patriarchy.

Up to now, the period of the Second World War has constituted a parenthesis in research into homosexuality. The late 1930s and the early 1950s are two chronological milestones separating, on the one hand, an initial homosexual movement born in 1897 (Lauritsen and Thorstad 1974), which reached its peak in Germany in the interwar period, and, on the other hand, a homophile movement born in the post-war period in several European countries, which entered into a decline from the 1970s (Bech 1994; Hekma 2004; Jackson 2009). The scarcity of information sources on sexuality, particularly homosexuality during the Second World War, partly explains this lack of research into homosexuality and homosexuals during this era, with the exception perhaps of the work done concerning homosexuals in Nazi concentration camps (Mußmann 2000).

Socio-sexual context during the Second World War

Between 1939 and 1945, millions of Europeans were drawn to having pre-marital and extra-marital sexual encounters, shifting their own moral boundaries and experiencing relationships that would have been quite simply impossible and unimaginable in times of peace (Herzog 2011: 98). Some historians claim that the Second World War, more so than the First World War, created new erotic situations that facilitated homosexual practices and encouraged the development of gay and lesbian identities after the war (D'Emilio 1990).

Firstly, the social and cultural context in question was characterised by the increased repression of homosexuals in several European countries, starting with Germany and the territories that it gradually annexed, while an attitude of detachment towards homosexuality prevailed in the occupied territories both in the west and the east. Secondly, the types of sexual engagement and encounters that the Second World War engendered were often described after the fact, using terms such as “circumstantial” or “situational”. Presented in this way, homosexual experiences became comprehensible and excusable and were regarded as a stopgap for the out-of-reach heterosexual relationship. The aim of this book is to go beyond such preconceived ideas and to show that, between 1939 and 1945, the issue went beyond that of identities and sexual experiences, because it became a political issue. In parallel with the subjective experiences of homosexual affairs and relationships, some European

states picked up on the homosexual question, criminalising or decriminalising it; they initiated policies that would continue into the post-war period and allow us to understand, in the end, why our continent is today a forerunner in the fight against homophobia and discrimination.

By opening up debate on a different history, one that was indeed marked by repression but also by enlistment in armies at war, collaboration and resistance in underground networks, the aim of this work is to explore these different situations while taking into consideration the temporalities of the conflict and national specificities. By jointly addressing these aspects, we are able to shed more light on the question of homosexuality in time of war and at a European level. In the first part of this book, the contributions will discuss the types of repression used against homosexuals, firstly in Germany, then in Austria, where lesbianism was suppressed to an extent incomparable with what happened elsewhere in Europe. In the second part, the authors evoke the situations prevailing in areas annexed during the war, in order to show how territories attached to the Third Reich were brought to heel. A study of the dismantlement of Czechoslovakia from 1940 on will make it possible to understand how several types of controls over sexuality were put in place. The example of the annexation of Alsace-Moselle will demonstrate how the integration of these regions into the Reich went hand in hand with the gradual exclusion of homosexuals from Alsace and Moselle. In the third part, the main focus will be homosexuality under an authoritarian regime: whether Hungary under Horthy, Italy under Mussolini or the Soviet Union under Stalin, these three examples will make it possible to understand how the temporalities of the war affected a group of individuals whose ostracism was conceived as a political tool. In the last section, this book will discuss on the one hand the situation in Sweden to understand how decriminalising homosexuality at the end of the Second World War was the first sign of the reforms that would affect all of Europe during the second half of the 20th century. On the other hand, it will discuss the situation in Yugoslavia: more precisely, how the anti-fascist movement dealt with homosexuality.

To write such a history at a European level, it is moreover necessary to put this issue back into the context of European historiography of the Second World War, which has paid scant attention to homosexuals because, after the war, few people were interested in them.

From the 1970s, the development of social movements for the liberation of women, gays and lesbians on both sides of the Atlantic, and the greater attention paid to victims of persecution, created a twofold dynamic. On the one hand, young people engaged in gay and lesbian emancipation movements sought to rebalance the writing of a history from which they felt excluded; on the other hand, activists searched for homosexual survivors and veterans from the Second World War with the aim of eliciting their testimony and consequently contributing to nourishing a collective memory. This dual movement was part of two broader dynamics that were “the era of the witness” and “competition between victims” (Wieviorka 1998; Chaumont 2002). Then, during the 1980s, at the same time as the emergence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, people following the example of Guy Hocquenghem went on to assert

that homosexuals had been victims of a genocide, of a “gay holocaust”² during the Second World War. University research and non-university research carried out from the 1980s on was focused above all on the fate of homosexuals in Nazi concentration camps. It showed that a systematic persecution did not take place on a European level (Tamagne 2006b). The research in question, quite often conducted locally, was primarily motivated by the desire of gay and lesbian organisations to show associations of former deportees that homosexuals had also been victims of the Nazi regime and, as such, they deserved to benefit from symbolic recognition in official commemorations. The historiography of homosexuals during the Second World War therefore has a political dimension, in that it constitutes a dynamic process permitting a social group that had long been kept silent to speak out and become visible. More generally, it is part of the history of homosexualities, which lies at the intersection of the history of sexualities and the history of genders, in that it concerns both the masculine, the feminine and the intrinsic hierarchies of each gender.

European homosexuals during the war

During the war, neutral Switzerland was seen as a beacon in the darkness. Le Cercle, an organisation based in Zurich and founded in 1932, was the only homosexual association to remain active. Its eponymous newspaper played a key role because it allowed homosexual people from all backgrounds to stay connected during the conflict (Kennedy 2013). However, homosexual organisations and associations formed only the most visible part of European homosexual subcultures. Many homosexual men and women, sometimes as couples, sometimes single, were able to continue leading a safe and discreet life during the war. They were simply subjected to the same restrictions as the rest of the population and, for the most part, there is little trace of them in the archives. Nevertheless, the temporalities of the war transformed means of movement between urban and rural zones, just as they affected the hierarchies between urban areas. At times, homosexuals found themselves confined to areas, leaving few possibilities for movement. The fact that it became impossible to “go into town”, a traditional place for more or less anonymous sexual encounters, forced a number of them to express their desires in ways that they would not have considered during times of peace. However, the archives contain only scant information on informal homosexual sociability. It is also a challenge to uncover this information, since it involves gathering coherent sources on a population that is, above all, defined by its sexual practices, whether criminalised or not, and perceived differently according to the locations concerned. Sometimes it is necessary to resort to verbal sources and personal documents, such as diaries. The diary belonging to the bisexual lawyer Eugène Wilhelm (1866-1951), for instance, reveals the transformation of sexual practices and fantasies during the Second World War. After withdrawing to the countryside following the evacuation of the French border zones, he described in these words the encounters he had with one of his young lovers:

Thursday 7 September 1939, I made love to Jean in the bushes. (Wilhelm 1939a)³

2. See the preface written by Guy Hocquenghem in Heger (2005).

3. *Journal intime d'Eugène Wilhelm*, Book No. 41, 7 September 1939, f° 110/145.

Tuesday 19-Thursday 21 December 1939: Back to full health ... Made love to Jean in the forest." (Wilhelm 1939b)⁴

More generally, the small amount of research carried out on homosexuality in rural areas has shown that gays and lesbians actually had a large choice of meeting places, sometimes semi-public, sometimes private, making it possible for them to have sex.⁵ British historian Emma Vickers (2011) has gathered many oral testimonies from British gay and lesbian veterans who, during the Second World War, had sexual encounters behind the front lines or on trains. Other testimonies attest to traumatic experiences on trains, especially when a homosexual identity was synonymous with disgrace. Heinz Heger, known as one of the first deported homosexuals to have testified in the 1970s, states in his memoirs that he was raped on a train that was taking him to a concentration camp (Heger 2005).

Homosexual behaviour did not only occur in the countryside and on public transport during the war. In many towns, public toilets and walkways maintained their social function as meeting places. In Prague, galleries, public baths and cafés welcomed the same clientele, putting aside the war and its unpleasant consequences. However, the war entailed several changes with regard to how homosexual communities functioned. In Czechoslovakia, the establishment of the Protectorate (16 March 1939) led to the dissolution of the army. Soldiers who were used to prostituting themselves in uniform were quickly replaced by young men enticed by the money involved. Very often forced into prostitution for economic reasons, they often turned out to be skilled blackmailers. As shown in Jan Seidl's contribution to this book, this led the police to focus their attention on male prostitution networks, which they were seeking to dismantle, rather than on homosexuals. In Italy too, the occupation of the south by Anglo-American troops from 1943, combined with the growing destitution of the local population, encouraged the development of a new type of prostitution, which turned Naples into a "big brothel" (Le Gac 2015) or even, if one is to believe the Italian writer Curzio Malaparte, the new European capital of homosexuality (Malaparte 2000). Lastly, in the Soviet Union, the practice of homosexuality was unimpeded, albeit discreet. Nevertheless, throughout our war-stricken continent, to engage in a homosexual relationship was rarely without risk.

Homosexuals and the law

Wartime can be a period conducive to legislative changes, particularly with regard to moral standards. Three distinct positions can be noted: the states that maintained the status quo regarding homosexuals, those that strengthened their legislative arsenal and, lastly, those that relaxed it.

As shown in the contributions by Arthur Clech, Johann K. Kirchknopf and Régis Schlagdenhauffen, Germany, Austria, Romania and the Soviet Union retained existing legal provisions. In fact these states had tightened their criminal codes before the

4. *Journal intime d'Eugène Wilhelm*, Book No. 42, 19-21 December 1939, f°41-43/71.

5. Howard J. (1999), *Men like that: a southern queer history*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, cited by Vickers (2010: 65).

war. The USSR had recriminalised homosexuality in 1934, Germany had increased the severity of paragraph 175 in 1935 and Romania had introduced the concept of acts of sexual inversion when reforming its Criminal Code in 1937.⁶ Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to say that nothing changed with the advent of war. In Germany, on 12 July 1940, a Nazi decree ordered the immediate internment in concentration camps of all men who had been found guilty of homosexual seduction. Then, in 1942, Hermann Göring decreed that a number of homosexuals be “put to the test” after serving their sentences. This measure ultimately led to homosexuals being enlisted in the Wehrmacht at a key moment in the conflict. Following the Anschluss, Germany required Austria to amend its interpretation of the Criminal Code to bring it into line with paragraph 175.

France was one of the countries that, on its own initiative, reinforced its legislation during the war. While homosexuality had no longer been punished since the French Revolution, Marshal Pétain approved, on 6 August 1942, a law introducing the concept of an “unnatural” act into French law. This change illustrates the moral crusade led by the Vichy regime, which had set out to regenerate the nation (Jackson 2009: 45). Admittedly, the law only sanctioned homosexual relationships between an adult and a minor over 15 years old, but it nevertheless led to the prosecution of victimless offences.

In the annexed Alsace-Moselle regions, German law was introduced from January 1942. Soon after, the number of arrests escalated and the judgments handed down show that the courts took a hard legal stance with regard to homosexuals from Alsace and Moselle. Nazi justice also adopted the principle of the retroactive application of the law. In concrete terms, this meant that men could be sentenced for acts committed at a time when homosexuality was not an offence. In a case tried in mid-1944 in Strasbourg, the court referred explicitly to the principle of retroactivity applicable in Alsace so as to be able to flesh out the evidence against a defendant prosecuted for “unnatural relations with men”, because he was accused of having caressed the leg of a soldier. Following his arrest, and during the interview, he admitted to having already masturbated with another man, two or three times at most, before the war. This made it possible for the court to consider him as a repeat offender. He was sentenced to six months in prison (Schlagdenhauffen 2014: 100).

The law was also applied retroactively in the Sudetenland, a region annexed by Germany since 1938.⁷ This provision enabled the arrest of 210 homosexuals in 1941, 112 in 1942 and 48 in the first half of 1943.

In situations of occupation, the occupying power could amend the provisions in force, along the same lines as what had happened in Austria following the Anschluss. The occupation of the Netherlands led to the overlap of two sets of rules. In addition to the Article 248bis, of the Dutch Criminal Code which specifically condemned

6. Article 437 of the new Romanian Penal Code introduced the concept of “sexual inversion acts” between men and between women, punishing them with sentences ranging from six months to two years if they created a public scandal. See Carstocea (2006).

7. Tamagne (2006b: 558) describes the case of Dr Anton Purkl, who was retrospectively convicted for acts committed before the annexation.

homosexual relations between adults and minors over 15, the Order No. 81/40 was promulgated by the occupying army on 31 July 1940. It made male homosexual relations punishable by a five-year prison sentence. From a formal standpoint, this order was nothing other than an exact copy of the German paragraph 175. However, since the Dutch police were not very co-operative, few charges were brought. Between 1940 and 1943, 138 men were brought before the courts pursuant to Order No. 81/40: 90 were sentenced, including 54 who were given a prison sentence and 10 who were committed to psychiatric hospitals. At the same time, 164 men appeared before the courts for violation of Article 248bis.

In Hungary, the government of Miklós Horthy adopted another type of treatment for homosexuals. Archives investigated by Judit Takács show that the Hungarian security services drew up lists of homosexuals, and 992 of them were considered fit for forced labour, in the same way as the Jews and political dissidents.

In Poland, a country that had decriminalised homosexuality in 1932, the traces of just a single case during the occupation have been found, attesting to the lack of German interest in the repression of homosexuals outside of the Reich. A Polish man who maintained a relationship with a German soldier was arrested in 1942. He was sentenced by the court of Toruń, managed by the occupying forces, to five years' imprisonment for violating paragraph 175.

Poland was not the only country to have decriminalised homosexuality before the war, since Denmark had done the same in 1933. This situation differs from that of countries that decriminalised homosexuality during the war. Iceland was the first of these in 1940, followed by Switzerland in 1942. In Switzerland, the German-speaking cantons had, until then, tended to punish homosexuality following the principle of paragraph 175, whereas the French and Italian-speaking cantons mainly drew on French or Italian law, which did not punish homosexuality. However, the decriminalisation in 1942 did not apply to the Swiss armed forces, due to the fear of the potential impact of homosexuality on troop morale (Delessert 2012). The last European country to decriminalise during the Second World War was Sweden in 1944. As Jens Rydström points out in the chapter devoted to this country, the argument put forward by reformers was the need to restrict opportunities for blackmailers who preferred to target homosexuals.

With regard to the risks run by those arrested for homosexuality, the majority of countries imposed prison sentences or internment in forced labour camps. Historical research carried out on the Gulag and concentration camps has shown that closed institutions of this type encouraged the development of a subculture, inspired partly by the prison subculture and very hostile towards homosexuals. To a certain extent, the subculture concerned was reflected in camp jargon, in which every term used was part of a hierarchical system classifying the individuals concerned. In Russia, the terms *pidory* (passive homosexual), *kobly* (a woman playing the role of a man) and *kovriyalki* (a woman who plays the role of the woman), used in the Gulag, contributed to the formation of a gender hierarchy (Kunstman 2009).

In Nazi concentration camps, a visible pink triangle was the "homosexual" badge, which was a symbol that allowed homosexual men to be distinguished from other

prisoners. Introduced in 1937, it was only used for prisoners of the Reich.⁸ The number of those who wore it in the camps never exceeded 1% of a camp's total population. Despite their small number, homosexuals were seen as repellent individuals. One of the rare options for homosexuals to escape their deadly situation was to be integrated into the Wehrmacht. This last point leads on to the question of homosexual participation in the war.

Homosexuals serving in the armed forces during the war

Following the Swiss example, many armies considered homosexuality strictly incompatible with rough soldierly manners (Rosario 2002). Under British Army instructions this was a clear reason for exclusion (Jackson 2010). The majority of homosexuals serving in the armed forces were aware of this and chose to hide their sexual orientation. At the same time, this explains why the cases of homosexuality to be found in public archives mostly concerned circumstantial or compensatory homosexuality (Delessert 2012: 80 ff.).

According to Vickers (2011), homosexuals kept a particularly "low profile" in the army and this is why few veterans are able to confirm that they encountered homosexuals during the war. However, many of them joined up, either through conscription or voluntarily. Vickers cites Peter Tatchell as claiming that around 250 000 gays served in the British armed forces (2011: 115). This number contrasts with the 790 cases of "indecent" brought before the British Court Martial between 1939 and 1945.⁹ According to Vickers (2011), the low number of cases reported was linked to the camouflage strategies deployed by homosexuals. However, going undercover did not mean that their sexual orientation would not eventually be discovered. The Croatian historian Franko Dota (2012: 22) has researched the case of the Partisan Josip Mardešić. As a Captain in the Yugoslavian National Liberation Army, he was charged with homosexuality and brought before the Supreme Court in March 1944, whereupon he was sentenced to death and executed.¹⁰ According to Dota, the charges – seduction of subordinates, unnatural sexual relationships with persons under his authority, corruption of young persons causing irreparable damage to their normal development – demonstrate the puritan stance taken by Yugoslavia towards homosexuality, considered to represent a danger to both the nation and the army.

The emphasis on aggressively heterosexual masculinity in the military did not necessarily mean that homosexuals were not enlisted. Nazi Germany is a textbook case. Until 1943, cases of homosexuality in the Wehrmacht were systematically punished but did not lead to the exclusion of homosexuals; they were incorporated into penal

8. Testimonies state that lesbians had to wear black "asocial" triangles, since the legal provision that sanctioned "unnatural relations" applied only to men in Germany. See Schlagdenhauffen (2011).

9. Section 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885, Labouchere Amendment, in The War Office (1950).

10. Sentence of J. Mardesic, Military Archive of Serbia, box 110A, f°5, doc. 1, cited by Dota (2012: 22).

battalions.¹¹ According to the historian Hans-Peter Klausch (1993: 24), this strategy was aimed at bringing these men back onto the right path, that of heterosexuality, because expelling them from the army would have sent a strong signal to all those who were trying to evade their military obligations (ibid.: 24).¹² For this reason, the Wehrmacht preferred to retrain homosexuals rather than exclude them. Franz Seidler (1977: 201) adds that “even emasculated men were still fit for military service, as long as they were worthy of serving (*Wehrwürdig*). It was not desirable to dispense emasculated men from their military obligations”. From 1944, when Germany was experiencing huge and growing losses on the eastern front, it was decided to resort to the forced incorporation of homosexuals interned in concentration camps, as Schlagdenhauffen describes in his contribution. A number of testimonies show that this political strategy was seen as a last hope. The historian Rainer Hoffschildt (1992: 130-3) has retraced the career of Heinz F., one of the last homosexuals to have been forced into the army. On 1 May 1945, eight days before the capitulation of Nazi Germany, he joined the Wehrmacht under duress.¹³

What about the homosexuals engaged in clandestine forms of combat and in the resistance movements that developed in several European countries? The research remains incomplete on this sensitive issue that, according to Gilles Perrault (2014), is a “taboo within the taboo”.

In France, several homosexual men and woman were engaged in resistance networks from the outset, including Pascal Copeau (who was one of the founders of the National Council of the Resistance) and the lesbian artist Claude Cahun, who actively participated, with her partner, in resistance movements on the island of Jersey until she was arrested by the Gestapo in 1944.

Seidl has also discovered evidence of Czech homosexuals who participated in resistance networks. A network was established around a priest, Otakar Zadražil (1900-45), from the Augustinian Monastery in Brno. Women also set up a network in Prague by establishing a network in which all of the members (men and women) were homosexual. Vague sources attest to the fact that this group was arrested and deported as political prisoners (Seidl et al. 2014: 263-4).

In addition, in the concentration camps homosexuals played a key role in the internal resistance networks. As Tamagne (2006c) points out, Robert Oelbermann, one of the leaders of the youth movements prohibited by the Nazis, was accused of an offence under paragraph 175 and sentenced in September 1936 to 21 months of forced labour. He was then transferred to Sachsenhausen concentration camp:

With Rudi Pallas, a former scoutmaster (*Pfadfinder*), he organised a resistance group that was able to unite deported homosexuals and politicians in Sachsenhausen. Rudi Pallas,

11. In 1936, homosexuals represented 11.5% of the 500th Disciplinary Battalion's recruits. Between 1942 and 1943 homosexuals represented no more than 3% of the troops, and 2% between 1944 and 1945. This can be explained by the widening of the channels for recruiting men assigned to the battalion (including those accused of offences inherent in a state of war, black marketeering, theft, etc.).

12. (No. 63), Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg (BA-MA) H20/474.

13. This career has been pieced together again thanks to research by Hoffschildt. Heinz F. gives his account in the documentary *Paragraph 175* by Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman (1999).

who was released in May 1940 and forced to serve as a medical officer on the Eastern front before being captured by the Russians, continued his resistance activities in prison. After the war, he was one of the few deported homosexuals to receive the title “victim of war” in light of his political engagements. (ibid.)¹⁴

A history of sexuality, and therefore of homosexuality, in the resistance still needs to be written. That would shed new light on the issue of homosexuals who collaborated, a subject that generally arouses considerable interest (Anglebert 2015). Certain of these collaborators are known, such as the far-right writer and journalist Robert Brasillach (Kaplan 2001) or even Abel Bonnard, member of the French Academy and Minister of Education under Vichy, who was nicknamed “Gestapette”. Hiding in Spain at the end of the war, he was found guilty of collaboration, sentenced to death *in absentia* and expelled from the French Academy.

Homosexuals after the war

The immediate post-war period was initially marked by the reconstruction of a Europe left devastated and grieving and then divided by the Cold War. This period, which saw stable institutions established on the continent with a view to a lasting peace – starting with the Council of Europe in 1949 in Strasbourg – was not necessarily more favourable for homosexuals. In a majority of countries, the legislation in force during the war was retained (Judt 2005). In Germany, paragraph 175 remained in place, leading to the conviction of more than 50 000 homosexuals between 1949 and 1969. In the United Kingdom, the police were particularly active in repressing homosexual relationships between men at the end of the 1940s and during the 1950s (Bauer et al. 2012). However, the repression of homosexuals after the war did not take place solely in the aforementioned countries, since the same observation has been made concerning other nations with a reputation for greater tolerance, such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and Finland (Rydström and Mustola 2007; Koenders 1986).

At the same time, there was an increased interest in the psychiatrisation of homosexuality and homosexuals, particularly thanks to the development of electroconvulsive therapy. To paraphrase Delessert, psychiatric facilities replaced criminal justice and the “criminals” were transformed into mental patients (2012). The cases considered by doctors to be the most serious were also subject – as in the United Kingdom – to “voluntary castration”, which was only voluntary in name. This finding is not confined to western Europe; in eastern Europe, particularly in the USSR, homosexuals underwent psychiatric assessment. Based on his ongoing research, Clech writes that, in the Soviet Union, half of the lesbian women whom he interviewed claimed that at least one of their partners or acquaintances was sent to an asylum after 1945. Psychiatric hospitals were therefore assigned a preventive function, but also one of re-education, which was hardly different from the function previously carried out by detention centres.

14. See Sternweiler A. (2000), “Homosexuelle aus der Jugendbewegung”, in Müller J. and Sternweiler A. (eds), *Homosexuelle Männer im KZ Sachsenhausen*, Schwules Museum Berlin, Verlag rosa Winkel, Berlin, cited by Tamagne (2006c).

All in all, the post-war years in Europe were marked by a fresh outbreak of police repression, and social and medical stigmatisation of homosexuals. The liberation of homosexuals would only take place from 1969 onwards thanks to the gradual appearance of a gay and lesbian movement, then the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) movement.

References

Anglebert M. (2015), *Eros en chemise brune. La face cachée du nazisme*, Vol. 2, Rosière en Haye, Camion noir.

Bauer H. et al. (2012), *Queer 1950s. Rethinking sexuality in the postwar years*, Palgrave, New York.

Bech H. (1994), "A short history of gay Denmark (1613-1989)", *Nordisk sexologi* No. 12, pp. 125-36.

Carstocea S. (2006), "Repères d'une identité clandestine : considérations historiques sur l'homosexualité en Roumanie", *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* No. 53-4, pp. 195-96.

Chaumont J.-M. (2002), *La concurrence des victimes. Génocide, identité, reconnaissance*, La Découverte, Paris.

Clech A. (forthcoming), "L'émigration intérieure des hommes et des femmes à l'époque soviétique tardive : une subjectivité homosexuelle soviétique commune", *Slavic Review*.

D'Emilio J. (1990), *Sexual politics, sexual communities. The making of a homosexual minority in the United States*, Penguin, New York.

Delessert T. (2012), *Les homosexuels sont un danger absolu : homosexualité masculine en Suisse durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, Antipodes, Lausanne.

Domeier N. (2015), *The Eulenburg affair. A cultural history of politics in imperial Germany*, Camden House, New York.

Heger H. (2005), *Des hommes au triangle rose*, H&O, Paris.

Hekma G. (2004), *Homoseksualiteit in Nederland van 1730 tot tijd*, Meulenhoff, Amsterdam.

Herzog D. (2011), *Sexuality in Europe. A twentieth-century history*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Hoffschildt R. (1992), "Wegen Homosexualität beinahe zehn Jahre in Konzentrationslagern – das Bericht eines Zeitzeugen", in Hoffschildt R. (ed.), *Olivia. Die bisher geheime Geschichte des Tabus Homosexualität und der Verfolgung der Homosexuellen in Hannover*, Selbstverlag, Hanover, pp. 130-33.

Jackson J. (2009), *Arcadie. La vie homosexuelle en France de l'après-guerre à la dépenalisation*, Autrement, Paris.