

## Homosexual Victims in Nazi Germany and Austria

Before Hitler's rise to power, homosexual acts were illegal in both Germany and Austria (as well as in the USA, the United Kingdom, Hungary, and many other countries, both before and after the war). Germany and many of these countries had **laws** against **sexual acts** between two men, and Austria laws banned same-sex relationships between both men and women illegal.

When Hitler came to power in 1933, the laws against homosexuality became even stronger. First Hitler began by banning all homosexual groups and imprisoned many men. The Gestapo began collecting "pink lists" of **suspected** homosexual men from lists that the police had made. In 1935 the section of the German **Criminal Code** known as "Paragraph 175" which banned homosexual acts was made stronger, and the punishments much worse. When Austria was **annexed** into the German Reich in 1938, their laws against gay men and women were also strengthened.

Nazis saw homosexuality as a disease and believed that true German men should be having traditional relationships, having children, and adding more people to the "Aryan" nation. Unlike those who were **persecuted** for racial reasons (such as Jewish, Roma and Sinti peoples), the goal of Nazi punishment was to "cure" gay men through punishment and hard labor. Female homosexuality was considered dangerous to Nazi ideas and women were targeted less by police, but they still suffered a great deal under these strict laws. For example, women who were accused of being gay might be sent to prison or camps under the category "**asocial**" instead of "homosexual". In Austria women could also be **prosecuted** and sent to jail for being suspected lesbians.

Punishments for homosexuality were severe. Depending on the mood of the judge, it was possible to be punished with a number of years in prison, and in later years even sentenced to death. After being released from prison, or even if found not guilty, men often were taken into "**protective custody**" in a concentration camp. In the camps, victims were forced to wear a pink triangle and were often treated particularly harshly by the guards and subjected to medical experiments by doctors. Often, the only way to escape imprisonment was to submit to **castration**. It is estimated that between 10 and 15,000 men were sent to concentration camps under the category of the pink triangle. In addition, many others were sent to prison and either died or were executed there.

After the war, it was very difficult for homosexual men and women to get **restitution** or to be recognized as victims of the Nazis. It was still illegal to be homosexual after the war in both Germany and Austria, and in some cases the men were kept in prison after 1945, even after having been in a concentration camp. Due to homophobic laws and social views, it took a very long time before countries started to pay **reparations** to homosexual victims or to build memorials that recognized them. Vienna recently made plans to build such a memorial, but the project ran into technical difficulties and was abandoned in 2007. No official attempts have been made since then.

**law**—das Gesetz

**sexual act**—der Geschlechtsverkehr

**to suspect**—jmdn. verdächtigen

**Criminal Code**—das Strafgesetzbuch

**annexation**—der Anschluss

**to persecute**— jmdn. verfolgen

**to prosecute**—jmdn. bestrafen

**protective custody**—die Schutzhaft

**castration**—die Kastration

**restitution, reparations**— die Entschädigungen