

CONCLUSION

Gay and Lesbian Life after 1945

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter considers the evolution of LGBTQ life and politics after the demise of the Nazi regime. In both East Germany and West Germany, the long history of LGBTQ life and politics continued to be felt—in the gay scenes that reemerged after the war, in the various political movements that eventually reappeared, in the scientific theories of sexuality that continued to evolve, and in the different sexual identities that LGBTQ individuals adopted.

OVERVIEW

This chapter serves as an epilogue to the book; it considers the evolution of LGBTQ life and politics after the demise of the Nazi regime. The abilities to find relationships, to organize socially and politically, and to develop a sexual identity were very much affected by whether one lived in East Germany or West Germany. In the latter, the government for a long time actually retained the Nazi-era version of Paragraph 175, meaning that prior convictions were upheld and thousands more found themselves arrested in the coming decades. New gay scenes and a new homosexual movement did emerge, but it took some time before they had the vitality of their 1920s counterparts. In East Germany, on the other hand, the law against male homosexuality was initially less stringent and was rarely enforced after 1957. The conditions of communism, however, made it impossible to build gay scenes as vibrant as those that existed in West Germany or to organize a movement that could fight for homosexual rights. Moreover, East German sexual culture remained focused on high birth rates, “healthy” families, and a conservative vision of socialist manhood in a way that left little room for public LGBTQ life.

In the 1960s much began to change. Both countries removed their laws against consensual adult male homosexuality. The sexual revolution generated a new openness toward sexual relationships that did not fit the norm. By the 1980s homosexual activists in both East Germany and West Germany began to memorialize homosexual victims of Nazi persecution, suggesting that this era of brutality was being reclaimed and refashioned into an emblem of survival and strength. The unification of Germany in 1990 and the creation of the European Union shortly afterward laid the groundwork for achieving new rights and protections for LGBTQ people in Germany.

KEY TERMS

Hans Giese; homosexuality in West German history; homosexuality in East German history; sexual revolution in Germany; memorials to homosexual victims of Nazi persecution

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NOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

- 1 Zeh, "Der Sexualforscher Hans Giese," 18–19.
- 2 Ibid., 13–14, 22–25.
- 3 Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany*, 70–78, 170–72.
- 4 Ibid., 75.
- 5 The photographer Erich Lessing took a number of photographs of Berlin in 1955; they are currently available online at Magnum Photos, www.magnumphotos.com/Catalogue/Erich-Lessing/1955/WEST-BERLIN-NN133768.html, accessed December 9, 2015.
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- 10 Ibid., 555.

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- 25 “Nachtleben soll gesäubert werden . . . in Berlin,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, June 16, 1967.
- 26 Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany*, 187–88.
- 27 For an extended treatment of Beate Uhse and her business, see Elizabeth Heineman, *Before Porn Was Legal: The Erotica Empire of Beate Uhse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
- 28 Hermann Glaser, *Kulturgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, vol. 2, *Zwischen Grundgesetz und Großer Koalition, 1949–1967* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1986), 98–107; Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried, *Deutsche Kulturgeschichte: Die Bundesrepublik von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2009), 260–65; Franz Eder, “The Long History of the ‘Sexual Revolution’ in West Germany,” in *Sexual Revolutions*, ed. Gert Hekma and Alain Giami (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 99–120.
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- 30 Evans, “Decriminalization, Seduction, and ‘Unnatural Desire’ in East Germany.” One of the most detailed versions of this story in English is a very good senior honors thesis by Adam Amir, of the University of Florida, “The Persistence of Paragraph 175: Nazi-Style Justice in Postwar Germany” (May 2010), 13–20.
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- 49 Matt Cook and Jennifer Evans, introduction to Cook and Evans, *Queer Cities, Queer Cultures*, 9.
- 50 Bunzl, *Symptoms of Modernity*, 205–11.