

## Book Review

Book Review: The Pink Triangle, by Richard Plant, Henry Holt & Company, New York 1986

The Pink Triangle is a comprehensive account of the fate of homosexuals in Nazi Germany. It is remarkable in that little information on the subject is available in English. This book presents the history of events leading up to the Third Reich and the effects on homosexuals of that time.

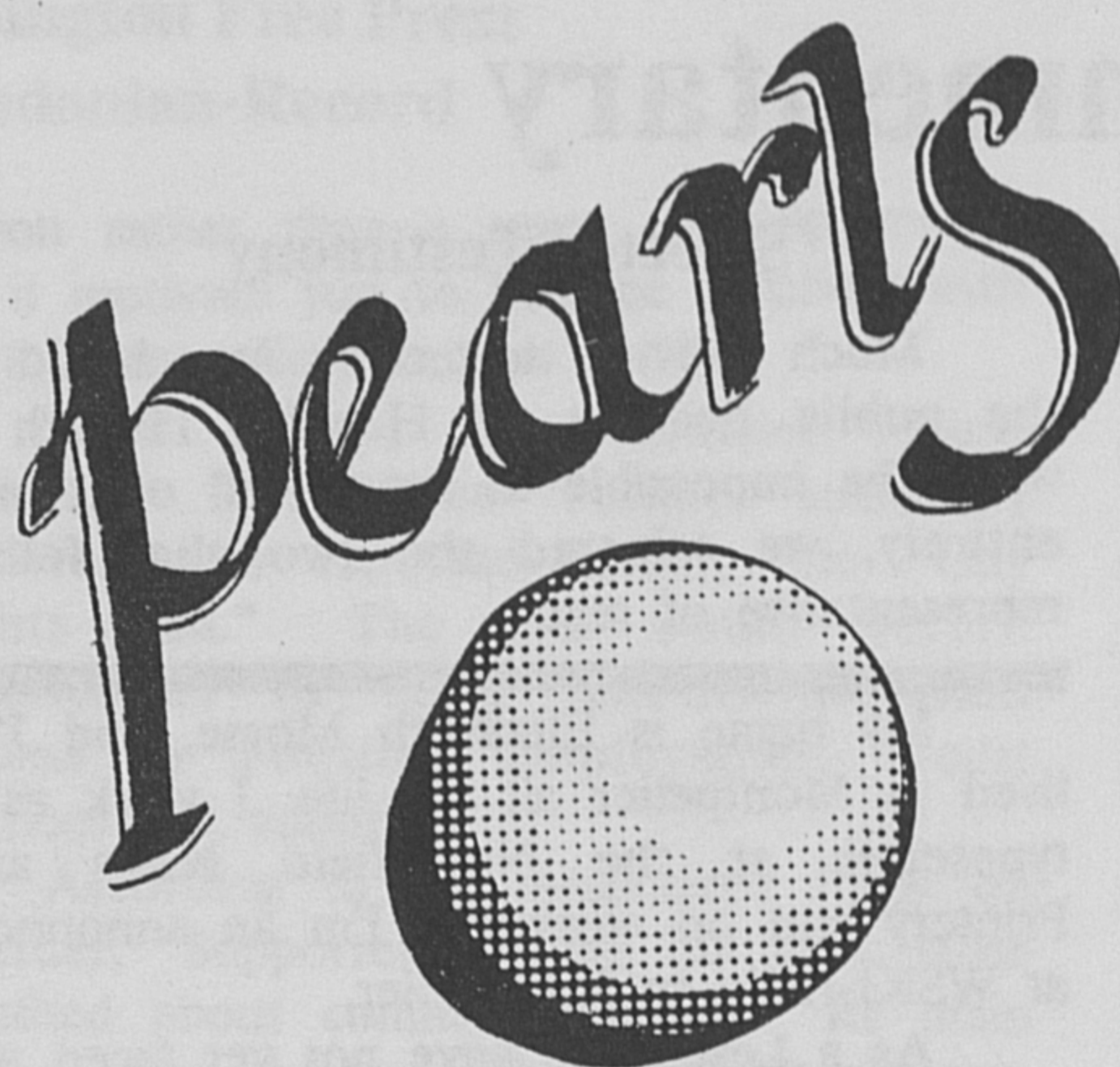
Plant's chronicle begins at the turn of the century and describes how widespread anti-gay prejudice was increasingly challenged by the homosexual emancipation movement. The relative freedom gays encountered in the larger German cities during this brief period was quickly quenched by the Nazi movement beginning in the 1920's, which signalled the beginning of a period of virulent homophobia.

This period began with street brutality by Nazi thugs and enforcement of the infamous Paragraph 175. This law which was first enacted by Kaiser Wilhelm I in 1871 pertains only to "criminally indecent activities" between males or males with animals and does not include women. Paragraph 175 meant imprisonment of many homosexuals and was also used to detain acquaintances of gay males and also any male with any "suspicion" of being gay. Eventually when the concentration camps and death camps were set up, homosexuals were interred along with Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, political prisoners, etc.

In the concentration camps, homosexuals were designated by pink triangles and were considered the lowest rung in camp hierarchy. Often, pink triangles were sent to the cement works which meant almost certain death. "Medical" experiments such as castration followed by testosterone treatment were often performed on those wearing pink triangles.

Liberation at the end of the war in many cases did not end the horror for "pink triangles". Quite often they were treated like dirt by the liberators and many were abandoned by friends and relatives.

The Pink Triangle is important if only for the fact that it is an attempt, however small, to fill in the gap of written history of the Holocaust. The author does mention the difficulties encountered in researching the subject, such as destroyed records and the reluctance of many former "pink triangles" to come forward and speak about their experiences. The book is somewhat unemotional considering the tremendous horror of the Third Reich. In a time when the plight of the Jewish people during the Holocaust is being examined in a highly emotional manner (for example, the film "Shoah" and the writings of Eli Wiesel), the story of The Pink Triangle is only beginning to come out. Considering the age of most of the people who have survived the camps, it seems more imperative than ever that their experiences be recorded.



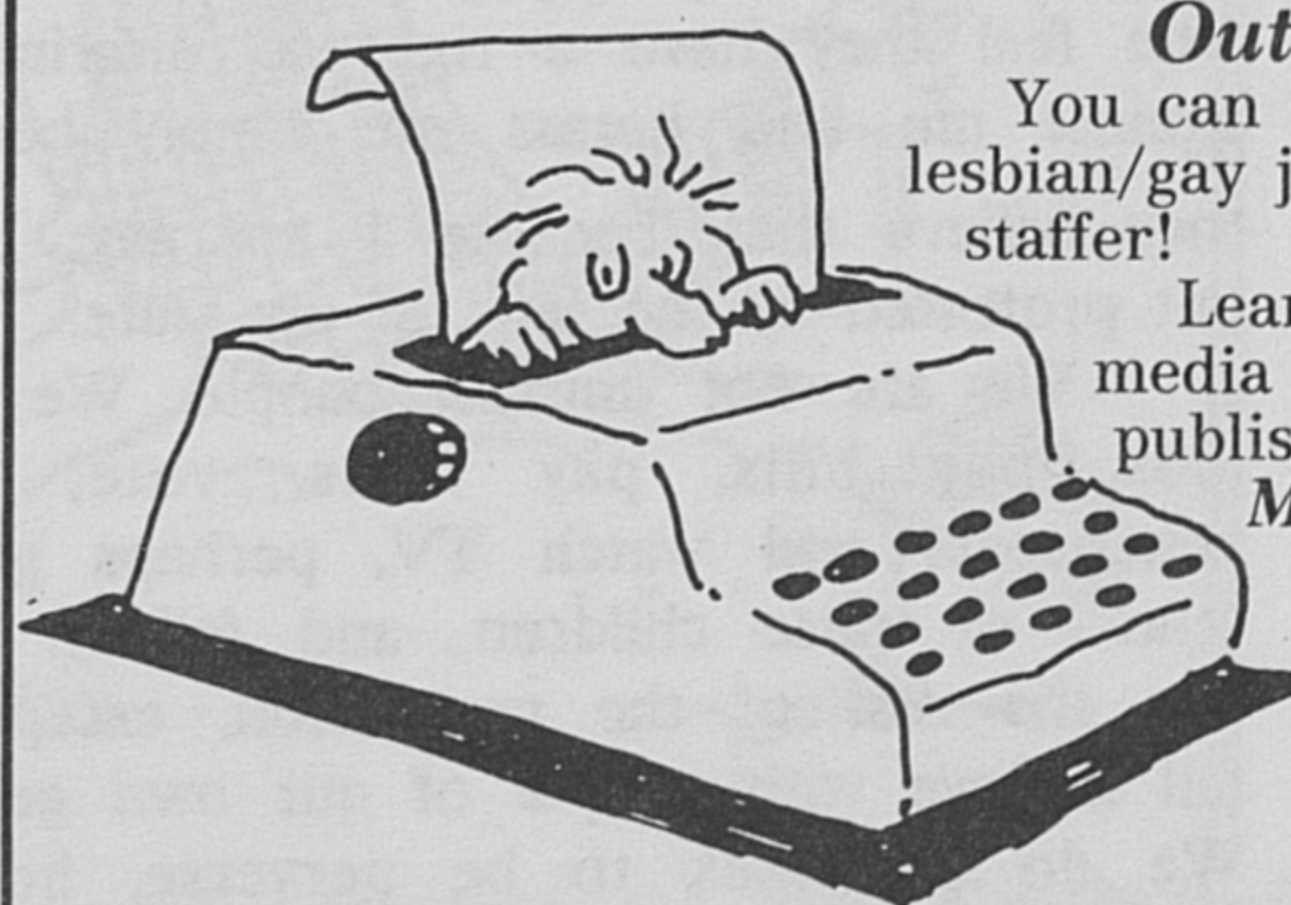
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