

**Insight into the Work of the Association
„Kultur und Geschichte Gehörloser e.V.“**

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The 6th International Deaf History (DHI) Conference in Berlin this summer is approaching quickly. As most people already know, the event is organized by the “Interessengemeinschaft Gehörloser Jüdischer Abstammung in Deutschland” (IGJAD) / Interest Group in Deaf Jewish Descent to Germany)".

I would like to introduce our association, „Kultur und Geschichte Gehörloser e.V.“ (KuGG) / Culture and History of the Deaf. The 2nd DHI Conference in 1994, held in Hamburg, gave us the initiative to form, two years later, a Deaf History Interest Group to focus on and analyze the history of the Deaf in Germany. Through the union of the Deaf History Interest Group and an already existing association, our KuGG was established in 2001.

Here I would like to concentrate on the research regarding the Nazi period in Germany because there is still a lot of work in that area to do. During the Nazi period numerous Deaf people were victims of Nazi tyranny. They were sterilized against their will and euthanized. Jewish Deaf were killed in the concentration camps. Awareness of this was discovered for the first time in the 1980's. Horst Biesold investigated the topic of forced sterilization, breaking the taboo after many decades. He has since passed away, but will not be forgotten. Jochen Muhs researched the Deaf in the Third Reich and has reported on it since the 1990's. Many people found his research on Paul Kroner, a Deaf Jew, to be very interesting. Kroner supported the Deaf communities in Berlin and Germany and was murdered later in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. Mark Zaurov concentrated on the living situations for Deaf Jews and highlighted the negative consequences of the Holocaust for the Deaf Jews in the Deaf community. Lothar Sharp recently researched the Deaf in the Hitler Youth and wrote two books about it. The topic about the Nazi period has interested me for a long time.

Last year on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the end of World War II, we remembered the Deaf victims of the Nazi Regime. We organized a symposium in Bonn with the theme "60 years after 1945 - With Deaf History into the future". We invited various speakers to give talks, among them were some eyewitnesses. There were many interesting presentations and some talked about their personal experiences. The Symposium was very successful with more than 150 visitors, 20 of those from other countries, to which we were very happy.

In addition, I would like to share a short story about an older participant from Holland. He saw his Jewish friends being deported by the Nazis during that time. He never told any Deaf non-Jewish Germans about this. The presentations and personal experiences of the speakers touched and encouraged him to share his own story. For the first time he described his experiences to Jochen Muhs and me.

We hope for further meetings and a fruitful exchange, not only among us Germans, but rather across borders so that we can process our common history and further develop the future, especially with regards to an ever increasing Europe.

It was a new opportunity for the German Deaf community to commemorate the Deaf victims of the Nazi Regime in a joint conference. A report written by Mark Zaurov about the Symposium appeared in the DHI-Newsletter (Fall 2005, No. 24, p. 2). If interested, you can read the abstracts from the speakers at the Symposium in English at our homepage www.kugg.de and you can familiarize yourself with our association as well.

A documentary on the Symposium is being written, so that we can pass the information on further. We at the KuGG e.V. want to make sure that the Nazi crimes against mankind are not forgotten and we want to always remember the Deaf victims of those crimes. If we understand the past, we can look towards the future and together mold it. Likewise, we must remain aware of racism and Anti-Semitism and do everything we can to prevent them.

The upcoming 6th DHI-Conference in Berlin this summer will contribute to that since many people from around the world will participate and learn more about these issues.

We are pleased about previous contacts with other National Deaf History associations/organizations. We also hope to establish many new contacts at the conference.

Best of luck to IGJAD in preparing an interesting and informative conference. And to all the participants a wonderful time in Berlin.

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