

Friedrich Radszuweit

(April 15, 1876 - April 1932)

This essay was written by Pink Triangle Legacies Project Intern Nic Suarez. It is based on the important research of Dr. Javier Samper Vendrell, Dr. Laurie Marhoefer, Huw Lemmey, Dr. Ben Miller, and Dr. Robert Beachy. Thank you for your work in preserving queer history.

Friedrich Radszuweit was born to humble beginnings that would greatly contrast his ambitions later in life. He was born on April 15, 1876 in a village near what was then Insterburg, East Prussia (today Chernyakhovsk, Russia). He leveraged his love for business to establish a LGBTQ+ publishing empire that launched the first mass-movement for homosexual emancipation in the world.

In 1901, Friedrich took his sharp business skills to Berlin, where he got involved in the movement of Friendship Associations. These associations functioned as social organizations where gay men could socialize amongst themselves. In the Friendship associations, Friedrich saw a burgeoning market of openly queer people who had cash to spend. His profit-driven mentality would define his relationship with the queer community in Germany for the rest of his life.



Friedrich Radszuweit, date unknown

In October 1922, Friedrich published an open letter in *Friendship*, the leading homosexual publication at the time. He argued that emancipation for gay men would occur soon. He believed that gay men simply had to prove to the rest of German society that they could be respectable citizens. For Friedrich, “respectable” meant: law-abiding, middle class, monogamous, and adhering to traditional gender norms. He called effeminate gay men, sex workers, and gender non-conforming people “the dregs of humanity.”

In early 1923, he formed the League for Human Rights. This organization served as the beating heart of Friedrich’s queer publishing empire, and also served as the mouthpiece for some of his worst political impulses. Later that year, Friedrich launched the League for Human Rights’ premier publication, *Journal for Human Rights*.

Friedrich did his best to ensure that his publications could be purchased on newsstands. He was able to pay lawyers to help keep his publications off of



The July 1929 issue of Radszuweit's newspaper "The Girlfriend." Courtesy of Forum Queeres Archiv München

copyright lists and defend his business against lawsuits. He also practiced a form of self-censorship following the passage of the 1926 Law to Protect Youth from Trashy and Filthy Publications by removing erotic imagery from his magazines.

Friedrich demonstrated a talent for understanding content that had mass appeal. His company published a range of newspapers and magazines that catered to different audiences. He also advocated to overturn Paragraph 175, Germany's national anti-gay law. He truly built the first mass-movement homosexual emancipation organization in the world. If that was all Friedrich accomplished, he would be rightly celebrated as a successful gay pioneer at a time when there were no other openly gay publishers around. But, Friedrich's story does not end there.

In the late 1920s, German voters turned to extremist politicians, such as those in the Nazi party, to solve their problems. Despite the Nazis' public displays of homophobia, Friedrich did not mobilize his empire to counter the growing threat of fascism. In 1931, he told readers that the Nazis would not target "respectable homosexuals," but would only target Jewish homosexuals like Magnus Hirschfeld. In a March 1932 issue of *The Girlfriend*, he wrote, "I'd be the last to support the Hitler party," but he pointed out that Hitler had allowed Ernst Röhm, who was openly gay, to stay in power as the head of the Stormtroopers. It "shows us that Hitler views sexual orientation as more of a private matter."

Friedrich Radszuweit died of tuberculosis in 1932. He did not live to see his attempts to make peace with the Nazis fail. Within weeks of coming to power in January 1933, the Nazis launched a violent, murderous campaign against all LGBTQ+ Germans, including those who had supported the party in its early years.

Sources & Further Reading

Robert Beachy, *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2015)

Laurie Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic: German Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis* (University of Toronto Press, 2015)

Javier Samper Vendrell, *The Seduction of Youth: Print Culture and Homosexual Rights in the Weimar Republic* (Toronto University Press, 2020)

Read more about Friedrich Radszuweit [online](#) and watch the video on [YouTube](#). For more LGBTQ+ Stories from Nazi Germany, visit pinktrianglelegacies.com/stories.