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## Gender, Race and the Gestapo

*Eric A. Johnson\**

**Abstract:** As part of an ongoing project on Nazi terror, this paper systematically examines the evidence contained in hundreds of Gestapo and Special Court case files in the Cities of Krefeld and Cologne and the results of a recent survey of elderly Cologne citizens pertaining to their experiences in Nazi Germany to compare the persecution of Jewish men and women with the persecution of non-Jewish men and women during the Third Reich. It argues that while most elderly Germans claim today that they had violated Nazi laws at one time or another (e.g. by listening to foreign radio broadcasts, telling anti-Nazi jokes, giving aid to Nazi victims, or spreading information about the Holocaust) very few of their illegal acts concerned the police and justice authorities greatly and very few either came to the attention of the Gestapo or were punished with severity when they did, except in cases involving Jewish men and Jewish women, who suffered ruthless punishment for even the most minor of infractions.

Since the end of the Second World War, German women have often been cast alongside the ranks of millions of other victims of a macho men's society in which fear and terror were supposedly omnipresent and punishment certain for anyone who did not scrupulously obey Hitler's every whim and dictate. Sometimes women have been portrayed primarily as indirect victims. Forced

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\* Address all communications to Eric A. Johnson, Department of History, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, Michigan 48859, USA, e-mail: [Eric.A.Johnson@cmich.edu](mailto:Eric.A.Johnson@cmich.edu) This is a revised version of a paper presented in London, England, on April 3, 1995, at a conference on »Gender and Crime in Britain and Europe.« The research for this study has been supported by generous grants from the National Endowment for Humanities (RO-22401-92) and the National Science Foundation (SES-9209720). The research for this paper was conducted while I was a visiting professor at the Center for Historical Social Research/Zentralarchiv für empirische Sozialforschung of the University of Cologne. Thanks go to my colleagues at that institution, and, in particular, to my two research assistants, Anna Perez Belmonte and Christiane Wever.

out of the workforce and not allowed into positions of political and economic authority, women had to retreat into a »private sphere« of tending to the needs of the children, the kitchen, and the church, earning mother crosses for faithful subservience and waving tearful farewells as their men marched off to war. Other times women have been seen as more direct victims - sterilized, raped, bombed, and terrorized. Whether viewed as active or passive victims, women have joined the often repeated litany of those who suffered from Nazi terror - Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, Communists, Socialists, democrats, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, clergymen, free masons, Jazz lovers, career criminals, swing youth, Edelweiss pirates, the handicapped, the insane, the work shy, the foreign workers, and nearly everyone else in Nazi Germany except for a handful of truly fanatic men.

Appropriating the convenient role of victims for themselves, many Germans have thus endeavored to absolve themselves of guilt for the unspeakable crimes of the Nazis. Even former Gestapo officers after the war maintained - in denazification hearings, »crimes against humanity« trials, and in their attempts (usually successful) to return to government service or retain their pensions - to have been victims of the Nazi terror, who were forced into their positions »against their will« and had no other choice but to fulfill their duty or face certain death at the hands of their fanatical male superiors.<sup>1</sup> Indeed this victims' paradigm is but the flip side of the other leading paradigm of much research on political terror in Nazi Germany that views all of these groups, or nearly all of them, as »resistance fighters« (something which even many Gestapo officers claimed to have been themselves). As the American troops often heard from the local population as they marched into the city of Cologne in early March 1945 and to other German cities shortly thereafter, »There might be a few Nazis to be found in the next village, but there aren't any here.<sup>2</sup>

Though Nazis seemed to disappear at the end of the war, the mythology of and much of the research on the Third Reich has maintained that the Nazi terror apparatus was »all knowing, all powerful, and all present.<sup>3</sup> The leading terror instrument, the Gestapo, reputedly had a huge army of officials and paid spies lurking on every corner, opening everyone's mail and bugging everyone's home and phone. Like Orwell's thought police, the Gestapo supposedly knew everyone's innermost thoughts and desires and ruthlessly applied maximum measures of punishment to even the smallest misdeeds.

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<sup>1</sup> Evidence of this is presented at length in my forthcoming book, *The Nazi Terror: Gestapo, Jews and Other Germans* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, expected 1998).

<sup>2</sup> *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*, March 6, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Gerhard Paul, »Allwissend, allmächtig, allgegenwärtig?« *Gestapo, Gesellschaft und Widerstand*, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 41 (1993), 984-999.

Recently a new wave of scholars has begun to see the plight of women and the Third Reich in general in a more realistic light. New scholarship has demonstrated that not all women in Nazi Germany were helpless victims and has called into question many of the longest-held notions about how the Nazi terror functioned. While some women appeared to have enjoyed their lives and found freedoms and empowerment that they had not had before the Third Reich came into existence, other women actively joined their male counterparts in playing important roles in the social control apparatus by keeping tabs on their neighbors and often by informing on them to the authorities. Recent research on the Nazi dictatorship has finally begun to move away from a reliance on memoirs and eye-witness reports of Jewish and other most obviously repressed enemies of the Third Reich and away from a concentration on the center of the terror apparatus in Berlin to a sober empirical examination of how the machinery of terror operated at the local level.

Using local archival records, scholars such as the Canadian Historian Robert Gellately and the German historian and political scientist Gerhard Paul and Klaus-Michael Mallmann,<sup>4</sup> have demonstrated that the Gestapo had only limited resources and served mostly as a receiver of damning information about the citizenry stemming from the citizenry itself (in the cities of Krefeld and Cologne, for example, there was only about one Gestapo officer for every 10,000 residents, an average of fifteen in Krefeld and seventy-five in Cologne, and in the surrounding countryside towns and villages there were no Gestapo officers at all). These scholars have questioned the argument that the organs of terror were so all powerful as once thought and given inspiration to new studies which focus on the individual's role in helping to make the Nazi terror work. Even previously taboo themes such as Jewish and women's denunciation have even started to become popular topics of historical investigation, as the Berlin-born Jewish American journalist Peter Wyden's intriguing book on the treacherous activities of the beautiful Berlin Jewish woman Stella has demonstrated.<sup>5</sup>

All of this having been said, the study of women's activity as perpetrators, victims, and resisters is only recently moving beyond the case-example stage of

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<sup>4</sup> Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy 1933-1945* (Oxford, 1990); Mallmann and Paul, *Herrschaft und Alltag. Ein Industrierevier im Dritten Reich* (Bonn, 1991); Paul and Mallmann, eds., *Die Gestapo - Mythos und Realität* (Darmstadt, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Peter Wyden, *Stella* (New York, 1992). For a more scholarly treatment of the issue of female denunciations, see Gisela Diewald-Kerkemann, *Politische Denunziation im NS-Regime oder die kleine Macht der »Volksgenossen«* (Bonn, 1995), and her »Politische Denunziation - eine 'weibliche Domäne'? Der Anteil von Männern und Frauen unter Denunzianten und ihren Opfern« 1999 2(1996), 11-35. See also, Helga Schubert, *Judasfrauen. Zehn Fallgeschichten weiblicher Denunziation im Dritten Reich* (Frankfurt am Main, 1990); and Inge Marbolek, *Die Denunziantin. Helene Schwärze! 1944<sup>7</sup>* (Bremen, 1993).

pointing to celebrated or excoriated individuals such as Sophie Scholl, Stella, or a handful of so-called *Judas Frauen*.<sup>6</sup> In a previous study published two years ago, I attempted to make one of the first general assessments of women's involvement in the various stages of what I referred to as the Nazi system of terror. Here I found that women were far less involved than men at all levels. By examining prison and Special Court records for the city of Cologne and a neighboring small town called Bergheim, I determined that women were represented at about the same level in Nazi Germany in court proceedings, vis à vis men, as they had always been.<sup>7</sup> Thus women represented only a small percentage of the investigations which were opened and a smaller percentage of the cases which actually went to trial for illegal political activity. This percentage nearly doubled in the war years when many men were at the front, but it still never reached more than about one-fourth of the number of offenses charged against men. Furthermore, only a relatively small number of people, either men or women, ever had even an investigation lodged against them (far less than one in one hundred women), and the clear majority of these women were working class and usually single women.

Most cases started against German citizens were not punished severely, if at all. Upwards of **80%** of all cases were dismissed by the prosecuting attorney's office (*Staatsanwaltschaft*) before going to trial (when dismissed cases and cases ending in acquittal are subtracted from the total of investigations, it appears that only circa one Cologne woman in a thousand was convicted by the Cologne *Sondergericht* and a large proportion of these convictions resulted in cases involving economic crimes like blackmarketeering or plundering that might have been prosecuted in any society). Where women appeared to have been more heavily involved in legal matters was on the other side of the control apparatus, as those helping to enforce ideological conformity. Through an examination of **238** randomly selected cases of political nonconformity treated by the Cologne *Sondergericht*, I determined that denunciations made by German women started about **21%** of all cases (again the figure rose dramatically during the war years). This figure rose to nearly one third of all denunciations when cases started by the Gestapo itself, or by the regular police, the party, or by anonymous denunciations were taken out.

The evidence from this previous study suggests that relatively few cases of political nonconformity were lodged against non-Jewish German women during the Third Reich and the consequences for a German woman who had a case lodged against her were not usually dire, especially if she were not an

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Gisela Diewald-Kerkmann's on women's roles in, *ibid.*, denunciations and Gisela Bock's on the victimization of women, *Zwangsterilisation im Nationalsozialismus. Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik* (Opladen, 1986) are exceptions and are perhaps heralding a new trend.

<sup>7</sup> Eric A. Johnson, »German Women and Nazi Justice: Their Role in the Process from Denunciation to Death,« *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 20(1995)1, 33-69.

unmarried woman from the working class or a woman with a background as a Communist or a Jehovah's Witness or one of the other highly persecuted »sects.« Nevertheless, this previous study left many important questions unanswered. Were relatively so few German women brought before judicial tribunals for political misdeeds because so few German women actually committed illegal acts? Was the judicial record actually indicative of the persecution of German women? Did Nazi officials prefer to let the Gestapo treat cases of women in a way that could avoid the danger of a public outcry against excessive persecution? Hence, did the Gestapo prefer to hide their persecution of accused German women from the eyes of the public by placing them in »protective custody« or sending them directly to concentration camps instead of handing them over to the courts? How did the Gestapo itself differ from the prosecuting attorneys and the courts in their treatment of German women? How does the record of persecution of German women and men for political offenses compare with the record of persecution of Jewish women and men?

This study, therefore, builds upon my previous work on the persecution of German women by comparing the experiences of Germans and Jews in their confrontation with the Gestapo and the Nazi judicial system. By analyzing a large sample of Gestapo case files for both Germans and Jews from the city of Krefeld, a moderate-sized city of about 150,000 inhabitants lying about 50 miles north of Cologne, and by comparing this evidence with an analysis of a larger sample of Cologne *Sondergericht* records than I was able to use for my previous study (597 cases against 238 cases), I hope to shed light on the questions raised above.

Whether or not German women were frequently involved in resistance or even in »*Resistenz*« (a term which has become popular for describing smaller, but presumably significant, acts of non conformity and non compliance with the Nazi regime) is a matter of definition and conjecture. Less laden by problems involving subjective interpretation, however, are some of the results of a recent survey of the attitudes and previous activities of a large sample of the elderly German population which I have recently conducted with my German sociologist colleague, Karl-Heinz Reuband. In a pretest of this study that we carried out with 188 Cologne citizens, we found that nearly every man and woman claimed to have undertaken activities during the Third Reich that the Nazi authorities considered illegal.<sup>8</sup> The Nazi authorities could certainly have chosen to punish these activities if they had become known to them through denunciations from the civilian population, observations by Nazi officials, reports by Gestapo spies, or through other means of surveillance and information gathering the Gestapo used. A majority (53%) of people, for

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<sup>8</sup> Some of the results of this pretest are presented in our paper, »Die populäre Einschätzung der Gestapo. Wie allgegenwärtig war sie wirklich?« in Paul and Mallmann, *Die Gestapo*, 417—436.

example, reported having listened to illegal radio broadcasts (usually the German-language broadcasts of the BBC), 27% claimed they had told illegal jokes, 9% reported having aided Nazi victims, and roughly a quarter reported having heard and usually having retold news about the mass murder of the Jews. Women and men were involved in these activities in roughly equal measure.

Of equal interest is that, despite these activities, almost none of the people considered their acts to have been particularly serious. Only one person, a 73 year old former dentist, who had studied medicine in Frankfurt in the war years, reported in the survey that she had been involved in «active resistance,» and this, reminiscent of Sophie Scholl, involved the handing out of illegal fliers. Apparently the Gestapo considered these everyday transgressions, even though they were commonly committed, to have been of only limited importance as well and only very seldomly sought to punish them. Not only were less than 1% of the people in our study ever investigated by the Gestapo for any reason, nearly none of the survey respondents believe today that they had been spied on in any way during the Third Reich. A sizable majority did not even know anyone personally who had been even accused of an illegal activity during the Third Reich (only 26% reported knowing someone and many of these accused people had been Jews), and over three quarters of all the people (81%) recalled having had no fear whatsoever during the Third Reich of being arrested by the Gestapo.

There are obvious problems with people's memory of past events. Perhaps the people who are still alive today are simply the lucky ones who somehow slipped through the Gestapo's supposedly seemless web. An examination of the archival record will help to clarify if the observations of these people distort the truth of what happened.

In a random sample of 597 cases investigated by the Cologne Prosecuting Attorney's Office for the Cologne Special Court, it turns out that 12% of women's cases and 17% of men's cases ended in the conviction of the defendant, (see Table 1) The reason for these low figures is not that most cases led to acquittals as only 2% of women's cases and 3% of men's cases led to acquittals when the outcome of the case can be determined from the documentation (and it can be determined in 97% of the cases for each gender). What accounted for the low rate of convictions is the extremely high dismissal (*Einstellung*) rate, which was 78% for men and 83% for women. If the racial background of the defendants is taken into consideration, one finds that Jewish defendants made up at least 6% of all investigations but probably much more than that as the religious background of the defendant can only be determined in about 80% of the cases and the racial background of the defendant in less than 50% of the cases. Nevertheless, as Jews in 1933 made up only 2.3% of the Cologne population and less than 1% of the entire population falling under the Cologne *Sondergericht* district which was used in this analysis, it is clear that

*Table 1: Final Disposition of Cases Brought Before the Cologne Sondergericht*

(Percent of all Cases in Each Category)

	Total	Men	Women
1. Conviction	15	17	12
2. Acquittal	3	3	2
3. Dismissal	78	78	83
4. Unknown	4	3	3
Total:	100	100	100

Note: N = 597.

*Table 2: Gender of Defendants and Informers in Cases Handled By Cologne Sondergericht and by the Krefeld Gestapo*

(Percent of all Cases)

	S. G. Köln		Gestapo Krefeld			
	men	women	men	women	German Cases	Jewish Cases
Defendants	82	18	83	17		74 25
Informers	69	31	83	17		66 34

Note: In the above cases one needs to add from left to write under each type of data set to reach 100%. The figures involving informers are only in those cases in which the denunciation in the case originated from the citizenry. N = 28,920 for the Cologne Sondergericht under Defendants and 597 under Informers. N = 174 for German defendants in Krefeld and 80 for informers in Krefeld. N = 90 for Jewish defendants and 34 for those who informed on Jews in Krefeld.

*Table 3: Final Disposition of German and Jewish Cases Handled by the Krefeld Gestapo*  
 (Percent of all Cases in Each Category)

	Gestapo Krefeld German Cases			Jewish Cases		
	total	men	women			
				total	men	women
1. Put in Concentration Camp	1	1	0	26	24	35
2. Put in "Protective Custody"	14	16	7	15	17	6
3. Given over to Prosecutor's Office	29	26	41	14	16	6
4. Case Dismissed with a Warning by the Krefeld Gestapo	23	21	31	20	17	29
5. Case Dismissed without a Warning by the Krefeld Gestapo	28	29	21	17	21	0
6. Unknown	5	6	0	8	4	24
Total:	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: N = 169 for "German" cases and 87 for "Jewish" cases.

Table 4: Estimate of the Amount of Cases Involving Protest or Criticism Handled by the Cologne Sondergericht or the Krefeld Gestapo

(Percent of all Cases in Each Category)

	S. G. Köln			Gestapo Krefeld			Jewish Cases		
	total	men	women	total	men	women	total	men	women
1. Serious Protest or Criticism	2	2	0	9	11	0	8	8	9
2. Minor Protest or Criticism	14	14	15	12	12	10	9	10	4
3. No Protest or Criticism	84	84	85	80	77	90	83	82	87
Total:	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: There were 511 cases analyzed for Sondergericht Köln, 172 "German" cases and 90 "Jewish" cases under Gestapo Krefeld. Identifiable cases involving Jews are not reported for Sondergericht Köln.

Jews were prosecuted by the official court authorities for allegedly political offenses at a far higher level than what their percentage of the population would warrant.

As one sees in Table 2, Jewish women, like German women, were far less likely to have cases lodged against them than men with their same ethnic background, both in the data analyzed for the Cologne Special Court and the Gestapo in Krefeld. But there the similarity ends. Furthermore, it must be remembered that, relative to their numbers in the population, both Jewish women and Jewish men had judicial proceedings lodged against them at a rate that exceeded that of the non-Jewish German population by several times even though Jews had a long history of having had extremely low rates of crime.<sup>9</sup>

The Gestapo handed relatively few Jews over to the judicial authorities. As Table 3 makes clear, the Gestapo, in Jewish cases more frequently than in non-Jewish cases, preferred to decide upon their own punishments than to afford them the privilege of being sent to the courts. As terrible as the German courts were, one usually had much better chances of receiving fair treatment with prosecuting attorneys and judges than with the Gestapo. Table 3 analyzes the final disposition of a random sample of 167 cases involving non-Jews and an additional 87 cases of Jews who had cases started against them by the Krefeld Gestapo. All of these cases involve political transgression falling under the Gestapo's authority. Although some of the cases involving non-Jewish Germans involved serious protest or criticism against the regime, minor violations of the *Heimtücke* laws against malicious übel and slander were most typical (see Table 4). *Heimtücke* infractions comprised a smaller percentage of the Jewish cases, on the other hand, though Table 4 shows that both Jewish men and Jewish women were just as likely to have been involved in serious protest or criticism of the regime as were German men, and far more likely than German women. Most Jewish cases involved infractions against the myriad laws specially designed to control their activity such as the Nuremberg Laws of September 1935 for the »protection of German blood and honor« or the various laws involving their being marked and separated from the German population. It bears repeating, however, that these Jewish cases represent only a small fraction of the cases of Jewish persecution by the Gestapo. As they only involve alleged »political« infractions, they do not include Jewish men put in Dachau concentration camp after the *Kristallnacht* pogrom of November 9 and 10, 1938 (this happened to nearly every adult Jewish man under 65 years of age), or Jewish men and women who were forced to emigrate in the 1930s or were »evacuated« to the east after October 1941.

In addition to demonstrating that Jewish defendants seldom had the chance to defend themselves in court, Table 3 highlights the draconian treatment both Jewish men and women experienced and the relatively mild treatment that

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<sup>9</sup> On the historically low rates of Jewish criminality in Germany, see my *Urbanization, and Crime: Germany 1871-1914* (Cambridge and New York, 1995), 201-205.

German men and women usually experienced at the hands of the Gestapo. This is not to argue that many German men and German women were not handled in appalling manner by the Gestapo, but it is to argue that Jews as a group were treated far worse. The figures on placement in concentration camp are most revealing here. Whereas only one percent of the German men in this random sample and no women at all were sent to a concentration camp, 35% of Jewish women and 24% of Jewish men had their cases resolved by a concentration camp referral. Typical of the cases of Jewish women are those of young women who were sent to concentration camps for »a schooling« after they had returned from study abroad, or of those who were sent to concentration camps after being accused of carrying on illicit sexual relations with Aryan men. According to the »law«, only men were to be punished by the courts in mixed sexual encounters. But Jewish women were often sent to a concentration camp without any recourse to the law in cases of so-called **Rassenschande**, whereas Aryan women were only warned not to do it again and then let go. A final example, but not an atypical one, is the case of Änne H., a 22 year old girl of mixed parentage who was arrested by the Gestapo in September 1942 for not wearing the Jewish star. She was denounced to the Gestapo by a 15 year old neighboring girl, who in a zealous one-and-a-half page written denunciation wrote that she had made her denunciation »after the Gestapo made me especially attentive to H...in particular, I was to be sure to notice if she wore her Jewish star and so on.« In Anne H.'s file, one finds a telegram from commandant Hess of Auschwitz relaying that »Hermes died in concentration camp Auschwitz on May 5, 1943.<sup>10</sup>

The cases of most Germans, on the other hand, ended either in a dismissal with or without a Gestapo warning or were sent on by the Gestapo to the prosecuting attorney's office, where most of them were later dismissed. In Table 5 and 6 one finds how the Gestapo and Special Court cases originated in the first place and under what conditions the defendant appeared at Gestapo headquarters to give their testimony. Denunciations from the citizenry started the vast majority of the non-Jewish German cases (over 60% of cases involving German men and 70% of the cases involving German women) and a large amount of the cases of both Jewish men and women as well. Particularly important here, however, are the figures involving cases started by the Gestapo. Whereas the Gestapo itself started one quarter of the cases involving Jewish men and women, it started only 9% of the cases involving German men, and no cases at all involving German women. Other police agencies also often started cases against Jews, but no German woman at all in Krefeld had a case started against her in this sample by any police agency. These figures are supported by the much larger sample of cases that eventually came to the Cologne prosecuting attorney's office. Here we find that only 4% of both German men

<sup>10</sup> Nordrhein Westfälisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf, RW58/21813 and RW58/29343.

Table 5: Body/Person Initiating the Cases Brought to the Cologne Sondergericht or the Krefeld Gestapo  
 (Percent of all Cases in Each Category)

	S. G. Köln			Gestapo Krefeld			Jewish Cases		
	total	men	women	total	men	women	total	men	women
1. Gestapo	4	4	4	7	9	0	25	26	23
2. Police	9	11	3	6	7	0	11	14	5
3. NSDAP Officials	17	18	17	20	18	26	11	10	14
4. Denunciations from Citizenry	63	62	71	62	61	70	47	47	46
5. Anonymous	7	6	6	5	5	4	7	4	14
Total:	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: N = 511 for the Cologne Sondergericht, 122 for the "German" cases and 73 for the "Jewish" cases under Gestapo Krefeld. Cases of unknown origin are left out (37 S.G. cases, 50 "German" cases, 17 "Jewish" cases). Most of these appear to have come from denunciations from the citizenry.

*Table 6: Manner in Which People Appeared to Testify in Cases Handled by the Cologne Sondergericht or the Krefeld Gestapo*

(Percent of all Cases in Each Category)

	S. G. Köln			Gestapo Krefeld			Jewish Cases		
	total	men	women	total	men	women	total	men	women
1. Under Arrest	29	34	19	28	28	28	43	41	48
2. By Invitation	53	48	64	43	40	59	17	17	17
3. Unknown	14	14	15	14	16	3	24	23	26
4. No Testimony Found in Case Documents	3	4	2	15	16	10	17	20	9
Total:	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: N = 180 for Cologne Sondergericht cases, 175 for "German" and 89 for "Jewish" Cases under Gestapo Krefeld.

and German women's cases were started by the Gestapo and only an additional 3% of cases against German women were started by other police authorities (and this was usually in the countryside where there was no Gestapo officer present in the town).

The information found in Table 6 helps to complete the picture of the different manner in which the Gestapo and the court authorities handled different types of suspects. Here we find that a great majority of German women and a near majority of German men who had cases started against them either in Cologne or Krefeld came to the Gestapo headquarters after receiving a summons in the mail. This happened relatively infrequently in the cases of Jewish men and women. Jews most often came to Gestapo headquarters under arrest.

The weight of these results strongly suggest that the Gestapo knew well how to differentiate between serious protest and insignificant grousing on the part of the civilian population. With some important exceptions, like Communists and Jehovah's Witnesses, the Gestapo did not have to set whatever spy and surveillance network it possessed into motion to guarantee the conformity of the population. It only had to make some exemplary arrests and let the courts make a show of even-handed judicial treatment. Otherwise, it could count on the civilian population to control itself through its power to settle disputes and quarrels or demonstrate its ideological trustworthiness by denouncing fellow citizens. Most people did not denounce their fellow citizens. This we know from the great amount of people who were never punished and were never spied upon, even though they now tell us that they frequently listened to BBC, told disparaging jokes about Hitler or spread the news of the mass murder of the Jews. But enough people were willing to denounce others to ensure that the Gestapo had plenty of eyes and ears to ensure that any real protest would be stifled. The Gestapo concentrated much of its effort and most of its sadism on Jews. In their case, gender played almost no role at all.