

Florian Steger and Maximilian Schochow

## Disziplinierung durch Medizin Die geschlossene venerologische Station in der Poliklinik Mitte in Halle (Saale) 1961 bis 1982

Halle (Saale): Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2014  
184 pp; 19 illustrations; Sources and literature

Psychiatry has been well known for its political and other kinds of abuse. In 1909, the then Serbian apparent heir to the throne George, was replaced by his brother Alexander due to “impetuous temper” and “unsound mind” and kept isolated for decades in the Toponica mental sanatorium near Niš. In the 1920s USA, known were the cases of reclusion in sanatoria of persons opposing police corruption (which became topic for the movie *Changeling*, for instance). In particular was psychiatry abused during dictatorships, as in Germany during the Nazi rule, or in the communist Soviet Union. Recently more intensively studied has been the situation in Eastern Europe in the second half of the 20th century, to which also the book by Florian Steger and Maximilian Schochow is devoted, unveiling the practice in German Democrat Republic (DDR).

The Mitte Polyclinic in Halle has here been taken only as an example, since such institutions were quite often and present almost in every DDR county: girls from up to 12 years could have been taken and kept in such closed “venereological stations” under suspicion they had been infected by a sexual disease. Beside medical treatment, those girls had to pass also through “education” treatment aimed at the formation of perfect “socialist persons.” In the early 1950s, namely, an ideological turnpoint occurred in the DDR, declaring prostitutes the “asocial” who have to be re-educated in accordance to the ideas of the Soviet writer A. S. Makarenko. The girls and women were first taken to an “observation station” and then to the reopened “venereological station” (Kleine Klausstrasse 16) for treatment. In 1961, this practice was instated by the law. The main corpse of the book considers

organisational, institutional, and legal background of the venereological station in Halle (fighting sexual diseases after WW2 in Halle, local raids, etc.); construction, function, staff, and the patients of the venereological station (the Home Rules, etc.); and, finally, the everyday life in the Station: the procedure of admission, the medical procedures, and particularly the “terror in terror,” due to the rigid hierarchy within the Station and the general identification of the patients as “worthless freaks” (*Abschaum*).

The book is impressive testimony and well documented by facsimiles and illustrations: it is an example of how mighty archive materials can be in pointing out historical injustice and in preventing the historical wrong be repeated.

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