

Anneliese W., or "Johnny" (1916-1995)

"What could you do? - Hitler was in power"

Her name was really Anneliese, but all her friends called her Johnny. They gave her that nickname at her Labor Service job when they were putting on a play. "I was wearing a suit and had drawn on a moustache. And I had had short hair since I was a kid. 'Check out this sassy Johnny,' they said, and from then on I was just Johnny." When I spoke with Anneliese W. in 1987, she told me that she had only joined the Labor Service since she had lost her job as an insurance company clerk after an argument with her boss, an SS man.

"I had gone to the technical college of the AOK, the Public Health Insurance Company, and did my three years there. In 1933, when the changeover of power came, they threw out everyone at the AOK who really knew their stuff, since they were in the Social Democratic Party. Then they put in all their Nazi people, who didn't have a clue what they were doing. Our chief clerk was such a beast - early forties and a high-ranking SS man - a first lieutenant. He always slapped me on my behind, and I said, 'Hey, quite a few asses have already slapped me there!' So I was on his blacklist. We sat back to back at work. Once he bent over and spoke to a co-worker across from him. When you're young, you have a lot of nonsense in your head - well, I took both chairs and started rocking. When he went to sit down, the chair tipped over and he sat down on the floor. They said I did it on purpose, so I was supposed to join the BDM, the Nazi girls' association, but I refused - I didn't join and I wasn't in the Nazi Party either. I was in the Labor Front; that was compulsory. In any case, they fired me. After that I went to the Labor Service for six months. That must have been 1933-1934. My parents were well-off; we had a restaurant and two pieces of property. I didn't really even have to work. My mother said, 'I'd be happy if you would stay here and help me.' But I didn't want to. Yard work and waiting on drunk guys - that wasn't my thing at all. So I went to the employment office and signed up for the Volunteer Labor Service."

At her AOK job, Johnny got to know her first girlfriend, who "taught her the ropes." She smiled as she told me it sort of ran in her family anyway.

"My aunt also had a girlfriend. Supposedly this aunt swore to me in my cradle that I would turn out like her. Even as a child I preferred pants and a boy's haircut. I didn't want to wear dresses and skirts. When I first started working at AOK, I had to run errands and get files from the basement. There was always a group of women in the basement sitting, singing, and dancing with each other; I've always loved to dance. Sometimes they had a bottle and we drank a bit. It was there that I saw Hilde

Berghausen, and I thought to myself, 'Gee, you could fall for that Hilde!' But I still didn't really know why. Hilde was older than me; I was fifteen and she was twenty or twenty-one. She had finished her training period and had a permanent position. Once she invited me home with her; I went with her - brought a pounding heart and a bouquet from our garden with me. Her parents were on vacation. We were talking and she asked me if I had a girlfriend. 'Of course. Herta, my friend from school.' 'There are two kinds of girlfriends.' 'What do you mean, two kinds? I really love Herta!' Then we drank a little and she said I could sleep over. I didn't dare to get undressed and slept in my underwear and undershirt. I was still very young, very inexperienced! But I wasn't as dumb as she thought. 'You mean to say you never had a girlfriend?' 'Girlfriend, yes, but never intimate.' Well, one thing led to another. I was together with Hilde for about one and a half years. It didn't last all that long because I was very curious. But it was with her that I realized for the first time where I belong."

Hilde introduced the tomboyish, athletic Johnny to the flourishing lesbian subculture in Berlin around 1931. There she made a lot of friends and developed an unshakable lesbian identity that would prove immune to the developing "Thousand Year Reich." Johnny vividly remembered the Tanzpalast Zauberflöte, the Magic Flute Dance Palace, near the Spittelmarkt, where lively Kati Reinhard organized dances:

"The Magic Flute was a large hall with the dance floor in the middle; the orchestra played from a balcony above. Once, when there was a police raid, Kati called to me, 'Go in the kitchen by the garbage bins!' I had to hide back there because I was still too young. You had to be twenty-one to enter these clubs. I started going to the clubs and got to know everything around 1931, when I was fifteen. Back then, before Hitler came to power, we had a lot of clubs. For example, at the Andreas Festival Theater on Andreas Street there was a ball once a month. Through the Magic Flute, I joined a lesbian bowling club, 'The Funny Nine,' which was led by Lieschen and her girlfriend Gertrud. We went bowling once a week, and once a month we rented a really big room in a dance hall on Landsberger Street. It was really nice, young and old together, fifty- to sixty-year-olds, the rest around twenty, and I was always the youngest. Later, after 1933, the landlords - they were Nazi supporters - they stopped renting to us. Lieschen, who was in her sixties then, said, 'Let's just forget this club.' And so we just forgot about it. I also went to the Monocle Bar; that was on the Ku'damm [an exclusive boulevard in Berlin, trans.] near the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. That's where all the actors went. I still remember a lot of women who frequented that club. But they closed the Monocle Bar in 1933."

After the Nazis came to power, they were all "a little afraid" of being criminalized, of raids, or of losing their jobs. Under some pretext, a "girlfriend couple" Johnny knew who

worked in a lightbulb factory were fired. A feeling of being threatened and helpless became widespread. Some of Johnny's friends changed their appearances or even got married in order to be less visible and less vulnerable.

“From the very beginning of the Hitler regime, I still kept my short, man's haircut; back then we didn't wear pants anyway, but I had a tailored suit. You can't imagine what people said to us, 'Take a look at the gay broads!' and things like that. It was pretty bad. They said it was supposed to be made illegal for women too; it was already illegal for men.”

By chance, Johnny escaped a raid of the Kleist Casino in the Schöneberg district, where there had been a number of raids. It was temporarily closed in March 1933 and then shut down permanently in 1935.

“Once I planned to meet a whole group there at nine, but something delayed me at home and I didn't get there until 10:30. I got out of the subway, walked down the street, and thought, What's going on here, so many 'Green Minnas' [slang expression for police vans, trans.] in front of Kleist Casino. I walked up closer and saw them taking everyone. If I had been there half an hour earlier, I would've been taken too. The next day I heard from friends that they all had to go to the police, the vice squad, and they were released at six or seven in the morning. That was all. Heinz, the guy who owned the club back then - he was involved with cocaine. That's supposedly why the place was raided. But why did they take all the women? The women were questioned; they were asked what they were doing there, whether they had bought some coke. 'No,' they all said, 'we don't know anything about that; we go there to dance.' But they had to go to health control, since they were suspected of prostitution. I would have refused - that wasn't a club for whores! But what could you do? Hitler was in power. You couldn't do anything.”

Toward the end of 1933, Johnny spent six months in the Labor Service. At that time it was still a voluntary institution. It had been established as an employment program in 1931 during the mass unemployment. The "work maids" were housed collectively in camps and received no wages, working in exchange for room and board. They were employed mostly as domestic or agricultural workers. Compulsory work service was not initiated until June 1935, but it was not applied to women - except for prospective college students - until the war started.

First Johnny was placed in a camp near Schneidemühl in West Prussia, where she worked for a forest warden. "It was a great job. I felt good, wearing pants all day, jumping on a horse and riding into the woods." Of course everyone talked about politics, but "90 percent of the girls were not for Hitler. Most of them had been unemployed and went into the Labor Service to get a job later. And you had a chance to get to know something new."

Since Johnny was very outgoing, she quickly found a girlfriend among the forty-two girls - "there were six of us among them" - Hilde from Guben. When the two of them didn't return in time one evening from an outing, the other girls showered them with accusations.

"We hadn't behaved properly. First of all, because we were how we were, and second, since Hilde had gotten so drunk. It all started in the afternoon. They called us down to the common room. Hilde had already gotten a warning from the Labor Service for that kind of thing once before. I came down and a girl said to me, 'That isn't right, doing stuff like that.' Then Hilde came down and this Hedwig from Schneidemühl, who had the biggest mouth of all, belted her a few times. I used to have quite a punch and was very agile. First I wanted to support Hilde against all the others. Then they came toward us and I shouted, 'Hilde, go upstairs!' I distracted the others and then I raced up the stairs too. They followed us and we went into our room. Hilde wasn't all that nimble and already had a black eye. Next to the bed we had a round stool with iron on the bottom. Hedwig ran toward me and was about to grab me and I grabbed the stool and hit her on the head. I was tried for bodily injury; my mother had to come to Schneidemühl since I was under twenty-one. Hilde appeared as a witness and said it was the second time that they did that to her. She was thrown out of the Labor Service and I was supposed to be thrown out too. Nothing else happened, since we proved that they attacked us and I was only defending myself."

Johnny said it was impossible to get work if you had been thrown out of the Labor Service. But back then she remembered Hilde Lemke, whom she had known from the club; she was district manager for the Labor Service for Young Women in Brandenburg.

"Dr. Lemke had black hair cut in a man's hairstyle and was about forty or forty-two. She was married, had two children, but she also had a girlfriend on the side. I wrote her a very friendly letter, 'I know you from the Magic Flute, and such and such happened to me; it wasn't my fault and so on.' Then she wrote a letter, and the head of our camp said that since it was the first time for me I would just be transferred and not kicked out."

Hilde Lemke saw the Labor Service as the realization of "the great notion of educating a national community through work." In an article published in 1933 on the aim and object of the Labor Service, she emphasized its ideological orientation, which, according to the Nazi worldview, was meant to eliminate differences between social classes. She demanded compulsory service for women, saying that they must do their part as the men do theirs toward a "reconstruction of the German people." In addition to sewing and mending jobs, as was common up until that time, girls were also to perform "productive" work in the Labor Service, in the agricultural field in particular. This work was also meant to convey enthusiastic subordination to the Führer and a feeling for

"conscious Germanness" and was intended to train the girls physically, personally, and emotionally to be a "new German type" of mother.

With Lemke's help, Johnny was transferred to Ragösen near Brandenburg, where she worked first for a farmer and then in the Labor Service camp. Johnny said that the Labor Service was like an actual hotbed of lesbian relationships, though only indirectly, in that it was a community made up exclusively of girls and women.

"When I first came to Ragösen, I swore I wouldn't start anything. But when I wanted to go to bed in the evening, they had poured a bowl of water on my bed and everything was wet. So I had to sleep somewhere else. I picked out little Sonja von Paterski. 'Can I sleep with you?' 'Sure!' In Ragösen it was even worse than before. It was pushed incredibly in the Labor Service there. Many were engaged, but they just forgot their fiancés every now and then. Many got 'retrained,' and you just kept away from anyone who wasn't 'retrained.'

"It went around one day that Dr. Lemke was coming. We had to line up in our uniforms. All at once a car drove up and Lemke got out. I knew her. She marched past the ranks; we stood there, totally Heil Hitler, very sharp. She came up to me, 'You're Anneliese W-? I want to have a talk with you later.' I almost went in my pants! Then I went to her office. 'Say, what were you thinking about anyway? Writing me a letter like that! That was nothing less than blackmail.' 'For goodness sake, Madam Doctor, I didn't mean that at all. You understand the situation I was in, don't you?' I was a good actress in those days. She said, 'But if that happens one more time . . . and especially with your girls, just cut it out!' I didn't say a word; I just thanked her a million times. She left the next day. Before she left, she said, 'You promise?' I said, 'What?' I knew exactly what she meant."

After leaving the Labor Service, Johnny returned to Berlin-Weissensee, where the family that had adopted her when she was twelve ran a successful family restaurant. Her biological parents had divorced when she was eight and her mother had died a short time later. Johnny still remembered vividly how her grandfather had warned her adoptive parents, "'Mrs. W-, Anneliese has a masculine manner. Beat it out of her if you notice it.' But my mother couldn't beat it out of me either," she added dryly.

"When I went back home after the Labor Service, my mother found out, since all my girlfriends had written to me. I had stolen chocolate and cigarettes - we had everything in the restaurant - and I sent all my sweethearts little packages and they wrote, 'My dear little Johnny-mouse, thanks so much for the wonderful package. I'm lying on my bed smoking a cigarette from you and I think of you always. Oh, I wish you were still here with me!' When my mother saw all the letters she thought, 'Oh my goodness, that isn't normal; there's something not right here.' Every day four or five letters arrived.

She had opened the letters and spoken with my father. He was a lot more tolerant than my mother. 'Oh, it's just childish nonsense,' he said. She confronted me and we had an incredible fight. She said, 'Your grandfather was right. I should have killed you a long time ago!' You know the way things are with family. My mother was a very intelligent woman, very well read, but she just couldn't deal with that. Then she said, 'I think it's better if you just find yourself your own apartment.' But I didn't think she was serious, until I came home from work one Saturday, that is - at that time I worked for Brentator in Weissensee; they sold modern office supplies - and all my things were outside the front door. And there I was!"

But Johnny was lucky. She was able to sublet a room near Alexanderplatz with a friend and move in right away. "At first I didn't have any contact at all with my mother, except through a friend I kept in touch with who made deliveries for our restaurant. Later I did start visiting her again, but she never really got over it; I wasn't allowed to bring any girlfriends with me."

There were also problems with the family of her girlfriend, Helga. She was two years younger than Johnny; they had met in the club in 1937. Helga's older brothers were vehemently opposed to their relationship because they thought Helga should get married and have children.

"So her brothers always watched us and made trouble for me. They would come to me and tell me they forbade the relationship. I would say, 'You can't forbid me to do anything; I'm twenty-one.' Helga wanted to run away. At the time I worked at Siemens and I just quit without giving notice." The two women raced off to Leipzig, and the only one who knew where they were was Johnny's cousin Ello. "Ello wrote to us that the brothers were looking for me and went to the police. They filed a report, since, after all, their sister had disappeared." Johnny got a job with Siemens in Leipzig, but Helga didn't have any identification papers with her, so she couldn't find work. As a result, Johnny's meager wages had to support the two of them, and the room they sublet - "cheap, but bug-infested!" - wasn't free.

"Once a month we treated ourselves to dinner out, when I got paid. We got to know an artist, Harry, who fell in love with Helga. She was very beautiful. But we told him the truth. I had a sassy man's haircut then and anyone with a clue knew right away. He said, 'That's okay, I'm married too, but I'll treat you both to dinner often.' He told us about a women's club. So we went there and a woman - a real butch - was sitting at our table. She was hot for Helga. 'May I dance with your girlfriend?' 'Why not? It's no big deal.' But we hadn't told her about our running away. When the three of us went out together once, she said to Helga, 'You don't work at all? That's strange.' It turned out she had observed Helga a few times during the day. Well, we trusted her a bit; she was charming, very

nice. And so we said that we had run away and that Helga couldn't work because she wasn't registered and I had to pay for everything. Helga was at this butch's place once. She wanted something from Helga and threatened, 'If you don't go to bed with me, I'm going to report you.' Helga refused and ran out. By the time she got home, the police were already there. As soon as Helga had run out, she really did call the police. When I got home, the landlord called to me, all excited, 'Oh, Miss W-, the police were here and took Helga with them since she wasn't registered.'"

When Johnny went to the police, she was told that Helga was in jail and would be picked up the next day by her brothers. They were going to take her back to Berlin because she was still a minor.

"I went down past the police and whistled our secret whistle. Helga looked out her window that faced the street and told me that that butch woman had squealed. Well, then I went straight to her apartment and beat her to a pulp! I think she had to go to the hospital; she was all black and blue. In the evening I went back to the jail and Helga waved and cried. The next day I went to work and said my mother was sick. I had to think up some lie, because I wanted to leave immediately. On my way home I crossed over Adolf Hitler Square where the prison was and I thought, Well, I'll be damned - there was Helga with her two oldest brothers walking toward me. I turned white as a sheet for sure. Helga just stared at me. The brothers couldn't remember exactly what I looked like; they had only seen me twice for really short times. 'Wasn't that Anneliese?' they asked. Helga told me later she just said no. I went home, packed my bags, and went to Berlin the next morning. Helga's brothers had filed charges against me for seduction of a minor. They wanted to prevent our relationship on moral grounds. But they weren't going to accomplish that. They'd have to prove it first. Maybe it wasn't important enough for the police to follow up; in any case, nothing ever came of it. We stayed together for a while, always in secret; we had gone through a lot together. It was 1938 then - the streetcars were still running. Helga would ride all over town, and we would just meet somewhere, and the brothers were always on our tails. We were always afraid. And with all that harassment, our relationship eventually broke up."

After returning to Berlin from Leipzig, Johnny was initially unemployed. She was happy to hear about a new meeting place in the Wedding district.

"On Pank Street near Nettelbeck Square at the Wedding subway station was one of our clubs, one of the only ones that still existed in 1938. The Pauli was really atrocious. Normal men sat in front, and then you went into another room as big as the front one. There were old couches and the springs poked you in the butt when you sat down. It was terrible, but it was ours! A married couple ran the place. He was confined to a wheelchair; she was in her late fifties. Maybe some of us who lived in Wedding had

taken it over and then the grapevine did its work. There were even women there from the western part of town whom I hadn't seen in a long time. There was nowhere else to go! The room was absolutely packed! The men in front tolerated it all; they were very charming to us. In Wedding there was a kind of man - either they make a stink or they accept women like us. Of course they knew about us; we were simply like that - we loved women - you could see that! The other women were all dressed up and wore makeup, and there we were with sassy men's haircuts and I wore a suit and tie. You'd have to have been really dumb not to notice! And we danced together; there was music - Ellen Pollwitz played accordion. We danced so close together; the dance floor was very small since the sofas and a few chairs surrounded it. When it got too crowded, we stood in front as well. I was there almost every night, since it wasn't very far from where I lived and in the beginning I was still unemployed. There were never raids there, but one day the Pauli was suddenly closed."

Despite the official ban of homosexual clubs, there were more or less well-known meeting places in Berlin and other major cities during the entire Nazi period, even if they stayed open only a short time. The danger of raids was ever-present, however. Johnny remembered several clubs, including one on Woehlert Street run by a friend of hers, Anni.

"Outside it always said 'Private Party.' You had to ring a bell and she only let in people she wanted. In 1941 there was also a very nice club on Hoch Street at the Gesundbrunnen Station, but that one closed suddenly too. Even during the Nazi period there were always clubs you could go to, but they always disappeared again after a while. After 1938 there were more and more raids. If we went to one and it was closed, then we didn't know what had happened. Before the war, Lotte Hahm had also opened a place, at Alexanderplatz in the teacher's association building on the second floor. There used to be a dance café there. Lotte Hahm had rented it and organized ladies' nights there. But that didn't last very long either."

Lotte Hahm (1890-1967) played an important role in Berlin's lesbian subculture and, in particular, in the "Ladies' Department" of the BFM, the Human Rights League, the largest organization for homosexual emancipation in the Weimar Republic. From 1926 to 1932 she ran several organizations and clubs for lesbians, such as the Damenklub Violetta, the Violetta Ladies' Club, which had over four hundred members. Club activities included lectures, readings, and boat trips. She was untiring in her efforts to organize lesbians and improve their social situation. In early 1933 the lesbian magazine *Die Freundin*, which had been keeping everyone abreast of Lotte Hahm's activities, stopped mentioning her. Evidently, her girlfriend's father accused her of "seducing a minor" and pressed charges; she went to jail in early 1933. Gertrud Keen, who was imprisoned in

Moringen just for putting flowers on Rosa Luxemburg's grave, told me that Lotte Hahm was brought to Moringen in early 1935. Moringen had been the site of the central women's concentration camp since October 1933. Hahm had apparently told her fellow prisoners that she had been accosted by a stranger at Alexanderplatz who asked her if she would watch his suitcase for him. A short time later she was arrested by the Gestapo, since there were illegal communist materials in the suitcase. This story can't be verified because certain camp documents are missing. Lotte Hahm was released from Moringen in March 1938 at the latest, when the camp was closed.

"I knew that Lotte Hahm served time in jail for seduction of a minor. That's just nonsense; I'd never believe that about her. It was just a pretext. Then I heard that she was supposedly in a concentration camp. She really had disappeared from the face of the earth for years, so that must be true. I don't know why she was arrested. Back then I said to myself, no one wants to have those things stirred up again; if they don't bring it up on their own, then you don't ask."

Anneliese W. found out how easy it was to end up in a concentration camp from Helene Bartelt, who spent two years in Ravensbrück, starting in 1940.

"I was together with her after she was released - not for long, maybe a year. She was a very beautiful woman, delicate, blond, very good-looking. They wanted her to produce munitions as compulsory service and she just said, 'That fucking Hitler can make his own munitions.' She was arrested for saying that! They picked her up at five in the morning and took her to Ravensbrück. There were many like us in the camp, but whether they were like that before or got that way from being locked up together . . . ? She didn't talk about it much. She wasn't supposed to and was always afraid. Not until we had been together for quite a while did she tell me that she had been abused. They had knocked out her teeth and she had two holes in her head. Later she became a kapo and assisted the camp warden, and then she was treated better. She was released after two years for good conduct. She wasn't able to find any work since it was written on her identification papers; that happened a lot. Then, when we broke up, she married a Dane -maybe just to have a place to go, who knows? But that didn't last very long."

Although Johnny herself had not been in danger, she experienced how Margot Holzmans life was in danger because she was Jewish. Johnny had met Margot and her girlfriend Hildegard - alias Peter - in the Pauli. Margot went underground in the early 1940s, like the painter Gertrude Sandmann, whose life story appears in *Days of Masquerade*, in order to escape deportation to the death camps. Like many others who were persecuted and tried to survive illegally, she had to depend on people who refused to cooperate with the racist fanaticism of the Nazis and its murderous consequences and were willing to help, often giving their own lives.

“Margot and Peter both lived with Lissy, a woman like us who still lived at home and had already hidden one Jew, also one of us. Margot was in hiding there and Peter lived there officially. That was on Swinemuender Street near the Gesundbrunnen Station, and I lived on Ruppiner Street, right around the corner. We had known each other for a long time; either they came to us or we went to their place. One day, either 1943 or 1944, Peter came to me and said, 'Can you imagine, they picked up Margot. No one knew where she was and that she's Jewish!' The woman who ran the bar where we always hung out knew she was Jewish and must have denounced her. I don't know for sure; we never found out. The Gestapo doesn't tell you stuff like that. They just came and got her; these were really terrible times. So Peter came to me, 'What should I do?' 'Go to the Gestapo. Maybe you can find out something.' Peter fought her way through at the Gestapo; I don't know how she did it. I had gotten her food ration cards to bribe them; everyone made deals back then. Behind the police station on Alexander Street there was a special SS tract and they sent her there. Margot was there over six months. Peter got her out; she never told us how she did it. It didn't matter anyway; we were all happy that Margot was back. But she was totally broken. What she told us. . . . The Nazis kicked the Jews in the stomach and then they raped them - things like that. It was gruesome.”

As unbelievable as the story of this release sounds, it wasn't exceptional. Even Gestapo officers could be bribed from time to time and were willing to let their victims go free if the price was right. Temporarily, at least, for they could be almost certain that sooner or later those released would end up back in the tight web of the Gestapo. That was also the case with Margot Holzmänn. When Johnny went to visit her friends one day, they weren't home. She found out from Lissy that the Gestapo had just been there to arrest Margot again. Johnny had set out to find her two friends and warn and help them.

“All of a sudden they came from Gesundbrunnen Station. I said to Margot, 'Don't even bother going home; come with me.' She stayed with me at least three to six months. I had a one-room apartment. We only went outside in the park at night; she had to get some fresh air. I had really nice neighbors who didn't support Hitler at all. Our landlady was Jewish; the landlord wasn't, but because they were married he had been able to save her. The Jewish woman was really great; she tolerated our having girlfriends, that is, this homosexuality. She was the only one who knew I had hidden Margot. The neighbors didn't know; I never would have said anything. Back then children even denounced their own parents.

“It was like this: The apartment to the left of mine belonged to a gentleman who worked, and on the right, the man and the woman both worked. It was a sturdy old building, and pretty well insulated. Margot lay around and read the whole day. Using the toilet in the stairwell was the hardest thing. When she had to go, she would quietly open

the door, peek out, and then quickly run up the steps, close the toilet door, and take the key. I was the only one who used this toilet; the other apartments had their own. Then she had to watch out again and come back down. She was so incredibly scared! When I got home at five, it was better. Peter came about ten at night, and then we would sit and play cards.

“One evening we were at Vineta Square again and a woman from the house saw her. Margot hadn't noticed that she was being watched. The Russians were already in Berlin, but there was still a lot of shooting. The next day the Gestapo came again - to me this time. If they had gotten her then, they would have shot her. Of course, they would have shot me too. But Margot wasn't there; she was upstairs at Hanni's - also one of us. She didn't know any details about Margot, but I knew I could count on her totally. She lived on the fifth floor; I was on the third. When they came to check on me, I simply said, 'I don't know any Margot' and they were finished with me. It was May, right before the war ended. The Russians were nearby, and then she said, 'Now I can finally go outside!' On the way, the owner of the bar came out and yelled, 'There she is again!' And we took off again. The next evening, the Russians were there. We had them get the barwoman; I saw to that. She had denounced Margot.

“So Margot survived. She and Peter didn't stay very long. They went to England to Margot's siblings. They wrote and said I should join them. They sent me all kinds of things. I didn't want anything. I only did what I had to.”

After the war, Johnny continued to take part in various social gatherings, and she got to know Lilian Harvey and Zarah Leander, who moved in the same circle as gay lyricist Bruno Balz. Johnny continued to work as a clerk until 1972. Until her death in September 1995 she lived with her life companion in the Schöneberg district of Berlin.

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Allison Brown (Translation, Berlin 2005)

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