

Karl Andersson

Gay Man's Worst Friend

— the Story of *Destroyer Magazine*

Entartetes Leben

Published by Entartetes Leben 2011.

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Originally published in Sweden in 2010 as *Bögarnas värsta vän – historien om tidningen Destroyer*. Translated from the Swedish by the author. This edition is slightly abridged compared to the Swedish original, and contains an extra chapter. The cover photo is a reprint from Thomas Böhme's photo book *Jungen vor Zweitausend*, Fliegenkopf-Verlag, 1998.

Printed in the Czech Republic 2011. First edition.

ISBN 978-91-633-6899-8

entartetesleben.com

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BERLIN

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Preface

This is the story of *Destroyer*, a magazine that I published in ten issues between 2006 and 2010. The magazine was a celebration, in words and pictures, of the Boy – that is, the adolescent male. And it was – which is of considerable relevance to this story – completely legal.

The first issue of *Destroyer* in particular was subjected to massive condemnation by the gay establishment in Sweden. The Swedish Federation for LGBT Rights found it “tasteless”, a gay public radio show called it “disgusting”, Stockholm Pride refused to sell it, and the gay public TV programme dubbed me “gay man’s worst friend”.

The fierce reactions that *Destroyer* provoked are interesting, which is why I decided to collect them in this book, along with the few voices who defended my magazine. The result provides a picture of the LGBT movement in the 21st century – and one which is not very flattering. *Destroyer* caused gay men to join forces with neo-Nazis in condemning my magazine. The reactions to *Destroyer* expose internal power structures and show how gay identity has steadily shrunk over recent decades, encompassing ever fewer expressions of homosexuality. That is why it felt important to write this book.

It was translated from the Swedish by myself, but has been corrected by a native English speaker, to whom I am very grateful.

Karl Andersson
Berlin, February 2011

Man is beautiful

The only God I worship is Beauty. It's what made me create *Destroyer*. The magazine was a research project through which I hoped to find Ultimate Beauty – that magical force that eludes you when you approach it and runs through your fingers if you try to grab it. This is the force I tried to capture through *Destroyer*. It was my way of worshipping Beauty.

But what is Beauty?

Beauty is ubiquitous in nature and in man's celebration of nature. It is in a flower, and in the painting of a flower that an artist creates in an attempt to understand where its beauty resides. Is it in its petals? In its stem? In its colours? Artists in all ages have tried to capture beauty by describing it. The brush follows nature's lines as a tribute to it, an act of worship.

A work of art is more than a depiction, because the artist chooses what to depict. It is impossible to depict nature in all its nuances, and it is also pointless. A work of art must be read as a map. The spectrum of colours in the petal of flower is infinite. This infinity is simplified by the artist into a single tone – yellow, for example. That is his way of attempting to capture beauty, which according to him resides in precisely that yellow tone. At best he has seen something that the rest of us have missed. His discovery will then be regarded as a revelation and the painting will become famous. Artists are explorers – they tell us things about the world that we aren't capable of seeing ourselves.

Thus, Beauty resides in nature and art is our attempt to understand it. Through artefacts like paintings and architecture we try to recreate the line of beauty which is immanent in nature. What is the golden ratio if not a vain attempt to distil this line? In a mathematical formula we hope to find the very code of beauty.

But we don't succeed.

And therefore, we keep trying.

We'll never find Beauty, but we never tire of searching for it. It is what drives us and gives meaning to our lives. Over and above our basic needs of food and reproduction, we seem to have a need for understanding. Nature and ourselves. We map the human genome and get yet another code. Is that the key? We keep believing that we are closing in on the core of what it means to be a human being.

Because that's where Ultimate Beauty seems to reside, at least from mankind's perspective. Mountain ridges, giant clouds and colourful petals in all their glory – nothing is as beautiful as ourselves. Mankind loves itself and admires itself, for which we should count ourselves lucky. To find humans beautiful is simply human. The great Beauty resides in ourselves.

But where in ourselves? If man is nature's most beautiful creation, then what exactly is it that makes us beautiful? It is this very question that has kept artists busy throughout the ages – that's why man has been the most common object of their voyages of discovery.

Sometimes we've come close. There are, for example, many ancient examples of humanity depicted as a fertile woman, where the artist has enhanced the features he thought made her a human being: big breasts, buttocks and thighs. Those symbols were the home of mankind's secret, the reasoning seems to have been. The fat fertile goddesses were a kind of ultimate representation of mankind, a summary of what it means to be a human being: nature in a nutshell, beauty graspable enough to be worshipped.

The fertile woman was an ideal, and her function was to represent mankind's immanent beauty. But she wasn't the most common one. There is one ideal that outshines all others, an ideal that has been an object of worship since time immemorial and which no society has managed to remain indifferent to: the Boy.

The Boy is mankind in its purest form – man when man is most man. When I use the word "boy" I mean the state that Germaine Greer defines thus in her 2003 book *The Boy*: "A boy is a male person who is no longer a child but not yet a man." It seems that all societies that ever existed acknowledge this period in the life of the male, whereas there is no equivalent concept for females, whose individuals pass directly from child to woman. The Boy exists *sui generis*. Boys are subjected to complex rituals and are also pampered in various ways. They are a source of fascination as well as of irritation on the part of the rest of society, but no one remains indifferent to them – everyone recognises the Boy, in one way or another, as a unique phenomenon and a separate entity between child and man.

What is it that makes the Boy the essence of man? He's not the strongest or the smartest. Our senses are at their most acute not when we reach puberty but rather when we reach the age of about twenty. Similarly, scientists have concluded that man's physical strength reaches its peak when we are 23 – not to mention wisdom and experience, qualities that grow with each year that passes.

"So what is central in the boy?" asked Witold Gombrowicz in 1955 in a text included in *The Diary*. "It is not his reason, and it's not his experience, his knowledge or his technique, all of which are poorer and weaker than in a finished and settled man. His youth, and his youth alone – that is his trump card."

Boy is mankind fresh from the factory. He's like a brand new Porsche: beautiful, sexy and cocky, but not yet run in – and that's why the first few laps will result in crashes. The Boy does all those things that man, through experience and knowledge, learns *not* to do. If you search the internet for "teenage boy", you will find an orgy of criminal offences but also news where the boy is the victim. Boys climb train engines and get killed by the electric cables overhead. Boys "borrow" their parents' cars and crash them because they don't have driving licences and they overestimate their own capabilities. And boys drink themselves to death because they want to see how much alcohol they're able to drink.

What drives boys is the will to explore the world, and their own limits. This is precisely what man always has been engaged in, and it is this that makes us human: the constant exploration of the world and testing of its limits. As adults we explore under controlled circumstances: the Boy does it without a safety net. And that's why we can't help but admire him, while regretting the accidents he suffers along the way. We admire him and we love him, because in our hearts we know that we *are* him.

The Boy is the hint of mankind's greatness and everything it is capable of, from massacres and gang rapes to the building of advanced bridges and scientific discoveries. The Boy is the concept of man taken to its extreme. Our code does not reside in the human genome, not from a strictly aesthetic point of view. It resides in the Boy.

According to the classical Greeks, the Boy's beauty consists of, as Michel Foucault puts it in volume two of *The History of Sexuality*, "the signs and guarantees of a developing virility. Strength, endurance, and spirit also formed part of this beauty; hence it was good in fact if exercises, competitions, and hunting expeditions reinforced these qualities."

The Boy was thus a kind of valuable raw material, and it was society's duty to gently shape it in the right way, taking care of the boy's nascent power which

would not reach its peak until years later. This is how Pseudo-Demosthenes puts it in *Eroticos*, his tribute to the boy Epicrates. Foucault notes that “as if it were a matter of a work of art to be finished, he urges all who know Epicrates to give this future figure ‘the greatest possible brilliance’.”

Beauty resides in the Boy. But which boy? Which features in the boy make him beautiful and into a representative of all of humanity? As we have seen, the boy is meant to get out and explore the world in various ways. He should test the limits of humanity. But what else do we expect of him? What does the boy look like when he is most a boy?

There are surprisingly detailed accounts from ancient Greece in which physical traits are connected with, and appreciated in, the boy. Kenneth Dover describes them in *Greek Homosexuality*: “broad shoulders, a deep chest, big pectoral muscles, big muscles above the hips, a slim waist, jutting buttocks and stout thighs and calves.”

In addition, dark skin was one of the boy’s trade marks, since he was supposed to spend time outdoors and train his body, which would be tanned. This was not the case for females, whose skin remained light since they were to be kept at home and, perhaps to accentuate the differences between the sexes, avoid the sun. The vase painters, who only had two shades to choose from, therefore painted men and boys in black and women in white.

This was one of the reasons why many dark-skinned boys appeared in *Destroyer*. Another reason was that these boys lived in poor countries where the middle class hadn’t yet spread. Countries that were, in Gombrowicz’ terminology, *immature* – in a sense, the teenagers among nations. The boys in these countries were closer to what it means to be a human being, and thus more beautiful.

Mankind is beautiful, and *Destroyer* was a declaration of love for mankind – an attempt to give it “the greatest possible brilliance”. But what is mankind? What does its innermost core look like? That’s the answer I was searching for. I searched for the core in the ultimate representation of mankind: the Boy. I searched in his glimmering skin, in his long eyelashes; in the lines of his collar bone, his pectoral muscles and his puberty. In these angles of beauty, in his behaviour and in his scent I hoped to find mankind’s very being, its ultimate code. I knew that I was bound to fail, because no one can capture Beauty. But it was the many attempts that created *Destroyer*.

Apollo, Dionysus & the Boy

It is in December 2004 that the name *Destroyer* first appears in my notes. I had just finished reading Camille Paglia's 1990 classic *Sexual Personae*. Paglia is an art historian and her book analyses a number of classic novels, mainly from the English-speaking world. It took me half a year to read her masterpiece, and it made deep impression on me. I often claim that there are pre- and post-Paglia ways of perceiving the world, and many of my friends who read the book agree. I consider it something of a bible, to which one can return again and again; the margins of my copy are filled with my enthusiastic comments.

This is especially true of the chapter entitled *The Beautiful Boy as Destroyer*, in which Paglia analyses three novels: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde, *Death in Venice* by Thomas Mann, and *Billy Budd* by Herman Melville. Their common feature is that the beautiful boy destroys his admirer. Dorian Gray destroys Basil Hallward, Tadzio destroys Gustav von Aschenbach and Billy Budd destroys John Claggart. That's spot on, I thought. The Boy's beauty is so strong that it slaughters everything that stands in its way – I considered both von Aschenbach and Basil Hallward my soul mates. We were all slaves to beauty, and devoted our lives to worshipping it.

The magazine's subtitle came as naturally as the name: *Journal of Apollonian Beauty*. This too takes its inspiration from *Sexual Personae*, which divides the world into the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Put simply, Apollo represents the theoretical side of life, Dionysus the practical. The Apollonian eye is cold, manly and analytical. It's the eye of the aesthete, and it gazes upwards to the sky. The Dionysian, on the other hand, is the female earth and the pleasures of sex. Apollo represents visual beauty, Dionysus the emotions underneath. The ideal is Apollonian, reality Dionysian; in other words Apollo sees while

Dionysus touches. And since *Destroyer* was all about ideals, Apollo was my god of choice.

If I had stopped there, I don't think the magazine would have stirred up any scandal. It would have become just another of those photo books and other tributes in honour of Apollo. It would have become good, but maybe not so interesting. I wanted more.

Over the year before *Destroyer's* birth, I had become more interested in the history of the modern gay movement. I had ordered mountains of books that dealt mainly with developments in the USA following the Stonewall riots in 1969. I was surprised and upset by what I read. I had stumbled over a history that was little known, at least among gays of my generation. It was the history of a shrunken gay identity. After a short golden age, the years immediately after Stonewall, gay identity had been systematically reshaped to include ever-fewer expressions of homosexuality. Promiscuity and femininity among gay men was looked down upon, as another image was spread – that of the gay man as a nice lad who just wanted to get married in church, like everyone else. Nothing wrong with people who want to get married in church, but that image was sold at the expense of the other, less accepted expressions of homosexuality. And the least accepted of all was male attraction to young men. Not children, but teenagers. All of a sudden this was no longer called homosexuality. Men who mainly liked teenagers were suddenly called “boy-lovers”, or even, and incorrectly, “paedophiles”. By distancing themselves from this group of homosexuals through this use of words, other homosexuals would find it easier to be accepted by society.

I didn't find this strategy very attractive. Instead of demanding acceptance for being different, gay men tried to mimic the straight world as much as possible, in order to be accepted by them. Gay men had lowered the bar of what they wanted to achieve – and they had done so because Christian “family values” homophobes had told them to do so.

My conclusion could be summed up in one word: shame. I had seen the dark side of the success of the gay movement of recent years, and I wanted to share this insight with the gay community. I chose to do so through *Destroyer*.

Destroyer thereby became a gay magazine, and the subtitle was expanded to *Journal of Apollonian Beauty and Dionysian Homosexuality*. When I looked at that sentence, I realised what had been missing from the beginning. Apollo and Dionysus are mutually opposed, and when they meet sparks fly. Which is exactly why they should be forced to meet. To make a magazine that only celebrated Apollo would have been flat, uninteresting and – most of all – safe. Introducing

Dionysus to *Destroyer* was a way to bring the ideal and reality close together, which is a taboo, not least for me. But that also makes it tempting.

When *Destroyer* underwent the transformation from purely Apollonian worship to including Dionysian reality, the magazine became interesting. The famous antagonists brought a tension to *Destroyer* which would define the magazine's very being; over its lifetime, it would teeter between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, sometimes tipping over a bit in one direction, sometimes being pulled back in the other. A critic said that I walked "a pretty thin line", and she was right: I walked the thin line between Apollo and Dionysus. That's what *Destroyer* was: a thin line. That was what made the magazine interesting from an artistic point of view, and also what made it the target of a number of scandals.

Let me make it clearer: the Apollonian part of *Destroyer* meant pictures and texts that celebrated the Boy as an ideal, whereas Dionysus meant sexual politics. Homosexual politics at that, which, among other things, included cross-generational sex and relationships. *Destroyer* brought the ideal and reality dangerously close together.

It was all about the Boy.

If I had not got the rights to publish Thomas Böhme's photo of the Boy on the cover of the first issue, there would never had been a *Destroyer*. The Boy's name is Enrico. He has one Cuban and one German parent. But I didn't know that at the time. I had seen the photo for the first time many years earlier in Thomas Böhme's photo book *Jungen vor Zweitausend*. I had scanned it and used it in the drafts for a fanzine that I did as a sideline to my job back in 2003. In those days the name of the fanzine was *Smash*, but it was never brought to fruition, partly because I had a full-time job and partly because I didn't know what I wanted to say – beyond *smash*.

The image is fantastic in many ways. It depicts a teenage boy on his way out of a pool. The aesthetic is classic: everyone has seen this scene hundreds of times, but with women. They always come up out of the pool in exactly that way on the covers of *Penthouse* and *Playboy*. The water drips sexily down their wet breasts while they look into the camera. The water drips over Enrico's body too, but he doesn't look into the camera; men often lack the awareness of being objectified that women acquire from an early age.

Enrico is not a man, but the fuzz on his upper lip, and the incipient hair under his arms show that he is also not a child anymore. He was a boy. Correction. He was *the Boy*. I had found him.

I found Thomas Böhme in the phone book. On 14th March 2006, I called him and explained my business, in pretty basic German. He sounded a bit

sceptical and asked to see some sample spreads from the magazine, as it didn't exist yet. I wrote in my diary:

Destroyer's whole existence depends on that image. I get depressed when thinking about other images. There is simply no other solution. Not for the first issue.

Along with the sample spreads, I sent him some loose interview questions. His answer came a few days later. He would be happy to participate in *Destroyer*, he explained, and had written a text about one of his photos, which was published in the first issue under the headline "The Boy and the Artist".

But most important was that he approved my use of his photo of Enrico for the cover of the first issue. He attached a faded 9 x 13 cm copy of it. I scanned the photo, colour adjusted it, opened the layout program and put Enrico on the cover. *Destroyer* was born.

Destroyer 01

Released in April 2006. 36 pages in full colour. 1,000 copies printed. Cover photo by Thomas Böhme. Logotype in Pantone 806 (fluorescent pink).

Selected content:

- ★ **We're underground!** Already in the first editorial I stressed the distinction between ideal and reality that would run as a red thread through all issues of *Destroyer*: "Browse any gay magazine and you will find pictures of well-built, shaved 30-somethings who I probably wouldn't mind having sex with. But to look at them? To get weak while looking at them? To adore the lines of their bodies? Nah, I don't think so. It's one thing to have sex. Another thing to worship a beauty ideal."
- ★ **21 more reasons:** A collage of 21 pictures of Aaron Carter, and this text: "Everyone should find at least one picture of Aaron Carter to jack off over here. This is a tribute to XY." XY was an American gay magazine, which in 2000 published a similar page called "69 reasons to jack off over Aaron Carter". Half in jest, I sometimes refer to that article as the height of gay journalism.
- ★ **The Age taboo or how homosexuality went blunt.** The main article on four pages, where I explain how the gay movement in the 1970s adopted the rhetoric of the homophobes who attacked them.
- ★ **Collecting beauty.** A fictional interview with a man who collects pictures of beautiful boys. The article extrapolated the Apollonian view. The man is celibate and says: "My appreciation of these boys that I cut out is on a totally different level than real sex."
- ★ **10 Podolí positions.** A humorous guide to the outdoor pool complex Podolí in Prague. Numbers on a photo show where different types of visitor lounge, for example: "7. The geronto park – this is where your grandma would hang out!" Or: "10. And finally, this is the empty space where you, after an exhausting swim, can explode in a touching performance of Donna Summer's *This is it*."
- ★ **How to run a twink site.** An interview with two webmasters of gay porn sites. The article was illustrated with images from the websites. Four of them sport erections.
- ★ **Ultimate sauna.** A floor plan of a fantasy gay sauna; very Dionysian.

The Scandal

I didn't expect positive reviews. Quite the contrary. I expected the gay media to be critical of *Destroyer*, to put it mildly, in line with my analysis in the main article: I was giving gay men a bad name.

But I hadn't expected the deafening silence that the first issue faced. My friend Oscar Swartz told me about the reactions *Destroyer* caused among the board of directors of *QX*, Sweden's biggest gay magazine, where I once used to work myself. While waiting for all the participants to arrive, the chairman of the board and the CEO showed Oscar the magazine and asked him if he knew what the hell I was doing. They shook their heads and their conclusion seemed to be that I was simply mad. At the same time, they faced a dilemma. They knew that, from a purely journalistic point of view, they should cover the launch of a new gay magazine, made by a Swede who used to work at *QX*. Oscar told me that he thought they might write something on the internet site, but probably not in the print magazine. But they didn't write anything at all.

Sylvester, a Swedish gay site, didn't write anything either. I had sent the editor Henrik Tornberg a copy, since he had written an appreciative review of the fanzine *Brute* a few months earlier. He wrote: "God knows the stiff and bourgeois Swedish gay scene needs more projects like *Brute*. DIY, baby!"

The radio show *P3 Homo*, the gay programme of the Swedish public service broadcaster Sveriges Radio, was the first media outlet to comment on *Destroyer*. They did so on 2nd June, 2006. Here is the conversation between the two presenters, Anders Olsson and Moa Svan:

Anders: I'm seldom speechless, but some days ago I actually was, when in our mailbox I found a copy of the new gay magazine *Destroyer*, a

magazine made by Karl Andersson, who among other things was behind the *QX*-based magazine *Straight* some years ago. The magazine costs eight euros and the texts are in English and it's supposed to be an alternative to magazines like *Gay Times* and *Attitude*.

Moa: But, what's so upsetting about that? Why are you speechless, Anders?

Anders: I have the magazine here, take a look for yourself. The magazine is a celebration of hairless young boys. On page after page, young, mostly Eastern European boys show off their teenage bodies and erections and none of them seems to be a year over thirteen. The captions say they're eighteen, but the images ooze from underage children, lecherous old men and paedo flirts. And the texts, they tell you where to check out young boys at outdoor pools, and how to run a porn site with twinks. Seriously, I just get depressed. Karl Andersson writes in his editorial: "Worship the Boy and reclaim your homosexuality." I mean, to represent eighteen year olds as children has nothing to do with *my* homosexuality, that's for sure.

Moa: Well yeah, it's really, really disgusting. I must say I get these ancient Greece vibes, you know this age-hierarchical view on sex and young boys, no it's disgusting!

Anders: I really agree. But you who listen must not think that I'm against sex, nudity, attraction and porn, because I'm really not. It's just about on whose terms it is, and how and what the purpose is, so therefore I now give you some lines of a sweet, dykey short porn story.

(The lesbian porn is read out)

Anders: Mmm, how lovely lesbian.

I had expected the diss, but it surprised me that Anders Olsson claimed that the models in the porn article weren't "a day over thirteen". When I met him back stage at the Stockholm Pride festival in the summer of 2006, I asked him if he had really meant what he had said. He claimed that he had not meant the boys in the porn article, but in *Destroyer* as a whole. However, the caption he referred to in the radio show is from the porn article.

I also found interesting the moderators' sudden dismissal of ancient Greece, since that society has traditionally been hailed by the gay movement as a kind of homosexual golden age, an advanced civilisation to refer back to when homophobes accuse homosexuals of being decadent. However, the dismissal of ancient Greece as "disgusting" was in line with the theory I put forward in the first issue's main article: gay identity had become so narrow that it had even cut itself off from the ancient lineage running from the ancient Greeks.

On 11th June 2006, at 22:46, I got an email from *Aftonbladet*, Sweden's biggest daily newspaper. The reporter Daniel Persson had got a "tip-off" about *Destroyer*. Ten minutes later, I had emailed him my mobile phone number. He called immediately. We spoke for at least half an hour, during which I walked excitedly around my flat. I still remember how moist my hands were during our talk, and how they trembled. I had once worked at *Aftonbladet* myself, and I knew what angle a tabloid newspaper would give the story. So I tried to give the reporter what he wanted – good and slightly controversial quotes – at the same time as stressing that the magazine was in no way illegal and that I thought one shouldn't break the law.

I knew I would get attention from the interview. But I didn't know I would end up on page seven – the most valuable news page (as it's the first news page after the editorial and the culture spread). That's where the article on *Destroyer* was published on 21st June, 2006:

"Teenage boys are very beautiful"

– young boys expose their genitalia in a new gay magazine

Karl Andersson thinks that teenage boys are the most beautiful thing. Now he's launched gay magazine *Destroyer* – where young boys show their genitalia and caress each other.

"I don't care if paedophiles read my magazine", he says.

Some years ago, Andersson was editor-in-chief of *Straight* – a magazine founded by a major Swedish gay magazine. In May he launched his new project, a magazine with nude and skimpily-clad young boys.

"I want to reclaim the boy as one of the beauty ideals of gay culture", Andersson says to *Aftonbladet*.

Lives in Prague

"It's illegal to have sex with children under fifteen, and that should be

respected. But teenage boys are very beautiful.”

For some time he has been living in Prague, and it’s from the Czech Republic that he publishes *Destroyer*. The first issue has been printed in 1,000 copies, and it costs 75 kronor in Sweden.

In one spread in the magazine there are pictures of naked young boys in sexual situations.

In one image, for example, one boy is giving oral sex to another boy.

Some of the boys look very young.

Dismissed on the radio

“I’m a homosexual, and I consider the teenage boy the height of beauty”, Andersson writes in his statement of purpose in the first issue.

When the magazine was reviewed in *P3 Homo* it was harshly dismissed, partly on the grounds that the naked boys “were not a day over thirteen”.

“Chest hair”

Andersson denies that claim.

“Ridiculous. Some of them even have chest hair.

“I follow the law. It’s child porn if it’s a pornographic image of someone under the age of eighteen. That’s where I draw the line. I don’t even have any seventeen year olds in the magazine.”

However, Andersson realises that he’s walking through a minefield. And he thinks that the magazine could give rise to a police investigation if published in Sweden.

“But it would hardly happen here in the Czech Republic”, says Andersson.

On the same page, *Aftonbladet* published a box with “three views on the gay magazine *Destroyer*”:

Jon Voss, managing director and CEO of gay magazine *QX*:

“I don’t see the point of this magazine. I don’t see him as a paedophile, but I think his aim is to provoke by focusing on something that is taboo. I remember this from the 80s, when the gay movement threw out the paedophile movement.”

Lena Nyberg, Ombudsman for Children:

“This is extremely serious. We know that children are exploited and

that it is claimed that they are over eighteen, but in reality they are not. That's why there is a big responsibility to not publish such pictures."

Sören Andersson, chairman of RFSL [The Swedish Federation for LGBT Rights]:

"We strongly oppose exploiting young persons in this way. These boys don't seem to be eighteen. The images are terribly distasteful."

I liked the quote in the headline: "Teenage boys are very beautiful". These fundamentally gentle and innocent words were considered controversial enough to blow up to a bold headline covering half the page. In a large photo, I pose with my magazines. The picture was taken by my friend Lars when he visited me in Prague, and he was happy to be able to send an invoice of 250 euros to *Aftonbladet* for letting them use it.

The first thing that happened after the article was published was that the visitor count on my homepage skyrocketed, drawing the attention of my statistics provider Nedstat and resulting in their closing my account, citing some vaguely-formulated paragraph in the user agreement about "inappropriate" content.

The next thing that happened was that the orders started coming in. On the day the article was published, I received 24 orders – all of them from Sweden. Writing this, four years later when the magazine has many more readers, I seem to remember the article generating more orders than that – it certainly felt like a lot at the time. But even 24 orders was fantastic compared to the single copies I was selling before. The magazine was now well-known in Sweden, and the orders kept coming in until the break-even point was in sight. *Aftonbladet* had secured *Destroyer's* future.

Later that same day, the far-right organisation Nationellt Motstånd (National Resistance) published an article titled "New gay magazine with paedophile streaks". The introduction read:

Gay sex activist Karl Andersson launches a gay magazine with teenage boys engaging in sexual activities. Critics have condemned the magazine on the grounds that the naked boys are "not a day over thirteen". Karl Andersson has responded to this by saying, "I don't care if paedophiles read my magazine" and that as a gay man he considers "the teenage boy the height of beauty".

The neo-Nazi site *Info14* also wrote about *Destroyer*, under the headline “Fag magazine wants paedophile readers”. *Destroyer* provided perfect fodder for the neo-Nazi organisations, as the magazine – and the criticism of it – supported their view that “the gay sex lobby has connections to paedophilia”, as National Resistance put it in their article about me. Or with the words of *Info14*: “The gay sex movement is full of paedophiles and RFSL has previously openly functioned as a network for paedophiles.”

Let me make a few brief comments about this. The gay movement has no connections to paedophilia in the original sense of the word – sexual attraction to children. However, it has a paederastic heritage, meaning male attraction to adolescent boys, in as much as its founders were almost exclusively men who were attracted by teenage boys. I can understand why the homosexuals became furious with me if they thought that, through *Destroyer*, I put the spotlight onto that issue, as the neo-Nazis apparently thought. *Destroyer* wanted to bring back the teenage boy as *one* of the ideals in gay culture, but I never argued that homosexuals “are” a certain way, which was how both the LGBT organisations and the neo-Nazi ones had interpreted what I was saying. On the contrary: I consider it every minority’s duty to fight the view that one member of the group represents all the others.

The article in *Aftonbladet* also resulted in a great number of blog posts, and many comments on my own blog. In the beginning, it was the usual mix of vitriolic commentators who attacked me and each other. But after National Resistance and *Info14* wrote about me, I got increasing amounts of abuse of the “dirty paedophile” kind, as well as this comment:

Is this some kind of sick fucking joke? Nationalists are jailed in today’s society, and the paedophiles they criticise walk free! Disgusting. Porn is and remains wrong. I’m happy that I’m at least equipped with a heterosexual brain without paedophile features.

On the neo-Nazi site *stormfront.org* – with the slogan “White Pride World Wide” – one user commented on the *Aftonbladet* article:

Disgusting. Utterly disgusting. People like him don’t deserve to live.

Someone else notes that “Hitler had medicine to deal with faggots”. I found it amusing that the neo-Nazis repeat the word “disgusting” almost as many times as the presenters of *P3 Homo*.

The reaction that pleased me most was an email from a reader of *Aftonbladet*:

Hello Karl,

I read about you and your magazine *Destroyer* in *Aftonbladet* and couldn't refrain from writing you a few lines. I come from Iran and the Persian culture. For hundreds of years there has been an extensive poetic tradition in the Persian culture which deals with the subject of boys and their beauty.

World-famous Persian poets like Omar Khayyam, Hafez, Saadi, Molavi, Eraghi et al. celebrated in their poems the beauty of boys and the love that many men in the old Persian culture, as well as today, experience and fully appreciate.

I wish I could translate some of this ancient literature on the love of boys and send it to *Destroyer*, along with old images of boys that are found in various old Persian books.

I commend your courage, and I'm deeply surprised that in as tolerant a country as Sweden there are still so many narrow-minded people who aren't capable of appreciating the beauty of the human body. From old, wrinkled and beautiful bodies to young people's bodies. How can the human body be offensive? The fact that there exist sick paedophiles, necrophiles and other "philes" doesn't mean we should declare young people's naked bodies to be ugly and cover them up! After all, that's exactly what fundamentalists do with grown-up women who are forced to wear a "burqa".

Good luck with your magazine. I know *Destroyer* will be appreciated and remembered in gay history as the first magazine that dared to show that it can never be wrong to appreciate the body of a boy of legal age.

As we say in Persian, "Affarin Karl" (well done, Karl).

In the afternoon of the day the article in *Aftonbladet* was published, I got a call from an editor at *P1-morgon*, the morning news programme on Swedish national public service radio. He asked me if I wanted to participate on the phone on the next morning's programme, in a live debate about *Destroyer* with Lena Nyberg, the Ombudsman for Children (a government appointed office). I was in two minds about whether to accept. As the editor was keen for me to participate, he explained at length to me what the discussion would be about and what the Ombudsman for Children's views were. We spoke for half an hour and he asked me to call him an hour later to let him know.

It might seem strange that I didn't accept immediately. After all, wasn't this the media attention I had hoped for when I sent the magazine to the Swedish media, along with a cocky press release? I now had the chance to draw atten-

tion to the issue that I put forward in the first issue of *Destroyer* – the return of the boy as one of the ideals of gay culture. I had also been on live television and radio back in 1999, when I launched *Straight*.

But the situation then was different. The media were falling over themselves to show their love for everything gay, and as the editor-in-chief of a new gay magazine I was welcomed by radio and TV shows with open arms. The questions were predictable and easy to answer; my participation was mostly symbolic. I got media attention for *Straight* and the media who invited me could fill their “gay quota”.

Of course, it still worked like that, but this time I found myself on the other side of the fence. And the subject wasn't homosexuality anymore. The Ombudsman for Children wanted to discuss child sexual abuse, and Sören Juvas (then known as Andersson) was arguing that RFSL “strongly oppose exploiting young persons”. Neither of these topics had anything to do with *Destroyer*, and I would have to prove this in a live debate. Add the usual nerves – I was worried that my voice would tremble, that I would lose the thread and make a fool of myself. That's why I hesitated. But as I emailed three friends and called a fourth one to ask for advice, I already knew I would accept. As Oscar pointed out in his reply: “If this is an issue that you burn for, which it seems like, then you should go for it. This is your chance, which you wanted, didn't you?”

My friend Johan emphasized the importance of being well prepared, so in the evening I wrote down the questions that the Ombudsman for Children might ask, as well as my replies. I knew more or less what her arguments were, as the editor of *P1-morgon* had discussed this in our long phone conversation earlier in the day.

But at nine thirty that evening another person from *P1-morgon* called and told me that the debate would be with Sören Juvas of RFSL, The Swedish Federation for LGBT Rights, instead. I had no idea what criticism of *Destroyer* the chairman of RFSL wanted to air on national radio, or what questions the presenter would ask when the radio station called me up the next morning at half past six. Here is a transcript of the debate:

P1-morgon (presenter Jörgen Huitfeldt): A new magazine targeted at homosexuals and containing nude images of young boys has upset both the Ombudsman for Children and the gay movement. Several of the pictures show the boys in sexual situations, boys who according to several people seem to be quite a bit under eighteen years old. Sören Andersson, chairman of RFSL, welcome.

Sören Andersson: Thank you.

P1: You have seen these pictures – what do you make of them?

SA: I actually think they are quite tasteless.

P1: What is the problem?

SA: The problem is that you mix pictures of comparatively young, persons who are under eighteen, with those that are said to be eighteen, and those who are younger, that's not sexual images, but those who are older, that's where it's sexual images. And I also think that this is pushing the boundaries too far.

P1: What is the problem with mixing images of younger boys in clothes with nude ones who are, in that case, older?

SA: Well, this is not about... this has been done with a purpose and for a reason.

P1: And that is?

SA: Well, as I understand it, it is to make them look almost younger than they look anyway in the pictures.

P1: These naked images or the sex images?

SA: Yes, it is naked sex images.

P1: On the phone from Prague we have Karl Andersson, editor of *Destroyer*, which is the name of this magazine. Good morning.

Karl Andersson: Good morning.

P1: What's the idea behind your magazine?

KA: Well, the idea is to make a gay magazine that celebrates the young man and the teenage boy, the beautiful boy, that is – who used to be one of the beauty ideals in gay culture, but who isn't anymore and I want to, so to speak, bring him back. I have made the magazine entirely myself and printed it here in Prague, where I live, and it's scheduled to come out twice a year and can only be bought on the site *destroyerjournal.com*.

P1: Why do you think that is, that this beauty ideal you're talking about with teenage boys is no longer prevalent in gay culture?

KA: Well, homophobes have always accused gay men of being paedophiles. Which is, of course, absurd. But when the gay movement began to state that gay men absolutely *not* were paedophiles, I think they committed the mistake of taking these homophobes' arguments seriously. And since then, the gay media haven't dared to publish images of someone who could be seen as too young. And that's how the boy vanished as one of the beauty ideals.

P1: But is it so strange that many people get the impression that there are paedophiles in the gay movement when you publish this kind of images of young boys?

KA: The thing is, there are of course homosexual paedophiles, just as there are homosexual murderers and heterosexual paedophiles. The problem is that I don't think any one homosexual should be forced to be represented by any other homosexual.

P1: Okay, some of these images are more clearly pornographic. One where two boys have oral sex with each other and two other images where the boys pose with erections, and so on. Many think that the boys on those pictures look very young. How old are they?

KA: Well, all of them are eighteen, but first of all I must say that *Destroyer* is a magazine, it's a culture journal with lots of articles, there are book reviews and...

P1: Yes but now we're talking about these images. How do you know that they are eighteen?

KA: Well, these pictures illustrate two interviews with owners of porn sites. And all of the boys are eighteen, I have been ensured that, and these are professional porn sites which have thorough systems for checking that the boys are eighteen and all have their ID cards...

P1: Okay, do you agree that they give the impression of being younger?

KA: No, I don't. I think they give the impression of being very hot eighteen year olds. And I think it's strange when people start thinking for themselves that this guy doesn't seem to be eighteen, he seems to be seventeen, or whatever is their point.

P1: Okay, we'll let in Sören Andersson from RFSL. What do you say about Karl Andersson's arguments?

SA: I must say I find them a bit naive. I think this is pushing the boundaries too far in a way that I don't think is good. Partly I understand it as if you have the idea that homosexuals avoid speaking about, well, that gay men avoid speaking about the phenomenon that one likes looking at teenage boys and feel sexual arousal from this, only because one is then considered a paedophile. I don't recognise this, that a large group of homosexuals think that this is a good thing, that is, feeling sexual lust towards teenage boys in the way that you describe it. I don't recognise it, neither from my circle of acquaintances nor from those that I meet professionally in the LGBT sphere. It is possible that *your* circle of friends looks like that. And then, this about avoiding pictures of boys... I can't see that gay media avoid pictures of young guys. However, one doesn't usually publish porn with young guys in the gay media, but that's a totally different matter.

P1: Karl Andersson?

KA: Yes, gay media don't publish porn at all, I would say – very few magazines do. I don't look upon porn as something ugly, so I don't want to cut it from my magazine.

P1: But what do you say about those who claim that paedophiles can be attracted by this magazine, that it includes images that could attract them?

KA: Well, I got that question from *Aftonbladet* – whether I cared if paedophiles read my magazine – and they cut my reply. But I would say that they are very welcome to read my magazine, but I don't think paedophiles would care much for it, since all the boys are visibly sexually mature, and if you're a paedophile you're attracted by children who are not yet sexually mature.

P1: But do you think this legitimises children and young boys as sexual objects?

KA: Well, I got that question before too – whether I sexualise the teenage boy. And I'd rather say that the teenage boy *is* very sexual, and that's what I depict. I think that is a very beautiful thing to do, and *Destroyer* is all about celebrating this beautiful boy's, well, beauty, quite simply. That's something very worthwhile, in my view.

P1: Sören Andersson, RFSL?

SA: Well, I feel a bit... I mean of course you sexualise the young teenage boy. It's a fact that you use boys as sexual objects to sell your magazine.

I think you're pushing the boundaries in a way that I don't think is good. I think this opens up the possibility of abusing young people, that it legitimises it in a way that I don't find okay in any way.

P1: But Sören Andersson, why is the RFSL reacting against this? You don't have any more responsibility to comment on this than any other organisation, do you?

SA: No, I think that many of the views that you, Karl, hold here are a lot about imposing on the LGBT community, in this case homosexual men, views and opinions that are not significant for the whole group.

P1: So you think that this gives the gay movement a bad name?

SA: Yes I do.

P1: Karl Andersson, what do you say about that?

KA: Well, I find this very interesting. Sören Andersson thinks that I spread the wrong image of homosexuals. And the problem with that view is that you at the same time, automatically, are claiming that there

is a *right* image of homosexuals, which I find totally absurd. You'd have a lot to work with, if you were going to suppress every little thing that stands out – everything from promiscuity to leather men to butch lesbians to feminine gay men, and so on.

P1: Finally, Karl Andersson, the Ombudsman for Children is investigating whether this could be punishable as child pornography. What's your reaction to that?

KA: Well, my reaction is that if you really care about the children, then you should know that 80 percent of all child sexual abuse happens within the family, and people are often aware of it, and still you do nothing about it. Instead, clearly, one hunts scapegoats such as myself. In my view, that is not caring about children.

P1: Will RFSL act in any way to report this to the police or in any other way?

SA: No, I think it's enough if the Ombudsman for Children does her work in this matter.

P1: Thank you, Sören Andersson, chairman, RFSL. You also heard Karl Andersson, editor of the new gay magazine *Destroyer*.

I was pleased with my contribution and think I did well in the debate. Today, I wouldn't even touch on the matter of child sexual abuse, as it has nothing to do with *Destroyer*. But under the circumstances at the time, I was pleased. I also received a number of messages of congratulation. The one that made me most happy was an email from a female listener who said she was an engineering student from Gothenburg. She wrote:

I heard about your magazine for the first time this morning on *P1-morgon*. I want to compliment you on how logically, objectively and sensibly you refute the panic. The moralists' "shoot first, ask questions later, guilt by association" behaviour is real naughty. It's embarrassing that national media are so provincial and that RFSL are so afraid of being left outside in the cold.

I don't know why the editors of *P1-morgon* had me debate with RFSL instead of the Ombudsman for Children. But I think it was a pity, because debates between homosexuals in the straight media have a tendency to be treated somewhat as gladiatorial entertainment. We, who have everything to win from standing together, are pitted against each other in some sort of cockfight put on for the titillation of the straight audience.

A week after the debate, I received an email from a source at RFSL. It was sent from a private email address and stressed the importance of discretion, saying “I don’t want to risk an email leaking to my employers”, and also citing a famous case where a Swedish journalist lost their job because of a leaked email. The source wrote:

The word in the union is that we shall not comment on *Destroyer* anymore. Meaning, Sören’s first comment in *Aftonbladet* was border line for where we should have an opinion, and that it would be to judge taste to go further than simply stating our views on age limits and our opposition against paedophilia. Please do not mention in any context that I have given you this information.

I asked about more details:

Okay, it was like this: Sören spoke to the chief information officer about *Destroyer* and I happened to overhear. They said something about there being no need to say more, which we are also told via the internal email system. Please keep this information to yourself.

When I met Sören backstage at the Stockholm Pride festival in summer 2006, he complained about how well I had done in the debate against him. “You even laughed in all the right places”, he said.

The Ombudsman for Children participated an hour later in *PI-morgon*. She commented on what I had said earlier in the morning, but her own arguments stood unchallenged. The core of her argument was that *Destroyer* contained child pornography, and even if it didn’t she would welcome a change of law so that images with models over eighteen would be deemed to be child pornography if they *looked* underage. She called this “allusion pornography”. The Ombudsman for Children also stressed the importance of “keeping it clean”.

I was most surprised that my little magazine had got the head of a state authority to propose a change in the law. The four models posing nude in *Destroyer* were taken from big porn sites. Hundreds of thousands of people saw their images every day, which the models were aware of and for which they had been duly paid. But when four of these images were printed on paper, in a magazine that at the time of the debate had been read by about 50 people, the Ombudsman for Children felt the need to act. A certain kind of magic seems to be associated with paper. A magazine is a magazine and can’t be compared to the

intangible internet, even when pictures on the web have hundreds of thousands more views. I have the same mindset myself, that's why I chose to print a paper magazine instead of starting a website. You can hold a printed magazine in your hand, and it is stored at the National Library for all time – it exists in a different way to sites that come and go. I think that's what made the Ombudsman for Children and many others react so strongly. *Destroyer* was for real.

Since I wasn't able to respond to the Ombudsman for Children's views on *P1-morgon*, I wrote an opinion piece that I sent to *Aftonbladet*. The comment editor Lotta Gröning bought it for 500 euros. The article was published over a double-page spread on Sunday 2nd July 2006, accompanied by a large library photo of two men holding hands.

Homophobia stops my magazine

Karl Andersson: What my critics call "caring about children" is really just classic homophobia.

The new gay magazine *Destroyer* has been accused by the Ombudsman for Children and RFSL of publishing sexual images of underage boys – under eighteen that is. Even if the boys aren't too young, the Ombudsman for Children and RFSL still stand by their accusation that I chose models who look as if they are underage.

My critics want us to think that the source of their indignation is concern for children. But what it stems from is actually just plain old homophobia.

Men's magazine *Slitz* publishes, just like *Destroyer*, pictures of young, beautiful models. The women who are shown in *Slitz* are sometimes no older than eighteen. They are also made to look younger through the clothing and retouching. This is sometimes criticised. *Slitz* has over 200,000 readers, *Destroyer* a couple of hundred – and yet it is *Destroyer* that causes the Ombudsman for Children to demand harsher laws on the radio.

Why? Because this is about boys and not girls. Boys who will be looked at by men, not women or teenage girls.

Please let me inform you that the phenomenon of men being attracted by other men – even if they are teenagers – is not called paedophilia, as the Ombudsman for Children claims. It's called homosexuality.

The sexuality of the teenage boy has always been taboo and considered dangerous. Different times have curbed it in different ways. Today

you can't credibly claim that masturbation is dangerous, which was a method previously used to keep the hormone-heavy teenage boy under control.

But it is still acceptable to condemn homosexual images, especially if a boy is depicted in a sexual way. These are considered to be highly dangerous.

The same concern is not devoted the girls who are shown in *Slitz* or the male teenage pop stars that pose in youth magazines like *Frida*. The reason is that these are heterosexual contexts and thereby not dangerous to the people depicted. It is the male homosexual gaze that frightens.

The Ombudsman for Children can defend herself by saying that what she is most upset by in *Destroyer* is the sexual images. But there are – contrary to what one might think from the debate – very few sexual images in *Destroyer*. There is actually only a single picture of two boys having sex. One of the actors is Mike, from an established website; he's well over twenty years old. Apart from this picture, there are three images where boys pose with erections. And this in a 36-page magazine with over 140 pictures in total. It's hard to imagine that it is these four images that made the Ombudsman for Children demand a change in the law on national public radio.

No, it is of course the whole idea of *Destroyer* that is reprehensible, since it celebrates the beautiful young man by making him an object for other men to worship.

The criticism of *Destroyer* is not founded on concern for children, but rather on fear of homosexuals.

Those who truly care about children know that the vast majority of sexual abuse takes place within the family. With that in mind, I can't see giving priority to four legally-produced images in a gay magazine with a couple of hundred readers as anything but a betrayal of those children who are abused in families every day.

Luminary of the American Right Anita Bryant said in the 1970s: "I don't hate the homosexuals, but as a mother, I must protect my children from their evil influence." Nowadays, you can't use those words. But the Ombudsman for Children's criticism has the same homophobic foundation, just expressed in a more up-to-date way.

What's really tragic, though, is that RFSL, a gay organisation, feels the need to speak out and denounce a new gay magazine. Can reality get any more absurd?

Yes, it can. Because now the Ombudsman for Children has been joined by a neo-Nazi organisation. On its homepage, National Resistance denounces both me and *Destroyer*.

I printed the magazine myself and paid for it with my own money, in order to contribute to greater diversity within a gay culture that I cannot relate to. I have taken great care to create a magazine which is legal in Sweden and all other countries where homosexuality is legal.

The debate article resulted in yet another article on National Resistance's site, *patriot.nu*, where once again my picture is published, with this caption: "Fag editor, gay sex activist and paedophile advocate Karl Andersson." The headline borders on parody: "Fag editor advocates necrophilia." They have read my blog and copied and pasted the juiciest bits from recent years – apparently I had written about necrophilia. Once again, Anders Olsson's phrase about the models in the magazine is repeated:

Critics have argued that the boys in the images in the magazine *Destroyer* are "not a day over thirteen".

Around this time, I received a call from *Flipper*, a cultural show on Swedish national public service radio, who wanted to interview me. I had a long phone conversation with reporter Måns Mosesson. He asked me questions such as, "when did you realise that you liked younger guys?" I did not understand what he meant, and not until afterwards did I realise that he thought he was talking to a paedophile or something similar.

This was confirmed when the programme was broadcast. It dealt mainly with a new "paedophile political party" in the Netherlands. When they switched to the interview with me, they started by saying that I was not a paedophile and that I had no connection to the Dutch party. But the ominous soundtrack remained in the background. They dwelt on the article about Aaron Carter, in which I suggest the reader should jack off to his pictures. In the background they played an Aaron Carter song from the time when he was a child star and his voice was still high-pitched.

Now the blogosphere had woken up for real. "Stop Karl Andersson's *Destroyer*!" demanded a blog with the name, quite funny in this context, of The Blog of the

Free Word. Under the headline “Today’s Stupidities”, another blogger commented on the magazine. Eastern Öland’s Free Horizon blogged on the subject “Homosexuality, paedophilia, necrophilia”, a nationalist blogger asked in his headline: “Gay = paedophile?” A gay blogger complained about *Destroyer* under the headline “Fed up with these people who strengthen people’s prejudices without knowing it themselves!!!” And yet another neo-Nazi reported “Sodomite launches paedophile magazine.”

There were positive voices, too. For example, in the youth forum *ungdomar.se* (*youths.se*), sixteen-year-old user Hampie wrote the most sane words in the debate so far: “Once again media have totally misunderstood the word paedophile, oh how embarrassing.” The thread had 92 entries before it was closed, and once again *P3 Homo*’s words about the guys in the magazine not being “a day over thirteen” were repeated. But Hampie checked *Destroyer*’s site and looked through the gallery with pictures from the magazine. Then he wrote: “I’ve seen them now, and the person who spoke on P3 exaggerated like fuck.” Someone else replied: “By children is meant not only people under eighteen, but also those whose puberty isn’t yet complete, according to the law.” Hampie replies: “Children are those who haven’t reached puberty.” A long discussion follows on whether the line is drawn at fifteen, when people in Sweden are allowed to have sex, or at eighteen, according to UN’s Convention on the Rights of the Child. There seems to be much confusion among the youths about what they are allowed to do when.

The blog posts that I myself found most amusing were those where the author didn’t express an opinion on *Destroyer*, but simply mentioned the magazine in a matter of fact way. Like this football blogger who teased a friend by writing: “During a house search at Pelle’s, a whole stack of *Destroyer* magazines was found.” The family site Family Living’s blogger Anna Björkman mentioned *Destroyer* just as casually, without feeling the need to position herself on either side.

I got more and more comments on my own blog. Many of the commentators came from the nationalist sites that had written about *Destroyer*, at least by judging from their style:

Fucking hell! For how long will these pervs be allowed free rein? It’s time for resistance, my friends!

I didn’t moderate the comments and I didn’t delete a single one of them. One day, someone wrote this:

Everything you've written on your blog and all the pictures one can see on your disgusting bloody magazine's homepage makes me puke. Understand that you're a mentally disturbed paedophile and in need of care. THE BOYS in your magazine haven't even reached puberty yet. How incredibly ridiculous of you to compare it with magazines that have skimpily-clad girls in their magazines.

People's reactions to your magazine don't have anything to do with homophobia, as you claim. The reason is that you're a PAEDOPHILE, nothing else!

Please, for the benefit of us all – take your life. Or else we'll do it for you!

Was that a threat? I called the Stockholm police to ask them what constitutes a threat. The officer I read the comment to said it was clearly an illegal threat, and therefore took down a report over the phone. Without much purpose, it seems, as the investigation was closed immediately.

I wasn't very worried by the taunts on the blog, nor by this comment. Even if, according to the police, it constituted a death threat, I didn't interpret it that way myself. I saw those last words about taking my life if I didn't do it myself more as a witty play on words.

The right-wing blog Kulturrevolution published an article by Joakim Henriksen with the title: "Is Karl Andersson a paedophile?" It began:

Karl Andersson has started a magazine. *Destroyer*, as the magazine is called, is a wet dream for paedophiles. In the magazine, young boys show their genitalia and caress each other. Some even give each other oral sex.

Then *P3 Homo's* famous phrase about the models not being "a day over thirteen" was repeated, along with my apparently racy quote that "I don't care if paedophiles read my magazine." The author went through the links on *Destroyer's* homepage, and shockingly concluded that one of them was to "the controversial movie director Larry Clark, whose movies deal with young, undressed teenagers who use drugs and have sex."

I must admit that it wasn't always fun that the headline was one of the first search results when people, from potential employers to potential boyfriends, googled my name:

"Is Karl Andersson a paedophile?"

“Paedophile” is probably the worst thing you can be called nowadays. It’s today’s equivalent of “heretic”, “communist”, or “anti-communist”, to name a few examples from history. It was therefore with a mix of pride and discomfort that I became the target of this accusation, which was for years what was found by anyone who searched the internet for my name. In April 2010, the article was suddenly gone. I emailed Kulturrevolution but never heard back from them. I didn’t ask them to remove the article myself.

None of those who commented on *Destroyer* had actually seen the magazine, except *P3 Homo*, the Ombudsman for Children and Sören Juvas, who had been shown the magazine by *Aftonbladet*. Everything that was written about *Destroyer* was based on the pieces on *P3 Homo* and in *Aftonbladet*. None of the critics had bothered to order the magazine to form a better-founded opinion. There was no difference between left-wing and right-wing writers in this respect – both groups used similar rhetoric, the same obsession with the “P” word, and above all the same lack of interest in the real product. The left-wing site *ETC.se* published this article by Linnea Nilsson:

Does fuzz on the chest protect against paedophiles?

“I don’t care if paedophiles read my magazine.”

Those are the words of magazine maker Karl Andersson, who has founded new gay magazine *Destroyer*. Andersson is Swedish, but his magazine is so far only published in the Czech Republic. He tells *Aftonbladet* that *Destroyer* – which will focus on “sexy boys” – would face too much resistance in his home country. But in the Czech Republic there are no problems, he assures us, and adds that he’s not afraid of being called a paedophile. On his own blog he writes: “Today’s gay press, indeed today’s gay culture at large, doesn’t dare have anything to do with beautiful boys. This is despite the fact that young, beautiful boys historically made up a large part of gay culture. But now they are banned. Hairy muscle Marys are the ideal of today’s gay culture. The reason is of course that gay magazines, just like gay men, are afraid of being called paedophiles – which I’m guaranteed to be called myself, by the way. So what? It’s time for a revival of Beauty and Youth!”

The cover of the first, and as yet only, issue of *Destroyer* is graced by a boy who seems to be around fourteen years old. He could also be eighteen, but it is obvious that he’s supposed to look as young as possible. He is wet and naked, looking down and seems to be afraid. The magazine is for sale on the internet, but I refrain from buying a copy. It’s

enough just to see the cover and read in *Aftonbladet* about pictures in which boys “who look very young” give each other oral sex. Andersson assures the same paper that no boys are under eighteen, that he follows the law and that he “doesn’t even have naked seventeen year olds” in the magazine. His proof?

“Some of them even have chest hair.”

Many readers comment on the text, and the author writes:

He writes in his own blog that he doesn’t care if he’s called a paedophile. What kind of attitude is that? I think that everyone with the power to publish a magazine should feel more responsibility than that.

I still don’t understand what she meant. To use the “P” word in the place of any real argument is an effective way to get people to back down. It is good not to succumb to those tactics, isn’t it? I don’t see the logic behind the need to “feel responsibility”. I asked, but didn’t get any answer.

After the major national media in Sweden reported on *Destroyer*, the gay media finally did too. The first gay magazine to contact me was *Kom ut*, RFSL’s editorially-independent magazine. The freelance journalist Victor Bernhardt sent me some questions, which I replied to in an email. The interview was published in *Kom ut* issue 4, 2006:

Classic gay culture or paedophilia, Karl Andersson?

The new gay magazine *Destroyer* has caused an uproar. Critics argue that *Destroyer* comes dangerously close to paedophilia, as its purpose is to sexually objectify young, homosexual men. *Kom ut* asks the editor Karl Andersson what his aim with the magazine is.

“I want to bring back the beautiful boy as one of the beauty ideals in gay culture, in order to broaden it. I think there are many gay men who admire beautiful teenage boys, and who don’t feel at home in the kind of gay culture that worships the muscular, hairy, older man.”

You write that the gay movement denies its historical connection to paedophile organisations like NAMBLA, and consequently “a vital part of homosexual culture”, and that the gay movement by doing so allies itself with the straights. Isn’t it a bit harsh to reduce the possible political positions to either “liking NAMBLA” or “copy straight culture”?

“No, I think it’s a symbolic statement. You don’t have to agree with NAMBLA on everything, I don’t myself, and *Destroyer* hasn’t taken a stand on the issue of age limits. What I criticise is that the gay movement has chosen a strategy of presenting a safe image of LGBT persons, instead of demanding acceptance for the deviant, whatever it is, so long as it’s legal. The condemnation of NAMBLA has nothing to do with caring about children, but rather is about suppressing the most extreme expression of homosexuality. Promiscuous gay men and butch lesbians have been suppressed on the same grounds, and I call that shame.”

Don’t you agree with your critics’ basic moral demand that nude models should be over eighteen?

“No, I think it’s absurd that boys under eighteen aren’t allowed to be depicted sexually, because of the expectation that they will be hurt by it. It reminds of the old ban on masturbation, which was considered very dangerous for the boy. That said, I do of course remain within the limits of the law.”

This was the first time that I had questions relating to the content of the main article, which impressed me. However, it was hardly a coincidence that the “P” word was used in the headline, as it was again when Henrik Tornberg of *Sylvester* finally wrote a short text on *Destroyer*:

***Destroyer*, a paedophile magazine?**

Karl Andersson has worked in the heart of the Swedish gay world, as editor-in-chief of *Straight* (a magazine that *QX* published for a couple of years in the late 90s). Now he has moved to Prague and is publishing the magazine *Destroyer*, which celebrates young guys as a beauty ideal. I find it pretty terrible, for personal reasons. The Ombudsman for Children deems it child porn; Sören Andersson is critical.

Aftonbladet has also written about *Destroyer*, and Jon Voss, the *QX* boss, said that he didn’t see the point of the magazine.

Destroyer contains porn, but also cultural articles that argue that gay men don’t dare to find young guys hot anymore since they’re afraid of being called paedophiles.

In mid July of 2006, I was contacted by a reporter from American gay magazine *The Guide*, which has existed for 25 years. It looked like one of those boring gay magazines with muscular men on the cover, the kind of magazine which

I wanted *Destroyer* to provide an alternative to. But never judge a book by its cover. *The Guide* had read about the scandal in Sweden on my blog, where I had published English translations of some of the articles. Now they asked me for contact details for RFSL and the Ombudsman for Children, to ask the critical questions that no Swedish media had asked.

The result was published on a full page in the August 2006 issue of *The Guide*, under the headline “Scandalized Scandinavians”. They reported on the scandal, described the magazine and compared it to Germaine Greer’s book *The Boy*, before digging into the Swedish law on hate speech and asking RFSL whether they would want to see me jailed for spreading the wrong image of homosexuals:

Slurring gay people in Sweden can mean prison-time, as Pentecostal minister Ake Green learned in 2003, when he was sentenced to 30 days for pronouncing from his pulpit that gays are, among other things, “the Devil’s strongest weapon against God,” and likely pedophiles, to boot. Does RFSL likewise want editor Andersson jailed?

“Obviously the magazine from our point of view doesn’t give a good picture of gays and gay life,” RFSL vice chair Anna Karin Skantz told *The Guide*, “but I don’t think that we could, according to this [anti-defamation] law, prosecute it.”

Then *The Guide* discussed the Ombudsman for Children’s proposal of making “allusion pornography” illegal:

A law to treat arbitrarily defined “young-looking” adults as legal children has been rejected so far even in porn-hysterical US. Such a law could send a Swedish gay man to prison for possessing, say, a photo of his formerly furry boyfriend’s now smooth-as-a-baby’s-bottom shaved crotch.

RFSL comments on this proposal too:

Skantz said RFSL has no position on the government’s proposal to ban erotic images of young-looking adults. “There is a moral question and then there is a legal question,” she said. “We don’t necessarily always think that there should be a change of the law for a moral reason.”

Thus, allusion pornography is not good, but not bad enough to justify a change

of law. I was surprised that RFSL wasn't aware that such laws historically have been used against homosexuals. *The Guide* was surprised too:

In joining forces with neo-Nazis and anti-sex censors, what's up with RFSL?

An article like this made a nice change from what had be written about me so far. I almost got the impression that *The Guide*, an ancient gay magazine from the US, where the modern gay movement had started, had rebuked the Swedish gay movement.

Pride & prejudice

On 2nd July 2006, I got an email from a person working with Stockholm Pride, the annual gay festival in Stockholm. He asked me if I would be interested in “talking about or showing images from *Destroyer*” in the lounge in the “Pride Park”, the official festival area, or in a gallery which would also be in the park. He stressed, though, that he hadn’t seen the magazine yet, and that everyone was “shit scared of landing in the paedophile debate again”. When he had received the magazine, he contacted me again to ask if any one of those posing naked in the magazine were under eighteen years old. I told him they were not. A few days later I got the following email:

On the Friday [of the Pride week] at 15:00, I want you to be in the park in our lounge to participate in a debate. I will try to get Jon Voss and someone from RFSL too. Unfortunately there will be no pictures in the gallery, but you will be able to show them during the debate. I think this could be very interesting!! I hope you can participate – call me when it suits you.

He also told me, when I asked, that it would be possible for me to sell the magazine at the debate. He then asked me for a short text about *Destroyer* that they could publish in their programme on their homepage. I sent him this copy:

Destroyer is a new gay magazine for those who think that teenage boys are beautiful. It contains reportage, reviews, interviews, and – above all – photos. *Destroyer* is published twice a year and is sold solely on the site destroyerjournal.com.

His reply revealed how sensitive this subject was (my italics):

We'll have to edit the text a bit – *Destroyer* is a new gay magazine for those who think that teenage boys *over eighteen years old* are beautiful.

I pointed out that by teenage boys I meant boys in their teens, meaning between thirteen and nineteen years old, but I told him that they of course could put it any way they wanted in their programme. After some time I got this message:

QX said no because of lack of time, and I still haven't had any reply from RFSL. If I don't find anyone who is willing and able to participate in the debate, I will unfortunately have to cancel the whole thing.

Some days later, he informed me that “unfortunately there will be no debate – RFSL said no too”, but that he had heard that the magazine would be on sale in Pride House. “Keep the magazine alive and we'll have a new try next year!!!” he rounded off.

This correspondence between me and Stockholm Pride shows that there was an initial wish to debate and discuss the issue among the staff of the organisation. That's important to remember in the light of what would become the Pride week's most talked about incident.

Before the 2006 Stockholm Pride, the organisation advertised something they called Pride House Store, a little shop where the Pride visitors could sell their own works. “Have you designed your own original products?” they asked in the programme. “During this year's Stockholm Pride, there will be an opportunity to sell them in Pride House. In the school yard, in conjunction with the rest of the outdoor programme, artists, creators and programme participants can submit materials to be sold in Pride House Store.” The first invitation, which I have since lost, mentioned fanzines as a possible product to sell. *Destroyer* would therefore fit perfect into their selection, I thought as I sent in an application in late May. In the “describe your product” field, I wrote: “*Destroyer* is my new gay magazine which is targeted at gay men who like boys and young men.”

On 16th July, I and the thirteen other people who were to sell their own “original products” in the Pride House Store received a confirmation email from Alexandra Skantz, with instructions about when and where we should hand in our products. I had some additional contact with “Alex”, as I wouldn't arrive in Stockholm until one day after the shop had opened. We agreed that I would hand in my magazines at 12 o'clock on the second day. I mention these

preparations just to show that I was given no warning whatsoever of what was to happen when I finally arrived.

Pride House was set up in the grounds of a school opposite the Pride Park. Various marques were erected in the schoolyard, including the Pride House Store. Two young women were sat behind a counter when I arrived. Apart from these volunteers, the marque was empty. I explained that I had come to deliver my magazines, and opened my bag to take them out. They said that Alex handled new deliveries, but that I could put my magazines anywhere I liked. One of them got up and rearranged the shelves to free some space for my magazines, which she still hadn't seen. When I produced the first copies from my bag and put them on the shelf she had shown me, the atmosphere suddenly changed. "Wait", she said, and explained that they had to call Alex.

Alex came to the shop along with Ingeborg Nylund, who was the head of Pride House. We introduced ourselves and I asked if there were any problems. Ingeborg explained that she had heard about *Destroyer* and wanted to browse the magazine before she decided whether or not to sell it. She, Alex, and the two volunteers each grabbed a copy of *Destroyer* and started to examine it thoroughly. Some more women joined the group and took their own copies to look at.

"They are very young", someone said.

"I feel angry when I look at this magazine", someone else said.

Another two women came by the shop and asked about the strange atmosphere (as seven or eight people were standing there and browsing the magazine in silence). "Oh!" they whispered when they saw *Destroyer*. It seemed the magazine had been a topic of conversation before it even arrived. "We'll show you later", one of the women who already browsed a magazine whispered.

"I don't want to sell this magazine", Ingeborg finally said.

I asked why, and she explained that it "sexualised children".

Then the chairman of Stockholm Pride, Ulrika Westerlund, was summoned. She took basically the same view as Ingeborg, but said that a decision not to sell the magazine could not be based on such a cursory look. So, until further notice they would not sell it, but Ulrika would contact me if they changed their mind. According to her, the magazine was problematic from a practical point of view. She argued that *Destroyer* was very different from the rest of the products in the shop, which apart from fanzines and stationary targeted at lesbians also included some ceramic vaginas.

"I agree about that", I said. "But I don't see the problem. Pride's very theme this year is diversity."

"It is in Pride Park that the theme is diversity", Ingeborg replied. "Here the theme is racism."

I discussed the incident on a couple of mailing lists, and Ulrika herself replied on a list which we were both members of:

I can certainly say that this really wasn't an easy decision.

I have been a pretty fierce advocate of *Destroyer* at Pride – for example, I tried to convince Jon Voss to participate in a debate with Karl in the park, as I really understand what the magazine is trying to accomplish regarding challenging norms, etc.

The problem with selling *Destroyer* at the Maria school is, in my view, the context. The visitors there – and those who sell the magazine – aren't really the magazine's target group, since Pride House is extremely dominated by lesbians, and feminist ones at that. If a visitor were to get upset by the magazine's content, and there would be plenty of people there who would, there would be no one there to have that discussion.

I know that Ulrika tried hard to find an alternative sales venue for *Destroyer*. But regardless of her good will, the final outcome is all that ultimately counts. And in this case, the outcome was that Stockholm Pride excluded a gay magazine from their shop. I wrote a short text that Leo Lagercrantz, the comment editor of *Expressen*, one of Sweden's tabloids, bought for 200 euros. It was published on the Friday of the Pride week. *Expressen* wrote the headline but didn't change a single word in the text:

Pride only accepts vanilla gays

Last Tuesday I wanted to deliver the gay magazine *Destroyer* to the Stockholm Pride shop, after my registration and their confirmation a month earlier. But I was met with big commotion. After browsing through *Destroyer*, Ingeborg Nylund of Pride House said: "I don't want to sell this magazine in my shop."

The reason was that she thought *Destroyer* "sexualised children". She was backed up by Stockholm Pride's chairman Ulrika Westerlund, who added that the magazine didn't fit in as the shop was mostly frequented by lesbians, who might be upset by the content.

Destroyer is completely legal in all aspects, and Stockholm Pride didn't question that. Instead, Pride banned *Destroyer* on moral grounds.

And that reeks of shame – especially as the theme of this year's Pride is diversity.

Because *Destroyer*'s purpose is nothing short of broadening gay

culture by bringing back the beautiful young man. *Destroyer* celebrates the beauty of the teenage boy, and makes him an object for others, mainly homosexual men, to admire. I find this endeavour very beautiful and innocent, but RFSL – cheered on by various neo-Nazi groups – finds it “terribly tasteless”.

The absurdity of two gay organisations – Stockholm Pride and RFSL – disassociating themselves from a gay magazine is, unfortunately, in line with the strategy that the gay movement has adopted over recent years. The strategy is to present a perfect and safe image of homosexuals, which results in a suppression – conscious or unconscious – of less-wanted expressions of homosexuality, be it promiscuous gay men or butch lesbians.

This strategy is the opposite of the single goal that the modern gay movement fought for when it emerged in the USA in the 1970s – to defend the deviant. The new strategy is a logical dead end, as homosexuality in itself is deviance – deviance that should be defended fiercely as the right of people to choose the life they want.

When RFSL and Stockholm Pride denounce *Destroyer*, they denounce an expression of homosexuality and thereby themselves. Shame on you, Pride!

But is it Pride's duty to sell *Destroyer*? Why don't I just rent a tent in the park like everyone else who wants to do business? That was a common argument from those who thought that I exaggerated the significance of Pride's decision. Normally I would agree with them. Pride has no duty to sell anyone's magazine, comic book or anything else. But this time they had offered their visitors to sell their “own original products” in a specially designated shop. They had mentioned fanzines as an example, and most of the products in the shop were fanzines. They had not protested when I registered my product, so I wasn't disqualified on the grounds of being too commercial or anything like that. Instead, they had – upon delivery – excluded my magazine from their selection on moral grounds. That is and remains compromising for a gay organisation, in my opinion.

When I told a Czech friend this story, he was surprised that not a single person or organisation had defended me. But the organisation Tidsningsutgivarna (The Publishers' Union) actually gave me some indirect support by including the incident in a report on recent freedom of speech related issues. In the August 2006 section they write:

The Pride festival in Stockholm refuses to sell the gay magazine *Destroyer* as it “sexualises children”. Publisher Karl Andersson writes in *Expressen* that the magazine is completely legal and that Stockholm Pride seek, through their decision, to present a false image of homosexuals.

Following this second scandal, Henrik Tornberg of *Sylvester* wrote about *Destroyer* again. On 15th August, the satirical gossip column by Countess Ebba Sparre, his alter ego, is published. It ends like this:

By the way, I recently received the next issue of *Destroyer*. [...] To his chagrin (not to mention surprise!), Karl had to run the gauntlet in the Swedish media as the Ombudsman for Children, Sören Andersson, and a number of nameless lesbians at Pride thought that the boys in the pictures could be under eighteen. At least, they were trying to look as if they were under eighteen. You know, like those German *Schulmädchen* movies where 29-year-old women wear Pippi Longstocking wigs and painted freckles.

To avoid a new hullabaloo with issue two of *Destroyer*, Karl has decided to be better safe than sorry and lets the IT philosopher Oscar Swartz pose in provocative pictures. Oscar does his best to look underage, and Ebba can reveal that the result is pretty striking – if not entirely believable. Neither the dashing Pampers diaper nor the lollipop really do it, but at least the Ombudsman for Children and RFSL won’t object. Some people may get upset, but for totally different reasons. Karl is a dear boy, but without doubt a bit odd.

I’ll let the blog post “*Destroyer* – the magazine that everyone rages against” from 10th August sum up the storm around the first issue. I think it’s pretty funny that he defends *Destroyer* despite finding the magazine “pretty rotten”:

I got my copy of *Destroyer* today. If you’re not part of the gay scene, you might not have heard about *Destroyer*, so let me explain briefly. *Destroyer* is a brand new gay magazine focused on younger guys. Sounds good, right? Maybe a magazine for gays between age fifteen and twenty. The problem is that a number of organisations “rage” against the magazine and claim that the pictures in the magazine are too crude and sexualise children. Of course I had to see for myself what all the fuss was about, and after browsing it I can say the following: “Nothing to worry about.”

Seriously, I don't really understand all the criticism that the magazine has faced. Sure, there are pictures of young guys, guys who maybe have just turned eighteen, but still, as long as they're over eighteen it's a free choice. It's not porn at all. Two or three pictures in the magazine might be considered porn, but the rest are more like art.

The Ombudsman for Children was probably worried that older men would read the magazine and jack off to its pictures. But let me say that there are cruder images in any regular weekly magazine. [...]

I can understand the concern, that we mustn't show nude images of children, but the models in *Destroyer* magazine are hardly children.

Last of all, I would like to say: don't buy *Destroyer*. At least not in order to read it or look at the pictures – maybe in order to support it if you feel the need, but nothing more. Because all in all it's a pretty rotten magazine that definitely isn't worth the 70 kronor I had to pay for it.

A few days after the Pride festival, I got an email from a bookshop in Toronto that contrasted sharply with the Swedish gay movement's treatment of *Destroyer*:

Dear Karl Andersson,

I am writing you from Glad Day Bookshop, Canada's first and the world's second gay & lesbian bookstore. We are committed to offering the widest possible variety of queer literature, and have spent years in court fighting censorship. One of our regular customers had read the article on your publication in *The Guide*, and came in to show us the magazine. We really like it and are sure we could easily sell about 20-40 copies of it in Toronto. Please tell us what kind of arrangements we could make to order issue #1, and also what would be the wholesale discount & shipping cost to Canada. We could pay with a Visa card to expedite the transaction.

They bought 30 copies of the first issue. My appetite was whetted, and the next time I was in Berlin I walked in to the biggest and oldest gay bookshop in town, Prinz Eisenherz, and showed them *Destroyer*. One of the owners browsed it pretty indifferently and then said that of course they wanted to sell it.

"It's not my kind of magazine, but it's gay culture", he said. "And then, of course, it looks great."

They bought ten copies at 4.50 euros each, to be sold in the shop for eight euros.

I strolled through the gay area of Motzstraße in Schöneberg and asked in other shops if they wanted to sell *Destroyer*. No one did, but I found their reactions interesting. If the manager was young (my age, that is), I was met by a total lack of understanding. They had never seen anything like *Destroyer* and didn't understand why on earth they would sell such a magazine in their shop. They really did see it as the "paedophile magazine" that had made the headlines in Sweden.

But if the manager was older, I was met by smiles of acknowledgement. This is what gay magazines used to look like, they seemed to think. But today it was impossible to sell anything of the kind, one of the managers explained to me, and referred to a new law where the concept "underage" wasn't defined by age, but by how young the models looked – in other words, exactly the kind of law that the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden had demanded on the radio.

I maintained a happy and understanding attitude when visiting the gay shops. I didn't want to force *Destroyer* on anyone – to sell it was of course their choice. I think my understanding smiles made it harder for some of the managers to stand by their decision not to sell *Destroyer*. It would have been easier for them if I was pushy. I particularly remember one man who ran some kind of combined cruising bar and shop with gay DVDs and magazines. He browsed the magazine together with his boyfriend and explained that they liked it, but that it unfortunately was impossible for them to sell it.

"Sure", I said. "No problem."

"You must understand..." he said, almost apologising, as I made for the door.

And I think I understood. I imagined he had opened his shop some time in the 1970s to be able to sell the products that couldn't be found elsewhere. That's how all gay bookshops emerged – as an alternative where you could find the books and magazines that normal bookshops refused to sell on moral grounds. Maybe *Destroyer* was the first product that reminded them of this original purpose. If that was the case, I understand why they felt ashamed.

Intermale in Amsterdam was the first gay bookshop in Europe to contact me themselves wanting to sell *Destroyer*. Over the years, they would become my most successful reseller. When I visited Amsterdam, I was taken to lunch by the bookshop's American founder. He had the same attitude as his colleague at Prinz Eisenherz:

"I'm personally not into the content of *Destroyer*. But I'm not into leather either. Yet I do of course sell leather magazines in my shop, since it's part of gay culture."

Later on, the biggest gay bookshops in Hamburg, Munich and Stuttgart would contact me and ask to sell *Destroyer*, as they had heard that Prinz Eisenherz in Berlin made quite a profit from it. I also lined up some more resellers in Berlin.

But many of the readers were Swedish, and it was in Sweden that the magazine had become a news item. Many Swedes asked if it was for sale anywhere in Stockholm. A friend told me that a member of parliament wanted to buy it, but had explained that it was impossible for him to do so on the internet.

I looked into where I might be able to sell the magazine in Stockholm. One potential reseller was US Video, a sex shop with a cruising area. They were positive about it when we discussed it over email, but when I visited and showed them the magazine, they had to turn me down as the magazine contained pictures of boys under the age of eighteen in non-sexual contexts. But as US Video in itself was a "sexual context", they couldn't sell pictures of boys under eighteen, no matter how innocent they were.

The other reseller I considered was the total opposite of US Video: the bookshop Konstig. (The name is a play on the Swedish words for "art" and "queer".) I liked my potential resellers: one of them was literally underground, a dark basement where men had sex with each other; the other was a respected art bookshop. To me, they symbolised the two forces at work in *Destroyer*: Apollo and Dionysus.

The grey-haired, middle-aged woman behind the counter at Konstig was curious about *Destroyer*. We had quite a fun time as, for fifteen minutes or so, we discussed the art references in *Destroyer* and how the magazine was permeated by Apollo, Dionysus and Camille Paglia. She asked to keep the magazine overnight to discuss it with her colleagues. She told me to get back next day to hear their decision.

Next day, another woman was behind the counter. She knew all about it though, and explained that they wouldn't be selling *Destroyer* as it had "a bit too much peek-a-boo on young boys."

Before I left, I couldn't help asking what they felt about *Butt*, another gay magazine that once represented a sexual, and therefore controversial, expression of homosexuality.

"But *Butt* is cult!" she said.

Quite.

I tried one more reseller in Sweden: Interpress, a national magazine distributor. We had discussed it for some time, and I had a contract proposal from them, in which they were to buy *Destroyer* from me at 45 percent discount. But

when they received the actual magazine from me, the market coordinator for international magazines wrote:

I've now got your copy of *Destroyer* magazine. We must unfortunately say no to distributing this magazine. This is in large part because of the young boys who are depicted in the magazine. We have a very strict policy regarding this.

I can't say their reaction was unexpected, and Interpress would probably have been the wrong way to sell *Destroyer* in any case.

With a few exceptions, I didn't try to recruit any more resellers.

Destroyer 02

Released in October 2006. 36 pages in full colour plus 16 pages in black and white. Print run: 1,000 copies. Cover photo by Cosidetto. Red logotype.

Selected content:

- ★ **The lost lubricant.** Gay pride marches had been attacked in Poland, Russia, and Latvia. According to my analysis of the events, the attacks were not based in homophobia: "To 'come out' is a Protestant phenomenon, which has its advantages and disadvantages. Catholic and other societies chose other ways to handle homosexuality, prostitution, adultery (all of which are as 'accepted' as homosexuality). They had their plusses and minuses too. The recent attacks should therefore be interpreted not as homophobia, but as religious war."
- ★ **Dude, where's my magazine?** The first article on vintage gay and boy magazines that were sold in regular shops in the 1970s, but which have since disappeared since they in some cases, at least in theory, could be classified as child pornography. I ask my readers to send their old "fag rags" to me instead of burning them, since I argue that these magazines are part of our gay cultural heritage.
- ★ **Snezka views.** A spread with six pictures of hot guys on the top of Snezka, the highest mountain of the Czech republic.
- ★ **Heights of civilization.** My summary of Dover's classic work *Greek Homosexuality* from 1978. In the end, I conclude that an enclave of ancient Athens has surfaced in today's world: Pattaya in Thailand. In this vile tourist resort, teenage boys (like the 18 and 19 year old on the picture) can be seen walking hand in hand with older men, just as I imagined it looked like in ancient Greece.
- ★ **Destroyer Fiction 01:** "Jo's Boys." A pornographic short story by G. Cutter.
- ★ **Master of boy photography.** A ten page interview with the boy photographer Cosidetto, who I travelled to Berlin to meet. His photos are of the classical kind that was published in many gay magazines in the 1970s, typically depicting happy teenagers smiling for the camera.
- ★ **Oscar Swartz:** "The Shaded Area." On Man's sexuality, and how Woman tries to control it, especially when he is in his teens and his sexuality is very strong. Of course, Paglia is part of the analysis.

Interview with Oscar Swartz

Oscar Swartz is a Swedish writer, commentator and IT entrepreneur, who started Bahnhof, one of Sweden's first internet service providers, in 1994. I had known him since 1998, and asked him if he wanted to contribute a column.

What was your reasoning when you agreed to contribute to *Destroyer*?

"I'm a rebel and an activist at heart and in practice. I burn for the freedom of communication: the right to publish and acquire all kinds of information. I also have a cultural critic's view on sexuality, and I find Camille Paglia very inspiring. I interviewed her and sort of introduced her to Sweden, one might say. So how could I refuse to contribute to a magazine named after her theories?"

"I got fed up with the reactions to the magazine, especially from the LGBT establishment, where I know many people but always consciously remained an outsider. This was before issue two was released, so I was asked to contribute in a time when *Destroyer* was unanimously condemned. A friend with a blooming artistic soul had been virtually frozen out from civilised society. I wanted to help out and make a statement."

Had you seen the magazine? What did you make of it?

"I had seen it and I thought it was gorgeously produced. Zines usually don't look like that. And to think that one man had done all that alone was impressive. It was quite obviously the work of a professional magazine person. I also liked the attitude, with cocky headlines and colours. It was like the opposite of Lord Alfred Douglas' 'love that dare not speak its name'."

Were you happy with your contribution and its context?

"One of the few technical mistakes in the magazine's more-than-professional history occurred in my article, and that's a bit annoying. One character was replaced by some other character throughout the whole text. Apart from that, the cover was a previously unpublished photo by Cosidetto, and the magazine contained a big (and rare) interview with him. A famous boy photographer whom I hadn't heard of. Not a bad context. There might have been something more dubious too, but I can't actually remember."

Did you receive any reactions to your contribution?

"It's a small magazine that only exists in print, so no. Except for one person who thought he could harm me. In some official situation he showed a copy of the magazine and told everyone that I contributed to such publications. Ridiculous, especially since that person should know me better."

Freak out!

The first person to criticise the second issue of *Destroyer* was someone who was featured in it. In November 2006 I had moved to Berlin, and at a book reading I happened to meet Cosidetto, the boy photographer who I had interviewed for the second issue. I had sent him the magazine a few weeks earlier, and I asked him what he thought about it. The reading was just about to begin, so he only managed to say one word: “terrible.”

After the reading, I suggested we have dinner so he could explain what he found so terrible about the second issue. It turned out it was the sex.

“It doesn’t reflect reality”, he said, and argued that “80 percent of paederastic relations don’t include any anal sex.”

I couldn’t help but noting the irony of this viewpoint. Previously, I had been accused of spreading the wrong image of homosexuals – now I was accused of spreading the wrong image of paederasts. In fact, my intention hadn’t been to spread an image of any group.

I regretted very much that Cosidetto disliked the issue where he and his photos featured, although I couldn’t see how the second issue differed so crucially from the first one, which he had read thoroughly. I asked him if he wanted to write some kind of reply in the next issue, but he explained that for the time being he thought it wiser to keep a low profile, as he felt it was risky to be associated with *Destroyer*. He said that his friends were even more upset.

“They do this”, he said and made a cross across his chest with his hand. “They pray for me.”

At the Stockholm Pride festival, I had spoken to the Finnish writer Jaakko Stenros regarding an interview about *Destroyer* for Finnish gay magazine *Z*.

On 2nd October, 2006, he wrote that he had finally convinced Z to let him do the interview. We emailed each other questions and answers, and both thought that we had produced an interesting discussion. On 3rd October I sent him the second issue of *Destroyer*, and on 6th October, Jaakko replied that Z “got cold feet” after seeing it. He added that “it freaked me out” and he no longer saw fit to write the piece, as it was now clear to him what the “Dionysian” in the magazine’s tagline meant. Around the same time, a friend of mine wrote on a mailing list:

I found it easier to defend *Destroyer* #1, which focused on twinks, than #2, which I think is a pretty traditional paedo magazine focused on those aged around thirteen. And it doesn’t even try to hide the fact that it’s a paedo magazine anymore. In addition, to include so many children with darker skin emphasises the impression of exploitation, as most people see it. [...] It was very good for the magazine that you got so much attention at the national level, but at the same time I think that you slowly but surely undermine yourself in the Swedish media. Is that so wise? I seriously don’t understand the fight for showing ten year olds in Speedos.

I didn’t understand, and I still don’t, how someone who had seen the first issue of *Destroyer* could react so fiercely to the second one. Maybe they had considered the first issue to be comparatively asexual, but for those who had read the articles there can have been in no doubt that the Dionysian content was there from the beginning.

On 22nd January, 2007, I heard from Jaakko again. He had found another magazine that wanted to publish the interview, international art journal *Kasino A4*. I received the article to proofread, but I don’t think Jaakko got my reply, as none of my corrections had been made when the article was published in *Kasino A4* issue 4–5, 2007. That’s why it says I live in Warsaw – I don’t know where that came from. I was also a bit unhappy with the way some of my replies started, mainly after the question about “intellectual dishonesty”, as that reply was taken from elsewhere in our conversation.

But all in all, I think Jaakko had made a great effort in editing our discussions, and I really liked the headline. *Kasino A4* illustrated the interview with spreads from *Destroyer*, coupled with spreads from fashion magazines where female models of the same age as those in *Destroyer* posed in the same sexually suggestive manner.

Sex Destroys Beauty

Debating the ethics and aesthetics of the boy as a beauty ideal

Karl Andersson started to publish a gay magazine called *Destroyer* that “celebrates the beauty of boys” in summer 2006. It features photos and drawings of teenage boys in various stages of undress and fiction that portrays relationships between teenagers and older men. There have also been some nude pictures, but the models in those have been over 18.

Destroyer created a media shit storm in Andersson's home country, Sweden, where he had worked on a number of high profile glossies and tabloids. Both the media and the gay establishment quickly passed judgment on the magazine and Andersson was branded a paedophile. He was threatened with legal action – though ultimately nothing happened – and continues to be harassed by neo-Nazis.

In December he was branded “gay men's worst enemy” on Swedish national television. Andersson, now living in Warsaw, thinks he has been the object of a witchhunt and that the media reaction was part hypocrisy, part homophobia.

Does *Destroyer* have a political goal? If it does, what is that goal?

“No, I would rather say I have a cultural goal: To bring back the adolescent boy as one of the ideals of gay culture. Of course, that is pretty political in itself.”

You've compared magazines like *FHM* and *Maxim* with *Destroyer*, saying that it's homophobia to condemn pictures of 18-year-old boys but not girls. Is the difference because *Destroyer* presents the boys as boys and *Maxim* sells the girls as young women?

“I think the main difference comes from the fact that it is *men* who are to observe the beautiful boys. I think my readers have pretty much the same taste as the readers of girls' magazines such as *Frida*. The cute popstar Darin [who won the Idol talent show in Sweden] posed in *Frida* already as a 17 year old. But no voices were raised against that. In *Destroyer*, mostly older men will look at the boys. That brings out the old seduction theory – the fear that the old homosexuals will seduce our vulnerable teenage boys.

“The whole thing reminds me of when Donald Mader's photos of teenage boys were destroyed during the Culture Capital exhibition at The Historical Museum in Stockholm in 1998. The boss of the museum said publicly that she wished that someone would ‘tear down the shit’.

A neo-Nazi organization finally did, and even after that the boss applauded them, saying that ‘my fingers itched to tear down the pictures’.

“I too have been denounced not only by the Ombudsman for Children, RFSL and Stockholm Pride, but also by three neo-Nazi organisations. I find it very, very remarkable that gay organizations denounce a gay magazine – on moral, not judicial grounds. Because *Destroyer* is perfectly legal.”

Why aren’t women more interested in boys?

“Good question. To a certain degree we are all fostered into certain standards. When a girl reads Harlequin novels or *Frida* stories she only gets to see muscular 35 year olds with long hair and a rose in his mouth. On the other hand, that standard has probably developed because that’s what most teenage girls wanted.

“That said, I have a small group of teenage girls among my readers. They are the kind who know everything about Japanese boy bands and worship *Death in Venice*.”

In the magazine you mention the book *The Boy* by Germaine Greer. In it she wants to reclaim the appreciation of young boys to women. Do you see her as an ally or an enemy? Or do you just look at the pictures?

“I loved the book, especially since there are plenty of references to Camille Paglia. I liked her analysis at the time, of how straight men send out boys to war because they’re offended by their obvious beauty and want to get rid of them.

“Recently I’ve embraced Paglia’s analysis, which in short is that it is *women* who want to control a man’s extreme sex drive, especially when he is a boy. This is in order to direct it only towards them, the women, and reproductive sex. This has been the reason for condemnation of sexual activities as diverse as masturbation, homosexuality and fucking a goat.

“One of Sweden’s most interesting thinkers, Oscar Swartz, writes a column about that in the second issue. His conclusion is that it is not the straight man that is homophobic, as is usually believed. It is the woman, who in her ambition to control man’s sex drive also cracks down on homosexuality, which is accepted only if the involved partners identify as gay and thereby opt out of the normal, heterosexual world, which remains controlled.

“That said, I consider Greer my soulmate after having heard her reply on a TV show to what’s so fantastic about adolescent boys. She said: ‘Oh, everything! Sperm flowing like tap water will do.’”

Why do you think the uproar over the first issue took place? It seems the biggest red cloth to the media was your quote in the tabloid *Aftonbladet*: "It doesn't bother me so much if I get paedophiles as readers." Do you stand by that statement?

"I'm happy I'm intelligent, otherwise I would be devastated. Why would it matter to me if paedophiles read *Destroyer*? Why would it matter to me if zoophiles or philatelists read it? Does it matter to *Dagens Nyheter* or *Aftonbladet* who reads their newspapers?

"The point is that paedophiles won't find anything to still their needs in *Destroyer*, since it doesn't contain any pre-pubescent children, since I'm not into that. They will probably find more eye-candy in *Dagens Nyheter*. *Destroyer* is a gay magazine for people like me, who mourn that the gay press in general is so boring."

Where did the name *Destroyer* come from?

"The name of the magazine is taken from the chapter *The Beautiful Boy as Destroyer* in Camille Paglia's chef d'oeuvre *Sexual Personae*. In that chapter, she analyses Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and explains how the beauty of Dorian is so intense that it *destroys* Basil, his obsessed admirer. She then applies this analysis to Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*, *Sailor* and, not least, Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, where she's spot on of course. Just like Basil, von Aschenbach and the other characters, I feel that the teenage boy's beauty is so strong, intense, yet merciless, that it *destroys* me. So *Destroyer* it is. And then it sounds cool of course.

"And then there's the tagline: *Journal of Apollonian Beauty and Dionysian Homosexuality*, which is to reflect the two forces of our lives, which are alive and well in *Destroyer* too. Some connoisseurs of young, male beauty complained that the first issue of *Destroyer* was too Dionysian, since some of the teenage boys (ones over 18) were pictured having sex. As Paglia writes: 'Sex destroys beauty', but *Destroyer* is not only about beauty. Just like my own life, it's both about Apollonian appreciation from afar, *and* about the Dionysian, worldly need to get physical. Hence the tagline which should cover it all.

"Actually, it's the mix of Apollonian and Dionysian that makes for an interesting tension in *Destroyer*, according to me at least. That's probably what has disturbed many people, when I publish a beautiful portrait of a 13 year old boy in the same magazine as I publish the sex pictures of the over eighteen year old guys. 'Where do you draw the line?' they

seem to ask. Well, where do we? That's what creates the disturbing and interesting tension. It makes you think."

The way I see it there is an intellectual dishonesty at work in *Destroyer*. I find it hard to believe that the mission of the magazine is to simply reinstate the boy as an ideal. The short story in the second issue is clearly a paedophile fantasy.

"After having made the second issue, I realise that *Destroyer* is a lot about fantasies. There's so much yaoi, popstars, iconic pictures of boys on the beach and other almost metaphysical traces in the magazine. Perfection, as in perfect fantasies. The piece of fiction is as much fantasy as it gets. To forbid *Destroyer* is to forbid fantasies."

You urge people to send you old magazines that may be "kiddie porn". And some of the ads seem fishy.

"Yes, some of the magazines that I urge people to send me – instead of throwing them away – are considered kiddie porn nowadays. But what is kiddie porn? Even Donatello's *David* can be considered kiddie porn in some countries, and certainly Wilhelm von Gloeden's pictures, which were even burnt in the fascist thirties. Nowadays the owners of these magazines burn them themselves in their homes. There is a red line running through these actions: pictures of teenage boys have been denounced by the society, and so for no other reason than that the observer is a man. Homophobia, not concern about the children, lurks behind the kiddie porn legislations. Every intelligent social critic should fight them, or at least put the light on their real objectives."

But I still get the feeling that your whole argumentation is just a pretext, a cover story. Subscribing to that line of thought is as believable as reading *Playboy* for the articles. Can you spell out for me just what the Dionysian stands for in the tagline?

"*Destroyer* was all from the start a mix between the Apollonian and the Dionysian: Apollonian as in pure appreciation from afar, fantasies, or the pursuit of perfection. But also Dionysian as in worldly needs and everyday living. Celebrating the boy as an ideal is clearly Apollonian. But even the first issue was clearly Dionysian in for example the article about intergenerational relationships. That's very hands on and I chose to discuss the issue *without* taking a concrete stand about what to do with the age of consent laws.

"What is beauty and to what extent is the sexual aspect important? Obviously to a great extent – otherwise I could worship girls instead. But does this sexual aspect mean that one, or I, should have sex with the

beautiful boys? I'm not sure and I'm still sketching on the huge 'How to Live and Why' article.

"My own experience is that if you happen to have sex with your beauty ideal, something that I've only come close to since you by definition can't have it, his beauty vanishes and he becomes what sex is: Meat. Which is damn good but doesn't have anything to do with beauty. Sex destroys beauty. Mixing the Dionysian and the Apollonian is a dangerous game – but a tempting one! And that temptation is the essence of *Destroyer*.

"To look upon *Destroyer* as purely Apollonian, as some of my readers do, is in a way cowardly and a wish to be chaste. I want to recognize the sexual aspect in the boy's beauty, and our Dionysian needs. That doesn't mean I want to fuck the cover boy. Although I wouldn't say no if he asked me, I'm human, but I would probably be disappointed."

Gay man's worst friend

On 10th October, 2006, I received an unusual order. Swedish public service TV station Sveriges Television (SVT) ordered two copies each of the first and the second issues of *Destroyer*. Later the same day, I was contacted by a reporter working for SVT's new gay programme *The Gay Lobby* (*Böglobbyn*). His name was Johan Hilton. We had never met, but I knew that he had published an acclaimed book about hate crimes. "The idea is to have a deeper discussion about the magazine as well as the debate it created in the Swedish gay world last summer", he wrote. I accepted, and we agreed on a date.

At noon on Thursday, 19th October, 2006, Johan Hilton arrived with a gay cameraman to my flat in Prague. As I escorted them up from the street, we chatted and found that we had plenty of common friends. Everything was very pleasant – until the camera started rolling and we started talking about *Destroyer*. But I wasn't to realise that until I saw the report a number of weeks later.

We started filming in my flat. I was filmed processing orders and going to the post office to send them off. Then we took a cab downtown and filmed at a tourist café on a boat just below the Charles University, where I had studied Czech a decade earlier. We ended by half-running to the Charles Bridge, so the cameraman could capture it as the sun set.

I was content with the interview, but in the evening Johan Hilton called me and asked if we could meet next day, as he hadn't got all the replies that he wanted. If possible, he wanted to meet in my flat. So they arrived the next day. Johan Hilton and I sat down on my sofa, and what followed was nothing short of a duel. We got lost in theoretical hypotheses – I didn't think I was asked any real questions. When Johan Hilton suddenly exclaimed "but what do you *want* with this magazine?", I thought I had already explained that several times. We

didn't understand each other. But my strongest memory of that last interview in my flat is one of being made to feel inferior. I remember Johan making big gestures and being very upset. This just made me close up even more – I didn't want to be part of Johan's show. On top of that, the cameraman interrupted several times with questions and accusations, which of course can't be seen in the edited reportage.

Episode five of *The Gay Lobby* was broadcast on Monday, 4th December, 2006, at 20:30 and was entitled "Gay man's worst friend". The programme opens with footage of people browsing *Destroyer* and Johan Hilton's narration: "This is a story about a magazine, a magazine that has become the homophobes' best argument, that torpedoes what gay men have fought for since homophobia first showed its ugly face." Some beautiful pictures of Prague are shown and Hilton continues: "Prague. Autumn. I'm here to meet Karl Andersson. He is the man behind *Destroyer*, a softcore publication which caused a big debate in the gay world due to the models in the pictures." After a short silence, he continues: "In a few hours, I'm going to feel as if I have knocked my head against a brick wall." Footage follows of them ringing my intercom; both my and my neighbours' names are shown. In the next shot, we're in my apartment.

My first quote in the report is taken from the end of the second day's debate in my flat. I thought the debate had got completely out of proportion, and said:

"I think you are talking as if I'd raped a five year old."

"No, no one is saying that", Hilton says. "No one is saying that you have raped a five year old. What we're saying, what I'm saying, what I'm stating now, is that it is an interpretation when you say that one can see that this guy is proud of his body, that's your gaze, you're talking about his body, he might not even be aware that he's being photographed because of his body or his young lustre or whatever it is..."

"I think he is."

"Yes, you think so, but how do you know?"

"Well, you think he's not... what can it be other than interpretations?"

Watching the reportage today, I feel uneasy. Because even though I think I'm right, I'm still the inferior one in terms of social status. Hilton seems to be very upset.

Cut to anti-gay demonstrations, where homophobes display banners with slogans like "Crush the Gay Lobby". Hilton narrates:

"Homophobes – priests, Nazis, and everyday bigoted people – have always drawn a connection between homosexuality and paedophilia. It isn't enough to

hate us gay men – they want to associate us with something even worse. The paedophile argument is still used, not least by right-wing Christian publications.”

Cut to Sören Juvas, chairman of RFSL (the Swedish Federation for LGBT Rights), who comments:

“Some people say immediately: ‘But hey, what about that thing with the children, it isn’t true, is it, that you’re after the children sexually?’ It happens very often that people get to hear this in their everyday life, at their workplace. Men who are homosexual and work in childcare are not open, nor lesbians either – over 90 percent keep quiet about the fact that they’re gay, just because of this image of them as child molesters.”

I can’t help noticing that Johan Hilton uses almost the exact same phrase as I used myself on *P1-morgon*:

Johan Hilton: “Homophobes ... have always drawn a connection between homosexuality and paedophilia.”

Me: “Homophobes have always accused gay men of being paedophiles.”

From these quotes it sounds as if we were in perfect agreement. But my quote continued thus: “Which is, of course, absurd. But when the gay movement began to state that gay men absolutely *not* were paedophiles, I think they committed the mistake of taking these homophobes’ arguments seriously.”

Let me elaborate briefly, as the report revolves so much around “the paedophile argument”. There are homosexual relations that could be called paederasty – that is of course what the homophobes are referring to when they accuse gay men of being paedophiles. These paederastic relations between younger and older men were previously called homosexuality and were defended by the gay movement as an expression of homosexuality. Then the gay movement accepted the homophobes’ rhetoric, started calling these relations paedophilia and didn’t want to have anything more to do with them. Such an approach rings false, and that’s why we keep being reminded of this issue by homophobes – including in relation to *Destroyer*. If we call these relations paederasty, it’s true to say that the gay movement has a paederastic heritage. This should be defended as a legitimate expression of homosexuality, which was one of my points in *Destroyer*. When, instead, this form of homosexuality is cut off from gay identity, and the gays join the homophobes in calling it paedophilia – then they too will have to deal with the consequences. The issue will keep surfacing, for the simple reason that teenage boys will keep having sex. This is not paedophilia, but it is understandable that the homophobes want to call it that. And that’s the argument that I said, on *P1-morgon*, that the gay movement shouldn’t accept.

But *The Gay Lobby* didn't seem to want to understand me. Instead of taking me seriously, they next showed an old black and white film clip, where a group of pre-pubertal children run naked into the water. Hilton continues:

"But even if the myth about gay men's paedophilia is just a myth, homophobes are quick to refer to historical sources. In ancient Greece, older men functioned as a kind of love mentor to younger guys. The Spartan army was more or less based on such structures."

Sören Juvas:

"The sex there was a way to unite the group. And the fact that the officers had sex with the children, because now we're talking children – we're also talking a society where you got married at age ten or twelve, it was a totally different culture. So just referring to that is a bit ignorant, I would say."

Back to Prague and footage of Johan Hilton, whose narration continued:

"One can suspect that people back then had a different view on sex, no matter if they were straight or gay. But then comes publisher Karl Andersson and claims that the interest for the young always was a significant feature of gay culture."

Cut to the café on the boat, where I describe the magazine:

"*Destroyer* is a gay magazine which celebrates the beauty of the young man, the teenage boy, and I think this beauty is seldom allowed to be displayed, and that's what I want to change."

Cut to my flat, where I am processing some orders. Hilton:

"Karl Andersson produces the magazine in his flat in central Prague. It has a print run of about a thousand copies. Most of the buyers live in Sweden, but also in Germany, Canada and the USA."

Back at the boat café, I say:

"I have many straight acquaintances who have said, 'what's the big deal, every single straight guy likes teenage girls, no big deal, everyone knows that.' But as soon as it's about gay men who like teenage boys, it becomes controversial."

In my flat I continue:

"Gay magazines differ quite a lot from magazines for straight men, in that that the guys on the cover of gay magazines are always about 30 years old. But the girls on the covers of men's magazines like *Slitz* and *Café* are always about eighteen years old. And if they're 23, they are dressed and retouched to look younger. Why is it, then, that the guys on the cover of gay magazines are shaved 30 year olds? Shaved as in having shaved their chest to look younger. This is a sort of hypocrisy. It's like you do actually think that young guys, in their teens, are very hot, but you don't dare to publish pictures of anyone under, say, 25."

“Is it that simple, that this is just a gender issue?” Hilton in the narration. “In the magazine there is some legal porn with models aged about eighteen. But that is not the problem. It’s the secretly-taken pictures of shirtless young boys, and the short story about a man who has sex with a thirteen year old. You don’t find that in *Slitz*.”

That’s true. You don’t find any sex stories where a thirteen-year-old boy and a 22-year-old man have sex in *Slitz*. Johan Hilton continues:

“The first issue of *Destroyer* caused an uproar as it is published in the summer of 2006. Debates in radio, articles in the papers, malicious posts in homophobic blogs. With a friend like Karl Andersson, the gay world needs no enemies.”

Evening, in my flat. I say:

“What I found most surprising in the debate was that two big gay organisations spoke out and denounced a gay magazine, a fully-legal gay magazine: RFSL and Stockholm Pride. I think they perhaps regret that in retrospect, as they must realise that it is a very strange thing to have done. It’s one thing for neo-Nazi organisations to denounce me; it’s another thing for gay organisations to do the same.”

The report takes a break at this point. But first we’re served up yet another short black and white clip, this time featuring a figure skater. The silent movie is accompanied by bombastic classical music, and after a while a screen is shown with the following text: “The Victor Karl Schäfer.” I have no idea what this means.

In the interlude, the new moderator Farao Groth is introduced. This is done by means of a short sketch, with the first presenter Olle Palmlöf meeting Farao in a gay cruising park. At the end of the scene, Olle says:

“Just one thing that is extremely important: can you promise that you, as a gay man and presenter, will be a good representative for every single gay man in Sweden, and I mean every single gay man? Because it’s extremely important that every single gay man in Sweden, and everyone who knows a gay man, and everyone who has ever seen a gay man, has exactly the same views and feelings and thoughts as you all of the time. Can you promise that?”

Farao laughs and says:

“No.”

“What a relief”, Olle says.

In this little sketch, *The Gay Lobby* dismisses the idea of representation, meaning the idea that one gay man can be taken to mean something about all gay men. I couldn’t agree more, and was therefore surprised to see *The Gay Lobby* against me use the very tactics which they had just dismissed.

When the second half of the report begins, I'm at the post office sending off some orders. Hilton's voice:

"Karl Andersson's magazine *Destroyer* is a gay magazine featuring young men and boys. It has been attacked and debated, which has attracted publicity and more readers."

Back to my apartment. I'm sitting on my sofa with Hilton and browsing *Destroyer*, as he has asked me to give an example of what I consider to be "typical *Destroyer*". I show him some spreads from the interview with Cosidetto in issue two.

"I would say that all pictures in this article are very much *Destroyer* and what I want *Destroyer* to be. That is, boys who radiate happiness. There's a sexual aspect to that too, and they are very aware of that, and they play on it."

"How do you know that?" Hilton asks.

"I think it is evident that these guys are well aware of what it's about; they feel their sexual allure – they play on it and are proud of it. And I think – well, of course I can't know this, but this is my interpretation so to speak – that..."

Cut. A drum beat sounds...

Then Hilton says that Stockholm Pride didn't want to sell *Destroyer*, and I explain briefly what happened. In the next clip, Ulrika Westerlund, the chairwoman of Stockholm Pride, explains that it was a pragmatic decision not to sell *Destroyer*. A short clip with me again:

"I think what really provokes them is that I show the wrong image of homosexuals, and homosexuals therefore feel threatened and provoked by this image."

Ulrika Westerlund says that she understands my desire to question the perfect image, but argues that I "walk a pretty thin line."

Some footage of a modern gay pride march follows – I even see a friend passing by on a float – and Johan Hilton explains the so-called "paedophile argument":

"A radical stance on issues of sex has historically been at the core of gay liberation. The gay movement has always questioned norms, but a liberal climate of debate also opens for the way for extreme elements."

Sören Juvas of RFSL again:

"I may sound like Göran Hägglund [the leader of the small Swedish Christian conservative party], but this is about morality. It's also about ethics. I don't think it's okay to sexually expose people as young as this, which is what this magazine does if we focus on those who are actually dressed. I don't think it's okay to sexualise children's bodies." Cut. "I think it's filth for old men, quite simply. It's not porn – it's filth."

“What’s the difference?” Hilton asks.

“I think there’s a hell of a difference, because it’s the same as with Lolita porn, which is also filth for old men.”

“It has nothing to do with gay or straight?”

“No, I don’t think so.”

Once again, the pre-pubescent children in the black and white film clip jump into the water, as Hilton explains:

“RFSL still has to pay the price for the past lack of judgement of its individual members. In 1983, they argued for a lowering of the age of consent. Not only a gay proposal; the conservative women’s league had the same idea. At the RFSL congress of 1991, a small group proposed a subdivision for paedophiles. The proposal was, as you can surely understand, rejected. And in 2004, one of the most prominent spokesmen of the youth division of RFSL was sentenced for sexual abuse of a minor. All events that homophobes still happily refer to in debates.”

Sören Juvas:

“Now, this happens in other organisations too, but it’s not scrutinised in the same way in those organisations.”

“What is it that makes you so vulnerable?”

“We are vulnerable because there is a group in our society that keeps ascribing these values to us, values that we don’t stand for. It keeps surfacing.”

“Who ascribes these values to you?”

“It is these right-wing groups. Right-wing Christian groups and neo-Nazi groups make these statements.”

Hilton continues, while footage of Prague is shown:

“RFSL has entered into debate several times, explained the paedophile issue and made clear statements. Yet the subject keeps surfacing.” Cut to my apartment, where I walk around unconcerned, gesturing while explaining something, although one can’t hear what as there is no sound. Hilton’s voice continues: “But that doesn’t concern Karl Andersson. He also doesn’t care much about the boys who end up in his pictures, or the context they’re forced into.”

What follows is a debate on my sofa between Johan Hilton and me about the boys in the pictures in *Destroyer*.

“These boys are victims”, Hilton says.

“But tell me in which way these boys are victims”, I say.

“Because I’m fairly convinced that if I was 12 years old I probably wouldn’t want to see a secretly-taken picture of me in this context, along with a porn short story or next to articles about this ancient love between older men and younger boys. I would feel that a boundary had been crossed, it would have felt like...”

"And in which way would you have been a victim?"

"Because I wouldn't be in control of the context and because I might not even know what it was about, you know, what kind of context it was, to be sexualised, you know, to somehow end up in a masturbation magazine, you know, well, I don't know..."

"Well, I don't know. I think it's... it's just a picture."

"Yes, to you it's just a picture, but is it just a picture to this boy and is it just a picture to his family?"

"Yes, I think it should be."

"But..."

"But I can agree that it's problematic."

It does not feel good to watch myself arguing with Hilton. He is the upset reporter who throws emotional accusations at me; I am the cold theorist who doesn't succeed in countering this style of debate.

Cut to beautiful Prague footage: The Charles Bridge and Saint Vitus' Cathedral by sunset. Hilton narrates:

"This is where I start knocking my head against a brick wall. And when I leave Prague, I do so with disquiet in my stomach, a grey lump. The old paedophile argument always lurks underneath, offering *carte blanche* to simple-minded gay bashers. There are plenty of magazine publishers who want to provoke and don't have to face the consequences. These provocations aren't my concern. But meeting Karl Andersson is something else. His magazine is upsetting, and has in reality nothing to do with me. But as a gay man, I can't be really sure that others see it in that way."

The report ends with yet another clip from a silent movie, this time showing a strong man flexing his muscles and lifting heavy weights. Once again the text appears: "The Victor Karl Schäfer."

Those last words, about my magazine "offering *carte blanche*" to gay bashers, drew reactions from many people. Myself, I merely wondered what gay culture would look like if its manifestations were seen from the perspective of what "simple-minded gay bashers" would think. Seriously, would even Babsan (a famous Swedish drag queen who sometimes appears in children's TV shows) pass such a test? Someone wrote the following in the *The Gay Lobby* group on the LGBT community Quirer:

Of everything that *The Gay Lobby* has released, this must have been the worst I've seen: a reporter who freaks out and shows coquettish moral indignation, coupled with several hints that anyone who says the wrong

thing about gay men is some kind of traitor who is to be held accountable when madmen attack us. As if we're all collectively responsible for keeping the fascists happy. Just how did it happen that the editors decided not to bin this reportage?

I was pretty indifferent to Hilton's conclusions about *Destroyer*. What frightened me was rather my own participation. Because I didn't recognise myself. Hilton says he's knocking his head against a brick wall, and when I see myself in the report on *The Gay Lobby*, I must admit that it's a good metaphor. How did that happen? I don't know. Maybe a brick wall was what Hilton wanted to meet. Of course, one can have a debate about some of the pictures in *Destroyer*. But Johan Hilton and I weren't able to.

After the programme was broadcast, I received the first negative email about *Destroyer*. That might sound strange, but it seems that people prefer expressing their hate in blog and forum posts rather than in a direct email. Now a man who had seen *The Gay Lobby* wrote:

Hi! I just want to say that I felt sick watching you sitting there and defending these secret pictures of boys that you spread through your magazine! I hope you will some day come to your senses and understand that it is wrong!

On 7th December, 2006, one of *The Gay Lobby*'s reporters, Anders Backlund, published the post "Bad fag – good fag" on his blog. Among other things, he writes:

Over the course of this TV project, I have become painfully aware of the fight that many gay men seem to fight. The fight between either showing that you are "like everyone else", or the fight for being unique and standing up for that.

The editorial stance of "we are here, we are queer, get used to it", has provoked many. "Liberal" columnists as well as many people belonging to some kind of LGBT world. Because we have done things the "wrong" way. We show feminine gay men, we allow ourselves to be silly, we allow ourselves to show the filth and the cunning, we allow ourselves to be self-critical in relation to the LGBT world. We give gay people a bad name.

[...] We're supposed to describe and examine. Not just give "a good image" of gay men, whatever that would mean.

The blog post is very sensible, but, once again, contrasts sharply with the rhetoric used in the report about me. As commentator “The Fag” put it:

Just a reminder: you used the “you give gay people a bad name” tactics yourselves against Karl Andersson in your latest show. It’s not very becoming to whine when you get a taste of your own medicine.

Some weeks later, when I had discovered the blog post, I urged Anders to reply to “The Fag”, and he did:

Karl: I think there are very obvious similarities between the debate about the programme *The Gay Lobby* and the report that Johan Hilton made about you and your magazine. I had not seen the episode before it was screened and hadn’t participated much in the editorial discussion either. So it was kind of a meta-experience when I watched the report.

This is where we should remember that the rhetoric in *The Gay Lobby*’s reporting about me – that is, the will to protect the image of gay men – is hardly new. Through *Destroyer*, I had reawoken the question of whether gay men were “paedophiles”. But already as editor of *Straight* magazine in 1999, I faced similar questions regarding another “myth” about gay men. A reporter from local paper *Upsala Nya Tidning* asked me the question that everyone wanted me to answer in the late 1990s: “Are gay men promiscuous?” According to the arguments used by Johan Hilton, RFSL et al., one would have to reply no. Myself, I already back then found such questions idiotic.

Destroyer 03

Released in February 2007. 44 pages in full colour. Print run: 2,000 copies. Cover photo by Andrei. Yellow logotype.

Selected content:

- ★ **Camille Paglia mentioned my name.** An email conversation between me and Camille Paglia's mail screener, who writes: "Over the last decade, there have been serious legal problems in the United States with contemporary photographs containing subjects such as yours. Even established art photographers have had their work seized by the police."
- ★ **Letters.** A man in the US writes: "Literally breath taking. Had to send it to a friend in New York City. An 80 year old that I met when I was 16 and he was in mid 40's. I know he would love it. So I gots to get another one. Congratulations on reaching my heart that is surrounded by fear and self-loathing for the true love that dare not speak its name. Thank you, bless you." A teenage girl writes: "I like mine. I'd lick it if I didn't think I'd ruin it."
- ★ **Entartete Kunst.** Interview with the Russian art collector "Rinrin", who has an extensive web gallery focused on the boy in art. The introduction to the interview retells Hitler's ban on the so called *entartete kunst* (degenerate art), which Rinrin refers to when explaining the current situation in Russia, where the police seize and destroy photos by for example Wilhelm von Gloeden.
- ★ **Tong, 15.** Eight pages with the cover boy. The headline "Tong, 15" is a flirt with the vintage gay and boy magazines, which often used the first name and the age of the model as headline for their centrefolds.
- ★ **Fenny Skaller Superstar!** A rave review of German author and "gay" activist John Henry Mackay's autobiography *Fenny Skaller* from around 1913. In a side article, I write about Mackay's magazine on "nameless love": He planned two issues per year, to be printed in 1,000 copies and sold solely through subscriptions. The first issue was published in 1906 – exactly 100 years before *Destroyer's* first issue.
- ★ **Look/Don't Look.** An interview with the Swedish artist Ajohan Lahti, who has exhibited 196 ink depictions of boys and young men who undressed in front of the web cam.
- ★ **Unni Drougge:** "We are all fucked." The Swedish author enters her fictional character Hella Hell from her Nabokov-inspired novel from 2001.

Interview with Unni Drougge

Unni Drougge is a well-known author and critic in Sweden. I did not want to "trick" her into appearing in the magazine, so I stressed: "It is of course a major statement to contribute in Destroyer, and I will accept any reasons not to do it except lack of time." She replied: "Yes, I'm short of time. But I'll write anyway."

What was your reasoning when you agreed to contribute to *Destroyer*?

"I figured I needed to mask my contribution somehow, and chose to use one of my fictional characters, Hella Hell, whose fate was sealed by her weakness for very young boys."

Had you seen the magazine? What did you make of it?

"I bought a copy of the magazine at Stockholm Pride 2006 from Karl. Under the table, so to speak, since the magazine wasn't an acceptable product even in the LGBTQ community. And it reminded me a bit of a 1970s magazine called *Killen* (The Guy). It had the same format, and featured pictures of tadpoles, often in sexual situations if I remember correctly."

Were you happy with your contribution and its context?

"I'm a bit ambivalent there. I'm a very strong opponent of paedophilia. And one can't be totally sure that the boys on the pictures haven't felt used. However, it didn't look like that. And since I know Karl a bit, and we had had a dialogue, I didn't perceive *Destroyer* as a paedo magazine. Rather, I saw parallels to Michel Foucault's celebrations of the boy-love of ancient Greece. And I'm inclined to think that the pictures border on being artistic expressions. That's an aesthetic ideal to many people, the boy on the borderline, who has just barely discovered his sexuality and still doesn't experience anything but heedless happiness over it. Not a man, not a child. Androgynous, rather."

Did you receive any reactions to your contribution?

"One politically correct female friend was shocked. Otherwise, I haven't heard anything."

Anything else regarding *Destroyer*, me or you?

"I prefer to see the magazine as a kind of experiment, rather than as porn in the traditional sense. As I said: an aesthetic ideal. But one must be careful in exposing underage boys, this is not without complications. *Destroyer* was surely pretty far out there. But sometimes you must test where the boundaries are, and Karl kept an intellectual profile around it all. There was, in other words, a theory formation that belongs to the LGBTQ discourse, in my view."

Endangering of youth's moral education

Wednesday, 28th March, 2007 at 2:45 pm. I'm standing in front of the gated entrance of the criminal police in Prague. I use the phone on the wall to dial a number I have been given. A man replies. I tell him:

"My name is Karl Andersson. I'm here for the interrogation."

I'm asked to wait while they send someone down to get me.

One month earlier, I received this email:

Mr. Anderson, by this way I call upon you to appear in the Police of the Czech Republic, Criminal Police Dept. in Prague, to render the meaning in the case of publication of *Destroyer* magazine and photographing visually immature or juvenile boys in various sexual situations in the area of the Czech Republic. In case you don't stay in the Czech Republic at present, place your contemporary address where you could be contacted with the view of request of your interrogation.

Further, I appeal to you to document on the basis of which contracts or agreements was the work carried out, in order to identify the photographed boys for *Destroyer* magazine, and eventual confirmation or refutation of the crime of Endangering of Youths Moral Education or Seduction to Sexual Intercourse. Also subjoin the accounting documents concerning the performed work.

To dispose of this matter, as soon as possible contact the investigator of the Criminal Police Prague. [Contact details.] In advance – preferably by e-mail – mention the date and time when you appear in the police to write up the questioning, and the language which you wish the interrogation were performed in – in order to book an interpreter.

I have recently moved to Berlin, and I don't have internet at home yet, so I read the email from the Czech police at an internet café. All of a sudden, I don't feel so cocky anymore. It's for real now, I'm thinking. The honeymoon is over. To debate on radio and TV and in the newspapers is one thing, but to be summoned for interrogation is something else entirely. I am suspected of endangering the moral education of youth, and, alternatively, of seduction to sexual intercourse. I know I'm not guilty of the latter crime, but what does the first one mean? At this stage, I have no idea of the background to the police's suspicions. I don't know if they've seen the magazine and if they consider it a threat to Czech youth.

My Czech friends put me in touch with a lawyer they know. I send her the three issues that have been published so far, and she recommends that I contact the police immediately, to show them that I am willing to cooperate. She also suggests I inform the police that I now have a lawyer, and that contact should be through her from now on.

I contact the police, and later get an email from the lawyer, who writes that they have contacted her:

Yesterday Mr. [XX] (the policeman) contacted me. I asked him about your case. The first good thing is that the Police haven't initiated the prosecution against you. They just want to see you and talk to you about your publishing.

The next step is to collect the documents that prove the ages of the models who appeared in the sex pictures in the first issue. I've already done this. As soon as I received the email from the police, I contacted the owners of the gay porn sites that the pictures came from, explained the situation and asked them to send me the necessary documents, which they did. Then the lawyer asks me to decide a date for the interrogation with the police. She also writes: "When we know the date we should (you and me) meet in our office to discuss what you should tell them and what is better not to tell." And finally, she informs me that her fee is 80 euros per hour, and that as a new client I must pay in advance for ten hours, meaning 800 euros.

Two things make me break with the lawyer. First of all the invoice. It simply doesn't seem worth the money at this stage – after all, I've not yet been charged. I thank her for her help so far and write that I will get back to her if things get more serious. But the biggest reason why I choose to go to the police without my lawyer is what she writes about her and me having a chat before the interrogation, about what I should say and "what is better not to tell". But, I reason,

there's nothing that I don't want to tell. I really have nothing to hide, and thus no reason to prepare myself for the interrogation.

I rented an Opel Corsa at Budget and drove the 350 kilometers (217 miles) to Prague in the morning of 28th March. My interrogation is scheduled for three in the afternoon. I arrive in Prague shortly after one, and make a detour to Strahov Hill to pick up fifty t-shirts with a pink fluorescent *Destroyer* print that I had ordered. Then I go back to Sokolská, where the criminal police have their offices. It's a major road, but I manage to find a parking space at the Nusle bridge. I stay in the car for a while, and realise that my hands are sweating. A thought comes to me, one that has been lurking in the back of my mind all the time: will I be able to return the car to Budget in Berlin tomorrow? Or will they keep me in Prague? Should I have given my apartment key to someone to get things there for me if I'm not coming back?

I get out of the car and walk a couple of hundred meters to the entrance of the police station. I'm casually but smartly dressed in jeans and a grey jacket. It doesn't hurt to make a good impression, I think.

After I have waited for fifteen minutes at the entrance, a man comes down and opens the gate. He's about thirty years old, has a shaved head and wears camouflage pants. Not the gay-friendly type, according to my prejudices. He lets me in without a word and without a handshake. He climbs all four flights of stairs to the right department, staying ahead of me. All the time, I involuntarily gaze at his camouflage-dressed behind. I wonder if he's aware of that, and, in that case, how it might affect the interrogation.

We walk through a corridor and end up in a room on the left-hand side. It's a fairly cosy office, with windows onto the courtyard. There are two desks, and behind one of them sits a plain clothes officer in his fifties. He greets me and asks me to sit down in a chair opposite his desk. The younger officer sits down behind the other desk. A mountain bike is lent against the wall, which I assume belongs to the younger officer.

Even though I communicated with the lawyer in English, I have chosen to be interrogated in Czech. They start with my personal particulars. I hand over my passport, and the older officer enters the data into his computer. Then he turns to me and says:

"You know why you're here?"

I explain that I don't know any more than what they wrote in the email.

"You've been reported to the police, Mr Andersson", the officer explains. "Someone filed a report at the Czech embassy in Stockholm."

He doesn't reveal any more than that, and I'm too nervous to ask for details.

"Tell us about *Destroyer*", the older officer continues. The younger one leans back in his chair and puts his boots on his desk while observing us. Let the show begin.

"It's a magazine with beautiful boys", I say.

"I'm sorry?"

I repeat what I've said, and the officer doesn't look very satisfied as he puts the information into his computer. In the interrogation record it says: "It's a GAY magazine, or in other words, a magazine with beautiful boys."

I go on telling them about the magazine – what it contains, how long I've been publishing it, how many copies I've printed and so on, and all the while the officer slowly enters the information into his computer. Then he asks me to be more specific about the pictures in the magazine. I explain that only the first issue contained pictures of boys in sexual situations.

"In one of the pictures, a guy has an erection", I start. "In another picture, one guy has another guy's penis in his mouth. And there's another picture with an erection too."

The older police officer takes off his glasses, leans forward over his desk and looks me in the eyes.

"Mr Andersson", he says. "Are there any acts in the magazine?"

"Acts?"

"Sexual acts."

That's when I realise that the policemen haven't seen the magazine, so I ask them if they want to see it, which they of course think is a great idea. I hand over the magazines, and the older officer browses them slowly while I explain where the pictures come from. When he comes to the sex pictures in the first issue, I hand over the documents I have been sent, which proves the boys' age. The officer continues to browse back and forth, impatiently.

"Is this it?" he says after a while. "Are these the only sexual pictures?"

"Yes", I say.

The officer shakes his head. He explains that the interrogation is closed. After playing a bit more with his keyboard, he sends his younger colleague to the printer in an adjoining room to fetch the interrogation record. I read through it and sign it.

"Mr Andersson", says the older one once I've signed it. "This crime investigation is now closed. It's obvious to us that no crime has been committed, and you have nothing to worry about. I seriously don't understand why anyone would report something like this, but I suppose the reason must be homophobia."

I'm so relieved by the officer's words that I dare to play devil's advocate. I hint that the person who reported the magazine probably didn't mind the gay

content, but the young age of the models. But the officer won't hear of it.

"Of course it's homophobia", he says. "Society has come a long way in these issues, but there's still a long way to go."

And maybe it's as simple as that. The Czech police inspector, far away from the eye of the storm in Stockholm and the non-legal rhetoric about "sexualising children", might just be the one to see the *Destroyer* scandal objectively. And he sees homophobia. He ends with a warning:

"Maybe you should tone down the content of the magazine in the future", he says.

I don't understand what he means and ask him if it's a formal demand. Are they closing the investigation only if I promise to be more careful in future? But he doesn't mean it like that.

"It seems like someone is after you in Sweden", he explains. "Someone who wants you caught."

Yes, it definitely seems that way, I think. The question is who.

The younger officer follows me down the stairs. This time he makes small talk. He unlocks the gate and lets me out, but this time he shakes my hand, and then he does something that surprises me: he wishes me good luck with my magazine.

It's hard to describe how relieved I am when I leave the parking space and start my journey back to Berlin, with Narcotic Thrust on the car stereo: *I like it when we go to extremes!* For the first time, I allow a thought that I have carried with me for some time to blossom: that I am proud of the police interrogation. I know that Oscar was suspected of spreading child pornography in the 1990s, solely because he had started internet provider Bahnhof at a time when no one knew what the internet was. He was interrogated by the police in Uppsala, and immediately cleared of all allegations. That impressed me. As I saw it, such things happen only to those who live on the edge, and whose projects are fully legal but controversial enough to stir up a panic among the public. Such an event should be included on one's CV, as I saw it, as it is evidence of an interesting life. And now I had been there myself. I had experienced what Cosidetto talks about in the interview in the second issue of *Destroyer*, where he argues that the legal system is his best friend: "Because once there, you are safe. What you have to fear is public hysteria and newspapers like *Bild* et cetera. In former times it used to be the other way around."

I never found out who filed the police report at the Czech embassy in Stockholm.

Destroyer 04

Released in May 2007. 36 pages in full colour and eight pages in black and white. Print run: 2,000 copies. Cover photo by Alexander Krivon. Logotype in Pantone 804 (fluorescent orange).

Selected content:

- ★ **Letters.** A guy in the Netherlands writes: "I want to give you a compliment because reading your magazine actually one 15 year old came with a coming-out when he was alone. Funny because everybody knows what my feelings are, but your magazine gives a guy like him a push to honestly talk about his true feelings." Also, praise from one of *Destroyer's* few female readers.
- ★ **Sex destroys beauty.** One of the most discussed texts in *Destroyer*, often criticised by the readers. It ended: "Fucking beauty is to have sex with a God. The only thing that will happen is that you bring down the God to earth, where he transforms to a common man. Now you can have great sex with a common man, but it can never be beautiful. Sex is meat, power, love. Not beauty."
- ★ **Living in a 3D fantasy.** An interview with the 3D artist Opus 50, who creates three-dimensional boys in his computer. The article ended with a guide: "How to make your own Pinocchio."
- ★ **The real Mowgli.** An article on so called wolf children. The introduction read: "They are wild. They are cruel. They are kids. Reared by nature, the so called 'wolf children' are the extreme essence of the human being. They can't speak, they rely on their smelling sense, and they have a desire for fresh blood. Chilling yet fascinating, they show us what we would be like without civilization."
- ★ **Intestines destroy beauty.** An interview with the young Australian artist Jason Lingard, who makes collages of young men's beautiful torsos – and what's beneath, that is, bones and intestines. From *Destroyer's* point of view, a way to try to grasp exactly where man's beauty resides.
- ★ **Proof on file – gay history is revised.** I share my impressions from the book that accompanies the permanent exhibition at Schwules Museum (the gay museum) in Berlin: "The most striking theme throughout the book is that homosexual history is paederast history, or to put it in another way: that homosexuality was equivalent to being attracted to boys and young men. Up till a few decades ago, a gay bar was virtually the same as a hustler bar."

Mentors & victims

Who read *Destroyer*? Let's start by noting that the *Destroyer* readers paid quite a bit for their copies: one copy cost eight euros at the beginning, and later I raised the price to ten euros, with the last issue costing twelve euros (but with twice as many pages as the first issue). Many readers stayed with *Destroyer* throughout its whole four-year lifetime, and new readers often bought all available back-issues at once – without any kind of discount. Obviously, *Destroyer* filled a gap. But who for? On 5th April, 2007, I received a letter to my mailbox in Prague from a reader in the UK. He wrote:

Dear Karl,

I don't wish to embarrass you or cause you alarm, but...

I've greatly admired you ever since finding your '*Destroyer*' website and receiving Issue 1 from you. Unfortunately, things are not going well for me just now and I may not have long to live. So I'm writing my Will and would like to include you to help you continue your brilliant work. Unless you give me an alternative address (and perhaps your bank details to deposit any payment), I will use your P. O. Box 101 address, which would mean my Solicitor sending you a cheque by post in your name if my Will is put into effect.

I'm not short of cash – I might even send you some money before I die! Please don't respond to any of the above if you think it inappropriate though.

While carefully putting down my bank account details in a reply, I was hit by the gravity of the situation: All of a sudden, *Destroyer's* future depended

on a person's life. It was hard for me to understand how my magazine could mean so much to someone that he wanted to include me in his will. It almost seemed that the writer of the letter saw more in my "brilliant work" than I had intended.

He wasn't the only one. Although I was never told I was included in anyone else's will, there were many readers who wrote similar letters about how much *Destroyer* meant to them. They commended my courage and stressed how important my work was. Surprisingly, many of them wrote on paper, and the letters came from all over the world. Some of them were even written from American prisons. To these people I was a hero who published *Destroyer*. One of them even asked for a signed photo of me. I went to a photo lab to print the picture of me that *Aftonbladet* had published, where I'm sitting next to some stacks of the first issue of *Destroyer* in my apartment in Prague.

I think many of the readers were older gay men, who because of their interest in young men had found themselves excluded from the gay movement in recent years – despite in many cases being its very founders. At least, that's how I interpreted many of the paper letters I received. Many of these older readers carried with them a sort of homosexual heritage which they handed down to me, probably hoping I would disseminate it through *Destroyer*.

It was through these readers that I discovered the amazing Australian artist Donald Friend, Irish poet Cathal O'Searcaigh, Arabic-Persian poet Abu Nuwas, the *Greek Anthology* and much more. I became a kind of apprentice to a number of letter-writing mentors, who seemed to enjoy having found a young gay man who cared about the history of his culture. And I was immensely thankful to these older men, who made me discover authors and artists that I had somehow missed, despite considering myself as pretty well informed in the field of gay culture. But somewhere along the way, books like those of Michael Davidson, once published by Gay Men's Press, had ceased to be classed as gay culture, as Davidson was attracted by teenage boys rather than by older men. I had found a giant gay cultural gap, and I took joy in letting my mentors help me to fill it.

Destroyer was also read by many ordinary gay men who had heard about the magazine in the media. Many of them seemed to think that they had finally found a good gay magazine, and stayed with it up to the last issue. They were of all ages, they were secure in their gay identities and many of them had boy-friends, according to what I understood from my reader contacts. The magazine was also read by younger gay men, who were teenagers themselves, but I don't think there were many of them. Last but not least, there was an even smaller group of teenage girls, and a couple of women, who purchased *Destroyer*.

Those who really took *Destroyer* to heart though, weren't in any of these groups, but rather were those who call themselves boy-lovers. They differed from the gay readers in that they saw their interest in teenage boys as a sexual orientation rather than a mere weakness. My attitude towards these readers was ambivalent. On the one hand, I didn't think we had much in common. I was an aesthete who worshipped the teenage boy; they wanted to get physical with him – exactly what I considered to be a taboo, one which was both aesthetic and moral. A friend put it like this: "The Gods keep to their side, I keep to mine." That was my approach to beauty. The ideal must not be contaminated by reality.

The boy-lover readers couldn't understand this approach. And so they misunderstood. They thought that my philosophy of "sex destroys beauty" had to do with chastity, and I received many letters urging me to loosen up. But despite this misunderstanding, these readers loved me for "fighting the fight". But I wasn't fighting any fight – at least, not theirs.

Another example of us being different was the spread from Podoli in issue one. My guide to the Czech pool complex had been a joke, and a play on the homosexual tradition of meeting at public baths. But it wasn't long before I received my first email from someone who had travelled to Prague because of this article. Now he complained that my guide didn't correspond to reality. Another reader, who I met in Berlin, said that he had liked everything in issue four except Jason Lingard's intestine art – which I held to be one of the best articles ever to appear in *Destroyer*.

So *Destroyer* had quite a mixed, if very male, readership. I was thankful for every single reader, since by paying the fairly high price of the magazine they made it possible for me to continue publishing. It remained a fact, though, that I never made *Destroyer* for my readers – I always made it entirely for myself.

There were also some "readers" who saw themselves as the target group but took every chance to stab the magazine in the back in the comment sections of articles about it. These people had seldom ordered the magazine themselves, as they argued it would count as child porn in their country (USA, UK or Australia). This extract from the comment section under a blog post about *Destroyer* on my friend Josh's blog *Milkboys* illustrates their style of argument:

Xenopoesis: In the UK it is illegal to import an "indecent" item – any kind of item: print, painting, drawing, (written) book, wood carving, even (presumably) a marrow root that bears an unusually close resemblance to a penis. Having the material posted to you is importing it.

I am quite certain that *Destroyer* would be considered indecent by Customs fascists here in the UK. [...] Unfortunately, I know for a fact that *Destroyer* does occasionally contain images that English police would consider to be cp [child pornography]. Whether the images *really are* cp is another question entirely, but if you get discovered with such image, you run the risk of being arrested, charged and appearing in court while with the very real possibility of being locked up and labelled as a danger to children.

Josh: *Destroyer* was checked by Swedish, German and Czech (I think) police and none of them were having a problem with it.

Jake: Oh because Sweden, German and Czech police are the pinnacle of law enforcement Josh, your forgetting the Australian who got prosecuted for possessing child porn – a cartoon picture of Bart Simpson naked. I don't think it would be a good call to get the magazine shipped here.

Josh: Jake, there are no nude pictures of minors in *Destroyer*.

Leonidas: Nudity is not required for a picture to be considered CP. Anything can be CP if big brother decides it is.

Jake: Here they call pictures of underage teens or kids in speedos "Child Exploitation Material" and its just as bad as CP.

The commentators did have a point. A court which had deemed a nude picture of the cartoon character Bart Simpson to be child pornography would surely be capable of saying the same of *Destroyer*. There is a huge amount of arbitrariness in these matters, and it's impossible to know in advance what might, under certain circumstances, be deemed child porn. But it also seemed to me that these commentators weren't interested in that. They *wanted* *Destroyer* to be child porn, and they were as committed in their beliefs as the Ombudsman for Children and the neo-Nazis.

In my analysis, these commentators had embraced the role of the victim; it gave them satisfaction to demonise society and to paint things as worse than they were. For all I know they might have been through some unpleasant experiences. If so, to paint *Destroyer* as dangerous was a way for them to confirm their view of the world, the one that says that society was sick, rather than themselves. I'm only speculating, but I was truly surprised at the force with

which some of these potential readers smeared the magazine and warned people about it. Since they hadn't dared to read the magazine themselves, no one else should be allowed that pleasure, they seemed to argue.

When in January 2010 I published a link to children's rights organisation Ecpat on *Destroyer's* site as a joke, it was like waving a red rag to these "readers". Finally they had their proof that *Destroyer* was dangerous. By openly linking to Ecpat, I exposed myself – *Destroyer* had been nothing but a "sting operation" from the start, it was claimed, with the purpose of collecting addresses for the police. Such things happen, but if that had been the case here I would hardly have "exposed myself" by linking to Ecpat. The accusation would have been more credible without that link, but it was that very link that made these persons accuse me.

All of a sudden, those who should have supported me sounded as rabid as my worst critics. The link to Ecpat was only up for a couple of weeks, but these people would not forget. Long afterwards, they would comment under each and every blog post that mentioned *Destroyer*, as in these comments under another *Milkboys* post:

Oskar: So we need to be reminded once again of Karl's murky connection to ECPAT?

Aljoshka: Please tell me about Karl's murky connection to ECPAT, Oskar, you seem to know a lot about it.

Oskar: Why not ask Karl about it? He gives a different answer every time he tries to explain why he had a link on his web site to ECPAT. Once he said we should have a sense of humour about it, and yet another time he asked the rhetorical question "Don't you want to protect the children?" which is akin to asking if you still beat your wife.

People who want to "protect" children don't care about facts, they create "evidence" out of thin air to carry on their self serving witch-hunts.

I wouldn't feel very comfortable knowing ECPAT has my IP address after having linked to them from Karl's web site. I certainly wouldn't charge the magazine to my credit card, nor have it sent to my house in the USA. Maybe your door won't be busted down, but at the very least it is like waving a red flag in front of a bull.

Josh: Yeah Oskar... I also heard Karl used a special ink that reveals body fluids if you put it under black light so police can tell if you used your copy in an inappropriate way.

Oskar: Do you also make light of what happened to the Brongersma Stiftung and to the Dutch artist Bernard?

Boner boy: Good riddance to Karl and his magazine. I lost all respect for him when he put a link on his web site to that notorious gang of sexual fascists, ECPAT. After that, I don't care if Karl and his magazine drop dead.

I had obviously touched a sensitive nerve. Ironically the artist Bernard, who Oskar referred to, was interviewed in *Destroyer*, but Oskar didn't know that as he hadn't read the magazine in fear of being registered by Ecpat. Sidney Smith, who contributed to *Destroyer* 06, wrote on his blog:

Destroyer, the world's last in print B/L 'zine has ceased publication. The reasons are not clear to me. I recently on legal advice removed the *Destroyer* site from my links column. There was concern that it had become a front for the authorities.

"B/L" means boy-love. I had never called *Destroyer* a boy-love magazine, but I understood that many, both critics and fans, did. Sidney also published the warning about me that he got from one of his readers:

Sidney, A word of warning! You have a link to *Destroyer* magazine run by Karl Anderson. If you go to his site, he has placed a link right in the middle linking to *supportkim.com* which purports to fight child prostitution. REGARDLESS of what they CLAIM, that is a site run by the notorious ECPAT gang of moral crusaders who have been responsible for the arrest of a lot of our brothers, EVEN THOSE not involved in child prostitution.

I was shocked when I saw that and it led to even wonder if Karl in some way, whether he knows it or not, is running a cleverly disguised "sting" operations. At the very least, I suggest no one provide credit card details to buy *Destroyer* and certainly not click on that link since it will provide ECPAT with your IP which is as good as your address.

The commentator Geoffrey speculated about my motives:

Frequently when people run afoul of the law they are given an opportunity to entrap others in various kinds of sting operations in exchange

for some kind of privileged treatment beneficial to their own case. Now that Karl has ceased operations this seems to confirm this.

I think you did the right thing Sidney by removing a link to his site from here. This is not an area to take any chances when dealing with known fascists like ECPAT. The fact that Karl called this “humour” really galls me no end!

Let’s hope that all those who raised the warning helped in some small way to save a few lives among the brotherhood.

An anonymous commentator stepped in:

Right Geoffrey! And Karl was in one hell of a position to denounce a lot of people who trusted him with their very addresses since the magazine had to be mailed to them. Also most paid for the magazine by using their credit cards. It’s all a disaster waiting to happen.

Bodmin will remember the enema queen who handed over huge numbers of names and addresses to LEA while he lived in California in order to save his own skin. And Karl himself has written about the problems he had in Sweden when the government wanted to pass special legislation to make *Destroyer* illegal there.

Then along comes the ECPAT connection which just happens to be located in Sweden and Karl links to their site!!! The writing was on the wall for all to see.

I was pretty amused by this discussion. Yes, the Ombudsman for Children had taken the chance to demand harsher laws when discussing *Destroyer* – but now it’s apparently the Swedish government that wants to ban *Destroyer*. Yet another commentator includes the Swedish parliament in the conspiracy theory, and implies that I had fled the country:

Karl was in such deep shit not so long ago when the Swedish Parliament was going to pass a law making his magazine illegal. I was told that was the reason he moved to Prague. Why would he now support a Swedish group like ECPAT who would rather see all the boy lovers dead? Be careful guys! This is beyond fishy. I smell a rat.

What’s ironic about this whole story is that I did not only stir up anger in the boy-love community. By publishing that link to *supportkim.com* on *Destroyer*’s homepage for two weeks, I also woke the sleeping giant called Ecpat.

Destroyer 05

Released in September 2007. 52 pages in full colour. Print run: 2,000 copies. Cover photo by Jose Nuñez del Arco. Logotype in Pantone 802 (fluorescent green).

Selected content:

- ★ **Reclaim your fantasy!** In my editorial I stressed the importance of separating fantasy and reality – and not to restrict the former.
- ★ **Letters.** One reader wrote: “I find it highly amusing and slightly contradictory that the author wants to tell us all that ‘Sex destroys beauty’ in the same magazine that is promoting anal sex between preteen boys with the use of ‘Utterly Butterly’ as a makeshift lubricant. I find the story highly offensive, actually. Not to mention that I believe it to be highly unrealistic. What happened to the intellectual content?” To which I replied: “*Destroyer Fiction* is, like most of *Destroyer*, a fantasy. The magazine is devoted not only to Apollonian Beauty but also to Dionysian Homosexuality, or with another word: Utterly Butterly!”
- ★ **Master of forbidden fantasies.** An interview with Fred H. Berger, who published the underground magazine *Propaganda* in New York for twenty years. He reveals that the teenage boys in many of his photos were actually women in their twenties – dressed up as boys. This fantasy became the target of the US Child Pornography Prevention Act of 1996, which was ruled unconstitutional in 2002. One of the photos I published featured Eric Damen, the waif model who provoked the new law in the 1990s by looking too young and sexy in an infamous Calvin Klein ad.
- ★ **Fiercer than fiction.** An essay on *Destroyer*’s patron saint Gisberta, who was murdered by fourteen boys from a local child care institution in Portugal.
- ★ **The artist & the boy II.** A text and three paintings by American-German artist Will McBride.
- ★ **Tracing the lines of beauty.** I explain my obsession with tracing the contours of boys from porn sites: “What comes out on the other side is therefore not a boy – it’s an icon. You see, an icon was exactly what I saw the whole time.”
- ★ **Some boys make you gasp.** A passionate review of Michael Davidson’s autobiographical book *Some Boys* from 1968.
- ★ **Marita Lindqvist:** “About to explode.” On Japanese boy bands.
- ★ **Donald Mader:** “Carl, 1976.” Back cover photo.

Interview with Marita Lindqvist

I had read the Swedish author and journalist Marita Lindqvist's book Kawaii, about Japanese boy bands, and felt a strong kinship to her. I especially liked the way in which the boy idols in Japan are worshipped as ideals, and the unwillingness to meet them in real life that Marita expressed in her book.

What was your reasoning when you agreed to contribute to *Destroyer*?

"Some time earlier, my book *Kawaii* had received a couple of pretty weird reviews. Someone wrote that my book never would have been published if I was a man, and someone else thought that I endorsed the sexualisation of children by describing how Japanese women worship young boys.

"Therefore I was very pleased to be asked to write a column in *Destroyer*. I had been met with a crazy moral panic myself, and immediately felt solidarity. I also saw it as a chance to write for a new target group, since my books and articles are usually read by women and teenage girls."

Had you seen the magazine? What did you make of it?

"I had not seen a physical copy, but I had a pretty good idea of the content and the attitude. I had followed the debate and I found the sloppily homophobic arguments against it both to be expected and incredibly stupid.

"There was no place for humour, historical perspective, or abstract thinking among those who reviewed the magazine. How young are you allowed to look and how provocatively are you allowed to pose in a picture? Why is it more upsetting with nude teenage boys than with nude teenage girls? Those who denounced *Destroyer* didn't even want to discuss these things. It was just child pornography – period."

Were you happy with your contribution and its context?

"I was extremely pleased! Not least because my column was illustrated with some perfect pictures of my boy band favourites. The real strength of the magazine, in my view, was that the fire and devotion of it could really be felt. *Destroyer* was fearless, never ingratiating, and the issues I saw were created with enthusiasm, love and high editorial standards. The spectrum of the content was unexpected and exciting, and yet stayed within the frames of the magazine. And then it was cute, small and glossy too!"

Anything else you want to add?

"I hope *Destroyer* will live on in some way, somewhere, and I'm happy to have been part of it."

The Sex radicals

On 21st November, 2007, I'm contacted by Reb Kerstinsdotter. She explains to me in an email that she's writing "a thesis dealing with sex radicals and commercial operators' negotiations regarding *Destroyer*" for her bachelor's degree in gender studies at Stockholm University, and that she wants to do an email interview with me for this purpose. It flattered me that someone had chosen *Destroyer* as the subject for an academic thesis. The focus was actually not the content of *Destroyer*, but rather the way in which a number of sex radicals related to it. However, that would prove interesting enough.

The thesis was finished in January 2008 and had the title *The Beautiful Boy, The Destroyer. Sex radicals' negotiations regarding Destroyer magazine – an interview study about decent gay men, dirty old men and sexualised children*. An excerpt from the abstract outlines its aims:

Through the collection and analysis of negotiations surrounding the gay magazine *Destroyer*, the intention of this paper is to identify norms of sexuality within a contemporary sex-radical discourse. These negotiations are collected from interviews with individuals whom, at the time of the interview, consider themselves or their politics sex-radical.

Six sex radicals plus me were interviewed in the study. Like the others, I was asked about my sex, my sexual orientation, and which personal pronoun I preferred to be used about me. Here is a shortened list of all interviewees:

- ★ Francisco, 52, "bi- or omnisexual" man.
- ★ Jesper, 30, bisexual "man, alternatively FTM transsexual".

- ★ Karl Andersson, 33, homosexual man.
- ★ Kevy, 25, “non-heterosexual inter-gender”.
- ★ Michelle, 27. “He/she self-identifies as inter-gender and a queer feminist.”
- ★ Oskar, 21, pomosexual (pomo stands for postmodernism): “Oskar would prefer not to define his/her sex and considers the question irrelevant, but argues that it is of certain importance that he/she possesses a pussy.”
- ★ Vivian, 37, “chooses not to define his/her sex. He/she also claims to have no interest in or need to define his/her sexuality, but assumes that others would call him/her bisexual.”

A brochure from a supermarket, with a boy on the cover and therefore published in issue four as “everyday happiness”, causes Michelle to react:

This boy agreed to be in an ad, and he doesn’t have any power over who cuts out this ad and includes it in a collage in another magazine. Maybe it wasn’t his intention that this picture would end up in a magazine that celebrates children’s bodies and argues that there should be no age of consent. It’s another matter if someone jerks off to this picture in [Swedish newspaper] *Expressen*. But now he is part of a context that is sexualised already, so he is sexualised in another way. It’s more accepted to sexualise him here. (Michelle)

Using this picture, Michelle highlights the problem of not being able to control the spread of pictures depicting oneself. He/she wants to know where pictures of him/her end up. He/she is therefore against secretly taken pictures as well as reproductions like the one mentioned – at least in the context of *Destroyer*. When I ask Michelle what he/she means, and how it is different if the picture is published here instead of in a magazine for young girls, he/she replies that it’s about *Destroyer*’s sexualised/sexualising image. This attitude is very common among the informants. Whether the pictures are pornographic in themselves thus becomes irrelevant; the view is that they become pornographic through their context.

A bit later, in two separate places, Michelle exaggerates the age of the models in the same way that some critics did in the *Destroyer* debate earlier (“not a day over thirteen”, “ten year olds in speedos”):

The context is one where one fights for, as Michelle puts it, “abolishing the age limits and jerking off to Aaron Carter when he’s five years old”.

He/she says that Ilja and the other boys in the magazine don't look eighteen, but rather eleven. He/she stresses that he/she is "not stupid" and gets the point – that the objects of the pictures should "look ten".

Another picture that upset the informants was the reader photo in issue three, featuring two Indian boys. Kevy gets, according to the thesis, "very upset" when he/she sees the picture:

Kevy: But, really, I think this is *totally sick*. These pictures, they are just over the top! This is like... this is the world's most post-colonial stereo-type. Or child porn! Post-colonial child porn where they are supposed to look like street urchins who are dirty. And it says "Obsession" and "Continue to send your photos from your holiday", as if you go to a place and... I just think this is totally disgusting to look at.

RK: Mm. Those in the picture are dressed. Do you think that is of importance?

Kevy: No, I don't think it matters. And I don't think it matters if they are eighteen years old or not. As I said earlier, it's about the context and about how they are portrayed. And it's in this magazine. If this picture was published in [Swedish newspaper] *DN* it would be a different matter, you know. But in this context, I think it feels totally wrong. I feel sick from seeing these pictures in *this* magazine.

A discussion follows, about the importance of the context and the fact that the people in the pictures don't know that the picture has been published in *Destroyer*. "The pictured object doesn't (any longer) have the possibility of controlling how it is represented", as Reb puts it. That's the case when daily newspapers publish some pictures too, but almost all of the informants argue that it's worse when the same type of pictures are published in *Destroyer*, since the magazine "already conveys a sexualised image". However, Vivian agrees with me that there is a homophobic element to such a view:

They [Vivian and Karl] argue that the pictures are interpreted through a filter, where the gay man's gaze constitutes a sexualised (and dangerous) gaze. It's the idea of that gaze that creates these statements. Karl says that "the same type of pictures that I publish in *Destroyer* would go unnoticed in a heterosexual context, such as, for example, [teenage girl magazine] *Frida*." The context has, according to the two of them, made the pictures child pornography due to a homophobic analysis. How-

ever, most of the informants consider this a positive judgement. Vivian positions himself/herself somewhere in between. He/she argues that the analysis is indeed homophobic, which makes the magazine interesting to discuss, but he/she does not agree that this argument legitimises the pictures or the magazine's "celebration" of youth. Instead, this obsession should be questioned.

The informants thus concluded that the context was problematic. Which could also be said about the type of pictures I publish in *Destroyer*, according to them, since their objects are "sexualised". Kevy does not differ between drawn images and photos – he/she almost seems to think that the former is more problematic:

He/she argues that persons (factual or fictitious) always should be portrayed in "a fair way", with which he/she means "on everybody's (equal) terms." The distinction he/she makes between photographic and drawn images is that the drawing artist has a bigger power to control the picture's design, and thereby also a bigger responsibility.

The others do distinguish between fiction and reality, but Michelle worries that short stories with too extreme a subject might have a "normalising" effect, which makes him/her argue that such stories "should be restricted and not available to everybody, all the time. 'For example not in *Expressen*'s Sunday supplement,' he/she says."

Oskar too stresses the difference between fiction and reality and argues that it's better that people can study material where no one "had to be put in a situation where they needed to make a choice of placing themselves in front of a camera for money":

This criticism is directed towards that industry where "it obviously happens that these boys get into trouble or make choices that they may not be capable of making".

A discussion on power follows, where some of the informants criticise the fact that the models are not only young, but often have darker skin. "I think the exotification of Asians in gay porn is very problematic", says Kevy, who thinks that "porn that exercises power in that way is unacceptable". Michelle wonders how many "rubles" the models were paid.

The next topic is whether Stockholm Pride were in the right when choosing not to sell *Destroyer*. It turns out that Francisco is the only one who thinks that Stockholm Pride made the wrong decision, but he emphasises that he does not “sympathise with the magazine”. He simply concludes that it is censorship “when someone actively chooses not to sell a publication”. He also thinks that the interest in a product increases if it is banned, and compares it to drugs. “The problem thus lies in society and its people”, Reb sums up. Vivian thinks that the talk about censorship is my way of trying to “be a victim”:

Vivian argues that the magazine, since it serves to highlight a shameful sexual political debate, would fit into an [alternative queer] festival like Shame, but he/she doesn't have the impression that Stockholm Pride's purpose ever was to include all groups within LGBTQ. There is rather “a history of exclusion”, he/she says. Stockholm Pride's mission is rather to create an arena “with the purpose of creating legitimacy and some kind of equal access to society, for everyone”. With this in mind, he/she doesn't think it's hard to understand the decision. He/she imagines that the festival thought that *Destroyer* would “drag them down and defile that project with shady parts of what has an LGBT connection”.

Michelle too sympathises with Stockholm Pride's decision:

There is so much that is not included, he/she says, which is both good and bad. The fact that the people who are active in the organisation are the ones that set the standards for the festival's content, is seen by him/her as a negative thing. But the exceptions where they take on, according to Michelle, greater social responsibility and stop phenomena that are considered too problematic, he/she sees as positive. He/she looks upon it as a sort of censorship, but argues that this can be defensible, in relation to the context. The organisation has, according to Michelle, an important position within LGBTQ politics and he/she thinks that it's positive if that position is used to make a statement. These statements should be made more often.

Kevy agrees too:

He/she finds the whole twink niche in gay porn difficult, and think that it's negative for LGBTQ politics when it's associated with “that” (read: paedophilia). Even if he/she doesn't believe in censorship, Kevy sympa-

thises with Stockholm Pride's decision. The magazine is, according to him/her, counterproductive and supports the homophobes' arguments.

The statements in the thesis were in keeping with the reactions that *Destroyer* had aroused earlier on. What surprised me was that the critics this time defined themselves as sex radicals. The definition of a sex radical is, I suppose, that, unlike the majority, a sex radical doesn't consider the sex aspect per se as something problematic. But that was exactly what the informants seemed to think in regard to *Destroyer*.

What also surprised me, was that several of the informants went further than the management of Stockholm Pride had; Ulrika Westerlund had quite clearly explained that the exclusion of *Destroyer* from the Pride House store had been done on purely practical grounds, but several of the informants argue that the decision was also correct on principle.

Most striking is probably the appeal to common sense that some of the informants make. When Kevy says that something in *Destroyer* is "totally sick", he/she uses the exact same words that are often used against homosexuality. One should also bear in mind that the rhetoric about a "social responsibility" to stop "phenomena that are considered too problematic" often has been used to justify laws against homosexuality.

When I met Reb for the first time, I got the impression that she too was surprised by the sex radicals' reactions to *Destroyer*. I did a short interview with her that was published in the next issue.

Destroyer 06

Released in March 2008. 52 pages in full colour. Print run: 1,500 copies.
Cover photo by Ulrich Thiele. Black logotype.

Selected content:

- ★ **Letters.** A reader in San Francisco wrote: "Your magazine is filling a needed void in gay media by focusing on the beauty of boys, which as you correctly point out has historically been the mainstream of homosexual interest (and artistic interest as well)." A reader in New York wrote: "Your magazine is wonderful. I was on the subway reading *Destroyer* when a person asked where I got 'that magazine' from. I expected bullshit, and trouble, but it turned out the guy said he'd heard of '*Destroyer*', but couldn't find it anywhere. Imagine. I told him to go online, and subscribe. So there's a need for the kind of art you're doing."
- ★ **Hello Africa!** A black and white photo report from Mali by Canadian photographer Francis Cardinal.
- ★ **The artist and the boy III.** An essay on young Berlin artist Georg Weise's paintings, which are presented on six pages, including the centerfold.
- ★ **I've got the power!** An interview with Portuguese-German cover model Marc André. This was the closest *Destroyer* ever came to its models, although the necessary distance was kept by letting Marc reply to my questions on a questionnaire that was published along his pictures. A reader remarked afterwards: "You got his handwriting. That's beyond sexy."
- ★ **Caught in the act! Destroyer's editor in handcuffs.** A short report on how the police caught me when I was honouring Gisberta by spraying her name on walls in Berlin.
- ★ **Messages in a bottle.** An interview with New York artist Sidney Smith, illustrated with his simply but perfectly drawn young angels and other ideal boys, as once published in his book *Handful of angels*.
- ★ **One more reason?** I comment on the reactions to the Aaron Carter article in issue one, where I suggest the readers "jack off" to his pictures. I question why this is seen as something negative, and to prove my point I publish a shirtless photo of myself, age fourteen.
- ★ **Bo I. Cavefors:** "The Boy with the belt." The Swedish author writes about a sexual encounter from his childhood.

Interview with Bo I. Cavefors

Bo I Cavefors is a Swedish writer and publisher, who for decades published controversial books from a Zürich exile. I had discovered him some year earlier, and just started to read his books with articles from his magazine Svarta Fanor (Black Banners). Much of their content was a goof fit for Destroyer, and naturally I was happy when Bo agreed to write a column.

What was your reasoning when you agreed to contribute to *Destroyer*?

"I liked the whole project and thought that my contribution could broaden the magazine. I also thought that the context was one where I fit in – I was happy to be part of it."

Had you seen the magazine? What did you make of it?

"Yes, you had sent me one or a couple of issues, and I thought that the pictures were often good."

Were you happy with your contribution and its context?

"I had no objections."

Did you receive any reactions on your contribution?

"No..."

Anything else you want to add?

"*Destroyer* is good, but I would rather see more action and less speedos on the boys... I also think it would be good if *Destroyer* were to come out more often and become an active and serious forum for issues regarding relations between young and older men... that's what I wanted to contribute to through my text."

Alles klar!

I continued printing *Destroyer* in Prague, even after I moved to Berlin in November of 2006. When a new issue was ready, I rented a car in Berlin and drove to Prague, often with a friend.

The procedure was always the same: we left Berlin in the morning and arrived in Prague at noon. Our first stop was an ATM machine where I withdrew as much Czech money as I could with my credit card. Next stop was the printing plant, where I instinctively sought out the *Destroyer* pallet even before being greeted by the manager. The first look was always magic. The rest of the world disappeared as I browsed through the first copy and concluded that no technical mistakes had been made (they never had). Back in the manager's office, I used half the Czech cash as a down payment, while we had coffee and chatted about each others' businesses. They always wanted to know when the next issue was to be printed. Then a truck operator would drive the *Destroyer* pallet to the loading platform, where we would help each other to fill the back of the car with magazines.

Next step was packaging, which we did either at the printing plant or in the car. Since shipping costs were lower in the Czech Republic, I tried to send as many magazines as possible from Prague. My accompanying friend was a great help as we put the magazines into envelopes addressed to those who had pre-ordered the new issues, which most readers had. Then we drove to the business post office in the central area of Vinohrady (where I used to have the *Destroyer* mailbox), to send out all the envelopes using the rest of the cash to pay for the shipping.

The last stop on these printing plant trips was the restaurant U Posty ("By the post office"), where we were often joined by my Prague friends. I loved these

lunches. I had got my magazine, checked that no mistakes had been made, and finally sent them out to the people who had already paid for it, meaning I had met my obligations. Then there was the euphoria from browsing my work. My only regret was that I wasn't allowed to taste the wonderful Czech beer, as I was driving.

Sometimes we stayed overnight in Prague, but usually we would drive back to Berlin the same afternoon. We would arrive in Berlin at ten in the evening, and that's when the most bothersome work remained – carrying all the magazines from the car up to my apartment.

It was after I had picked up the sixth issue in Prague that *Destroyer* was investigated by the police once again. This time, I had brought Oscar to Prague. We had done the usual round of ATM machine, printing plant, post office and restaurant, and were now heading back to Berlin. It was late and traffic became thinner as we got closer to Germany. Shortly before the border I overtook a black car, which immediately afterwards overtook me and then braked while someone waved a stop sign through the right window. It was the German border police.

I followed the car into a parking lot and stepped out. One female and two male police officers greeted us. Officially, there is no border control any longer between Germany and the Czech Republic, but the area is monitored and the police have the right to carry out spot checks. We handed over our passports to the police officers. One of them opened the back door of our car and searched the back seat with a flashlight.

"Do you have any drugs in the car?" he asked.

"No", I replied.

"Any weapons?"

"No."

He slammed the door shut.

"What do you have in the trunk?" he asked.

"Magazines", I said.

"Magazines?"

"Magazines."

I opened the trunk. It was filled with brown boxes. The excitement rose as I opened one of them and the magazine stacks were exposed – the varnished cover glistened under the transparent shrink-wrap. The police officer lit up the content with his flashlight for several seconds. No one said anything. Then he picked up one of the stacks and held it under his flashlight for at least half a minute while carefully scrutinising it, one surprised colleague gazing over each

shoulder. He uttered a sound, as if not understanding what he saw: "Hrm?" The flashlight beamed onto the cover boy's happy face: *I've Got the Power! Marc André is gonna rock ya!* "Hrm?" The police officer uttered the sound a third time before starting to tear open the plastic. I asked him if he wanted to browse the magazine, in which case I would give him a copy I had in the car so he didn't have to "break the stack". Yes please, he said.

After I had given him his copy, he went back to the police car with his colleagues. Oscar and I went back to our car and waited. We were both a bit shaken up by what had happened, or rather what was about to happen. Because we didn't know what was about to happen. I tried to remember exactly what I had published in this issue. Were there any pictures that could possibly be viewed as child porn by a grumpy border guard? Would they seize the whole shipment? In that case it was a good thing I had already sent out a large part of this edition to those who had pre-ordered – those copies would be worth a lot if the rest was destroyed.

While we waited, we picked up a copy each and browsed it slowly, as we imagined the police were also doing. Not until I reached the last page did I relax; the magazine really didn't contain anything that the authorities could object to. After twenty-five minutes I said to Oscar: "With every extra minute this is getting more embarrassing – for them."

We waited for a total of thirty minutes. Then the policeman with the flashlight came back to our car. I opened the window.

"Alles klar!" he said cheerfully, and handed over the magazine and our passports. We were free to go.

Destroyer 07

*Released in March 2008. 52 pages in full colour. Print run: 1,500 copies.
Cover photo by Andrei. Logotype in Pantone 806 (fluorescent pink).*

Selected content:

- ★ **Style manifesto.** In my editorial I stressed the virtue of stretching concepts to their extremes – and the need not to.
- ★ **Witchhunt of Kathmandu.** A critical review of Neasa Ní Chianáin's documentary *Fairytale of Kathmandu*, in which she comes to terms (or doesn't, rather) with the fact that her favourite poet Cathal O'Searcaigh has sex with young men.
- ★ **Googling teenage boys.** In a small investigation I've categorised the search results of the phrase "teenage boys". I conclude that they're almost exclusively about either sex or crime.
- ★ **Young boys expose their genitalia in old newspaper.** Some facsimiles from Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet* anno 1980, when they wrote in bold headlines that "Sex is nice for the kids", and published pictures explicit enough to have me censor them in *Destroyer*. The article illustrates how quickly laws governing images have changed in the West; possessing this newspaper is probably a crime today. Ironically, it was *Aftonbladet* that wrote the first scandalous article on *Destroyer*.
- ★ **A French legend.** An interview with Bernard Alapetite, the French photographer who in the 1980s published the boy magazine *Beach Boy*. The interview was illustrated with plenty of black and white photos as well as thirteen *Beach Boy* covers.
- ★ **Vintage pride.** Part one of my investigation of the gay and boy magazines of the 1970s. For this article I printed a fifth colour on top of the regular CMYK scale. I reproduced plenty of facsimiles from the old magazines, and managed to track down the former editor-in-chief of *Für Uns* magazine, which was published in 1978.
- ★ **Sidney Smith:** "Boy art is dangerous." On the cowardice of today's "gay" artists.

Interview with Johan Haza

Starting with issue five, I used a proofreader. A close friend of mine in Stockholm offered to correct my English, which I of course couldn't see was imperfect. My friend was Swedish, but he had studied English at the university and said he could "make a difference". As he worked at a magazine in Stockholm and it said in his contract that he wasn't allowed to work for other magazines, I came up with a pen-name for him: Johan Haza.

What did you think about proofreading *Destroyer*?

"I loved it! It's hard to say what brought more pleasure – reading it before anyone else, or being part of perfecting it. I really like making magazines. The only downside was that I had already read most of the articles when the magazine finally arrived. Sometimes it was frustrating that I couldn't proofread the whole magazine, but at the same time I understand that you couldn't wait for me – I'm not the most disciplined person when it comes to things I do just for pleasure..."

What did you make of the magazine?

"I think few people appreciated it more than I did, despite the fact that I'm not really the target group (although I'm not immune to charms of the boys either, of course!). Brilliant, unique, well-made, sexy – each issue, except the one with the guy who plays Playstation, is like a work of art. But it was an ambivalent relationship – on the one hand I read the magazine on the underground and felt subversive, on the other hand I didn't want to deal with the situations that could arise from having the magazines displayed at home, at a party for example. Sometimes I didn't even keep them on my shelf, but instead stored them in the attic."

Did anyone know about your moonlighting for *Destroyer*?

"No, not a single person. According to my contract I'm not allowed to have jobs on the side. It can usually be cleared anyway, but working for *Destroyer* felt like a fight I didn't want to take on. I'm the first one to admit that it's a comfortable argument to hide behind, so that I don't have to ask myself whether I want to stand up for *Destroyer* and be associated with it. But even though it's nice to hide behind the argument, it's still very real and a weighty reason."

How good was my English on a scale from one to ten? And your own?

"I would give your English a six and my own a nine out of ten... If ten doesn't mean an Englishman but still a Swedish person."

The Allure of radicalism

As the 2007 Stockholm Pride drew closer I had not had any contact with the organisation at all. What had happened the previous year, when *Destroyer* was excluded from the selection in the Pride House store, was now ancient history to me, and I wasn't planning on bringing it up again. So I was surprised when Stockholm Pride themselves brought it up anew. In a brochure about that year's festival programme, a representative of Stockholm Pride is interviewed:

Last year *Destroyer* magazine stirred up a debate with naked young boys. What will upset the moralists this year?

“Maybe the dildo-kubb tournament [kubb is a Swedish lawn game where you knock over wooden blocks, or in this case, dildos, by throwing a wooden stick – or in this case, I suppose, a dildo – at them], and the porn film screening by the activist group The Queer Mafia might upset someone. Then there's a seminar about morality as a social construct, which you can visit and be morally outraged by if you feel like it.”

I had to read the question again. Was it really possible that Stockholm Pride was wanting to provoke “upset moralists”? That phrase caused reactions among other people as well. One of them put it like this:

I think that quote feels unfair, as if Pride is trying to ride on *Destroyer's* radicalism in order to be seen as a bit more edgy – without explaining that the magazine wasn't allowed to be sold. It seems from the quote that Pride likes upsetting moralists, when it in fact was *Destroyer* that upset Pride.

And so, the debate was ignited once more, but this time on a closed mailing list. I find it interesting that *Destroyer*, despite being so hated and considered so immoral, was still somehow tempting. It seemed that the magazine had the allure of forbidden fruit, and I suppose that is tempting in a world where the most radical thing one can come up with is playing kubb with dildos.

Apparently, *Destroyer* was discussed in the seminar on “morality as a social construct”. The Swedish National Institute of Public Health (Folkhälsoinstitutet) reports in their magazine *Insikt* (issue 4, 2007):

Ulrika Westerlund told how she, as the chairman of last year's Stockholm Pride, was forced to intercept and ban the sale of gay magazine *Destroyer* in Pride House. RFSL's chairman Sören Juvas and editor of *QX* Jon Voss also criticised the magazine, which is published in the Czech Republic by a Swedish man who celebrates the beauty of young boys and which contains erotic images of teenage boys.

“Those who say that the magazine must be allowed to be sold everywhere and in all situations I call sex liberal. I'm not pro-censorship, but I don't think it feels that radical or fresh to sexualise young bodies”, Ulrika Dahl said. “In that case it's more radical to celebrate desire for bears or fat bodies, or why not Miss Landmine (a beauty contest for women who have lost a body part after stepping on a landmine)?”

It seems as if many people consider the word “radical” to be something positive – in the quote above it almost functions as a synonym for “good”. When I started to think more about the word myself, my conclusion was that you can't decide yourself whether you're radical or not. Rather, it's decided by society's reactions. Furthermore, the word doesn't have any value of its own, according to me. It's just a descriptive word.

Through *Destroyer* I got in touch with many “radical” artists, and their attitude sometimes surprised me. One of them, who on his home page hailed “dramatic exiles”, “agent provocateurs”, “troublemakers”, “hustlers”, “paederasts”, “avant-gardists”, “enfant terribles”, “perverts”, and other I suppose radical groups, wrote to me after I had launched the first issue:

hi i love the name of your magazine. hot cover. i would love to shoot something for you. i don't suppose you pay.

We agreed that I would send him the first issue for free, which I did. But despite his love for paederasts and perverts, I never heard from him again, despite

writing to him several times.

Another artist who is usually seen as radical wrote to me regarding a possible contribution:

You know, if you toned-down your magazine, made it more artsy, and adhered to the laws of Germany and the US (where I do most of my work) I could possibly collaborate with you.

In another email, he wrote:

As regards an interview, I might decide to do one if you give me the front cover and agree to clean-up your content a little more.

I couldn't help but notice that he used almost the same words as the Swedish Ombudsman for Children, who spoke about the importance of "keeping it clean". Those words have traditionally been used by conservatives against art that they find improper, and I'm sure it has often been used against the artist's own art. He didn't seem aware that such rhetoric could be compromising for a "radical" artist, and I never mentioned it myself. Throughout our correspondence we maintained a polite tone, and he ended one email:

Be well, and try to be a little less provocative.

In late 2007, a Dutch centre of contemporary art was planning an exhibition on "the ethics and aesthetics of porn." Through a friend of mine who worked at the gallery, the curator heard about *Destroyer* and wanted to include the magazine in the exhibition. My friend reported that my magazine had ignited a discussion, and that "most of the female staff considered the pictures in the mag as child porn".

The curator was still interested in exhibiting *Destroyer*, but later chose not to do so. My friend explained his reasoning:

If the art world is already getting hysterical about Tong and his friends, he thinks the public, once they hear about it, will only come and see "that magazine" and comment on it, and leave the other stuff alone, which is not fair to the other artists.

I visited the exhibition in September 2007. Among other things, *Butt Magazine* and works by Bruce LaBruce were exhibited.

Without deliberately trying to be radical, *Destroyer* explored the concept of radicalism. My conclusion was that many of those who claim to be radical or who hail the radical, in fact only want a kind of cramped radicalism, one that is “toned down” enough to work as a brand.

Destroyer 08

Released in February 2009. 52 pages in colour and black and white. Print run: 2,000 copies. Cover photo by Nicholas Prenter. Logotype in gold print.

Selected content:

- ★ **Beauty made me do it!** My editorial on the beauty of extreme concepts, of which there will be plenty in this issue.
- ★ **Barely human.** A spread with a photo of a barely conscious beggar boy, who “excels on the brink of what makes us human, proving that barely human also means most human.”
- ★ **Conquering the chromosomes.** A doctor’s diagnosis versus *Destroyer’s* dito of a boy suffering from Seckel Syndrome.
- ★ **The big bluff.** One of the main articles, based on Jeffery P Dennis’ book *We Boys Together – Teenagers in Love Before Girl-Craziness* from 2007. In that book, he shows that the homosocial aesthetics so popular in Hollywood movies before World War II vanished after the war. One of the reasons seems to be that the homosexual identity had become more visible.
- ★ **Vintage scoops.** The second part of *Destroyer’s* gay magazine history focuses on the early issues of *Du & Ich*, Germany’s biggest gay magazine, which had interviews with celebrities like Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis, Jr, Mick Jagger and Zarah Leander. The fight for lower ages of consent for gay sex was one of the issues that characterised the magazine.
- ★ **When boys become men.** Summary of a thesis dealing with age cut-offs for boys at women’s shelters in Sweden. Officially, everyone is a child until they turn 18. But the women’s shelters, where men are not allowed, seem to think that boys become men much earlier, and use lower age limits for male “children”.
- ★ **Get with the beat!** My queer reading of Disney’s animated movie *The Jungle Book*: Mowgli is the teenage boy who is enjoying himself in the fun but dangerous gay quarters, but whose fate it is to eventually take his heterosexual societal responsibility and settle down with a girl and reproduce. I illustrated the article with screenshots from the movie, where one can see how animal of all shapes and sizes – gay men, that is – compete for the young boy’s attention.
- ★ **Aaron Eklöf:** “But, I look like a boy?” On boyish (beautiful) girls.

Interview with Aaron Eklöf

Aaron Eklöf is a young (22 at the time) Swedish writer and photographer, whom I got to know in Berlin. I liked the way he dealt with beauty in his works, and so asked him if he wanted to write a column for Destroyer.

What was your reasoning when you agreed to contribute to *Destroyer*?

"To be asked to contribute to someone's lifework must be considered an honour. It wasn't really clear to me how I fitted in to a magazine about young men, but I said yes to the magazine as a whole rather than to the content."

Had you seen the magazine? What did you make of it?

"I hadn't read everything but I had browsed two issues and I was very impressed by how good it looked. Maybe you could say I was blinded, because it hadn't really fully dawned on me what the magazine was about. I think it took aesthetics seriously and was interesting. Just like Karl."

Were you happy with your contribution and its context?

"I don't know if I felt that I contributed to that very issue. I tried to give my view on Dionysus and Apollo. My column was about teenage girls' efforts to be beautiful, and how transient beauty is, as displayed by a girl who puts on a cap and looks like a boy. And becomes beautiful. It seems far-fetched. In terms of style the column was probably pretty typical for me."

Did you receive any reactions on your contribution?

"A guy at my work called me a paedo when he heard about the magazine. But I doubt he had read my column. I've heard that boys who wanted to read about boys got angry with my column. But girls have said that they were touched by it. A blogger at [fashion magazine] *Rodeo* photographed herself in a cap as a tribute."

Anything else you want to add?

"What work to write, edit, Photoshop and be your own publisher all on your own. Karl's work is of the kind that you almost only see in countries with a neglected democracy, where solitary journalists stand up and risk their security and livelihood. Admirable."

Unethical, immoral & improper

One of the biggest challenges during my four years with *Destroyer* was of a very practical nature, namely to find ways for my readers to pay for the magazine. I was kicked off from more than one payment service because of the look of my magazine, until I finally used my creativity to find a solution.

In the beginning I sold *Destroyer* through Kagi, an American site where private individuals as well as small companies can sell their products via credit card without having a contract with the credit card companies. Instead, Kagi has the contracts, and charges a small commission as a middleman. Their site doesn't look very good, but it was Kagi who approved *Destroyer* when I first looked for a way to sell it. There are few services of this kind. One of the most popular, 2Checkout, replied in short and clear terms after seeing the *Destroyer* site: "We would not accept the account." But Kagi did. I sold the first issue for eight euros, plus two euros for shipping. Of these ten euros, Kagi took €1.50.

For a year I sold *Destroyer* through Kagi without any problems. I had some support issues – it had always to do with the design of my Kagi store – and Kagi were always very helpful. So naturally I was quite surprised when one day, in reply to a regular support question, I received this email:

Thank you for your email. Regrettably, your Kagi account has been terminated, as your products violate our terms of service. We can no longer process orders for you. [...] I apologize for this inconvenience and appreciate your patience.

I asked why my account had been terminated, and also pointed out that they had approved my magazine a year ago, and that my product hadn't changed

over that time. I had this reply from another Kagi representative:

Hello Karl,

Can you describe the age of the models in your magazine, the target audience for your magazine, and the way the models are presented in the images in your magazine?

As Kagi Operations Manager, and as a parent, and as an out gay man, I would be very concerned that Kagi not be perceived as homophobic. We do, of course, prohibit the sexual presentation of children, but, as you know, that is an issue that is completely separate from whether or not the magazine has gay content.

I am also very concerned not to have addressed this issue with you a year ago.

I wrote an extensive reply, but didn't hear from Kagi again. According to their terms, they were allowed to keep the money I had earned but hadn't yet been transferred to me. I told the journalist who had written about *Destroyer* in *The Guide* about the termination, and he decided to send Kagi an email with some questions. I don't believe he got a reply, but I got my money.

This episode with Kagi made me keep a lower profile in my dealings with other service providers. When my email address stopped working properly, I didn't dare to contact my web host for fear of having them "discover" the content of my domains. Instead, I simply stopped using my old email addresses and switched to Gmail.

Some month before Kagi terminated my account, Paypal had done the same. I never had any explanation as to why, as Paypal never replied to my emails with anything other than a reference to their terms of service. However, those were pretty clear: nothing even remotely sexual was allowed to be sold through Paypal. Not porn, dildos or sexy underwear. Fair enough. The real hassle here was to have been banned forever from the world's most popular payment system between private individuals.

My two most important sales channels had thus vanished. My readers could still make a bank transfer or send cash in an envelope, but in practice very few did.

I realised I couldn't rely on the arbitrary terms of the consumer PSPs (payment service providers) any longer, and started to look into the possibilities of signing a contract with credit card companies directly, through my own Swedish private firm. It turned out that two things were needed for this: one PSP, who provided the technical solution for the transaction, and one "acquirer",

meaning a bank who collected the money. Visa listed a handful of Swedish banks for this purpose on their homepage, but there were only two PSPs: Dibs and Samport.

I started by scrutinising these companies' terms of service to see what they said about permitted and banned products. Previously for me, these paragraphs were always the part that you could skip. Now I was suddenly directly affected by them. They existed precisely for products like *Destroyer*. Samport specified what they did not allow thus:

trade of goods or services that are unethical, immoral, illegal, indecent, offensive or for other reasons can be considered improper, including, but not limited to, goods or services that do not have the prescribed approval of Swedish authorities, or which are discriminating, and goods and services such as prohibited drugs, prohibited pornographic or sexual services.

The only word in this tirade that actually means anything is "illegal". I knew *Destroyer* wasn't that, but I didn't know what Samport would consider immoral. So I asked them in an email, where I also described the magazine and included a link to its homepage. They replied:

Your products are within the scope of the clause you refer to and we can therefore not offer our services to you.

And so, I had to cross off one of Sweden's two big PSPs. I sent a similar email to the other one. Dibs replied:

We don't have any moral concerns about your magazine and would be happy to have you as a customer.

The way in which the Swedish PSPs dealt with products such as *Destroyer* seemed very arbitrary. These paragraphs (Dibs of course had a similar one) probably weren't put to the test very often.

Now I just needed an acquirer, but that would prove even harder to find. Nordea wrote:

After checking and inspecting your website, I consider that your products violate Nordea's policy. I must therefore already at this stage reject your request.

SEB wrote:

Unfortunately I can't grant acquiring services as it would violate our policy. All pornographic material violates our policy.

Danske Bank asked me in a generic email to visit them, as they stressed a personal relationship with the customer. Handelsbanken called me up and explained that it would be easier if I were already a business customer with them. Skandiabanken, where I had held my accounts since 1995, didn't offer acquiring services. Teller, a Norwegian bank specialising in credit card payments, first wrote that my product shouldn't be a problem. But after applying formally, I got this email:

The risk department has now inspected your company and unfortunately decided not to approve an acquiring contract. The reason has nothing to do with your company's finances or the fact that it's a gay magazine, but what they are afraid might be considered objectionable is that it's a magazine with pictures of guys in their teens. Unfortunately, we have previously had a lot of trouble with a customer who said they wanted to sell a certain product, but then actually sold among other things child pornography. Luckily, we managed to stop that, but that is something that we are very afraid of happening again.

I had now covered half of the Swedish acquiring banks. Three of them had explicitly turned me down. If it continued like this, I wouldn't find a way to let my readers buy the magazine with their credit cards. Which in turn would mean the death of the magazine, as I needed the money from each issue to print the next one.

When I contacted Swedbank and their acquiring department Babs, I changed strategy. I set up a web shop which I called *ilovemags.com*, where I offered a number of odd but trendy magazine titles. The selection included Toronto-based art journal *C Magazine*, whose editor I had met in Prague the previous year, and *Panchamkauns*, a fanzine about Indian classical music made by a friend of mine. I also sold French gay fanzine *Kaiserin* and Finnish art magazine *Kasino A4*, which had published an interview with me. And *Destroyer*. The idea was to make *Destroyer* one of many odd magazines. In my first email to Swedbank, I explained: "I will sell indie magazines and fanzines in the fashion/music/art/gay areas."

It turned out to be the right strategy. I got the application forms in their reply email, but it would be half a year before I filled them out. I had managed to

open a new Paypal account connected to my German instead of my Swedish bank account. I didn't mention Paypal anywhere on my homepage, but sent out a payment request each time someone placed an order. Most people preferred to pay through Paypal, so this system worked excellently – until Paypal one day somehow uncovered my scheme and banned me again.

So I resumed my talks with Swedbank and paid a visit to their offices in Stockholm to open accounts in kronor and euro, and sign a contract for credit card payments. When the business advisor who was helping me came back with the papers, he said he and a representative from Babs had had a look at my site, *ilovemags.com*. I held my breath. It looks good, he said. But a couple of weeks later, I got the same message as the other banks had given me: rejection. However, this time the reason didn't have anything to do with the content in my magazine, as they probably hadn't "discovered" *Destroyer* among the other titles. Instead, it was my company's finances that they didn't trust, as I was a new customer. We solved this with a deposit of 2,500 euros. When everything was set, I signed up with Dibs too. Neither Swedbank nor Dibs provided the cheapest solutions, but I was in no position to be picky. Swedbank and Dibs had accepted me, and that made me overjoyed.

My shop was based on osCommerce, one of the most common open source web shop solutions. I simply downloaded the standard version and modified it with the help of what little knowledge of PHP programming and MySQL databases I had gathered while working on the shop. Since I'm no programmer, I was very proud of *ilovemags.com* as the shop went live in July 2008. Sure, there were some bugs, and the design wasn't as sleek as my print designs. But at least I had my own shop now, where my readers could pay with their credit cards. For this service I paid 50 euro monthly to Dibs, plus the set-up fee of 375 euros. Swedbank charged me a one-off fee of 150 euros and 2.5 percent of all payments.

My business ran smoothly until January 2010, when I got a strange email from my contact at Swedbank. He asked me to call him, but wouldn't say in the email what about. When I called him, he explained that I had been chosen for a random inspection. He asked me to send him some of my magazines for this purpose.

I was very surprised at this "random inspection". Does Swedbank inspect products from all companies who uses their payment services? Do they have a team dedicated to inspecting coffee beans, bicycles, DVDs, books and everything else sold on the internet? I sent them the latest issues of *Dik Fagazine*, *Panchamkauns* and *Destroyer*, and waited for their verdict. It didn't come. When

I called Babs customer service to ask them about the proceedings, the woman who answered listened attentively as I explained that I had sent in my products for review, as I had been chosen for one of their “random inspections”. She didn’t seem to know what to make of it. “We never do that”, she said, but promised to look into the matter.

Some time earlier, Swedbank and all other major banks in Sweden had made headlines when explaining that they now cooperated with the “children’s rights” organisation Ecpat in fighting child pornography, by means of stopping payments for it. The request from my contact at Swedbank came only a couple of weeks after I had put an Ecpat banner on *Destroyer’s* website – as a joke, since Ecpat is a Christian organisation which cares about “family values” rather than children, and therefore deserves to be made fun of, in my opinion. By placing their banner on *Destroyer’s* site, I knew Ecpat would see (as the banner was hosted on their servers) that one of their biggest “supporters” was *Destroyer*. Très fun, according to me. Maybe not according to Ecpat.

I called my contact at Swedbank and told him about my suspicions, that Ecpat had “reported” me to Swedbank. Maybe I was investigated as part of the bank’s new cooperation with Ecpat, which was said in the newspapers to target “organised crime” and “human trafficking”. “That might very well be the case”, he replied, but said he had no way of knowing, as he had only forwarded the magazines to Babs for inspection.

By May 2010, my magazines had been being inspected for over three months. I called Babs again, and spoke to the same woman, who apologised for it taking so long. I asked when I would get back my magazines and what the reason was that they were being inspected. She looked into it again and then wrote me an email:

When you get back your magazines, you will also receive a letter with the reason for the inspection. That is the information I have been able to gather at present.

The magazines arrived two days later – they must have been sent the same day that I called. However, the package didn’t include the promised letter. So I called them again, and later the same day I got a letter from a manager, who simply explained that the inspection was standard procedure.

That was the end of the matter.

Destroyer 09

Released in June 2009. 52 pages in colour and black and white. Print run: 2,000 copies. Cover photo by Nicola. Blue logotype.

Selected content:

- ★ **The Boy is dead!** Editorial on the Boy as an extinct species; the happily *sexual* boy is history, but his remnants can be seen in the photos from Naples in the 1970s that dominate this issue.
- ★ **Test.** I divide men who love boys into four types: The straight, the schoolgirl, the aesthete and the freak.
- ★ **Nicola of Napoli.** Swedish amateur photographer Nicola donated his collection of photos from Naples in the 1970s to me. I asked him for the background story, and published it along the black and white pictures over ten pages. As I write in the editorial, the pictures are of a type that doesn't exist anymore. Not only are they hot – to print them is also important from an anthropological perspective.
- ★ **Art: His paintings are too sexy.** An interview with the artist Bernard, whose paintings had been seized by the Dutch police since they might be child pornography. He says: "I was persecuted back in South Africa almost all of my young life and spent quite some jail-time for being in possession of pornography – my own work, that is. [...] I was assured that I would not be prosecuted for my art here."
- ★ **Honey, I shrunk the gay identity.** "Marriage has killed sex", the spokesmen of a Canadian LGBT organisation said before closing it down due to lack of new members. I reflect on the ever shrinking gay identity.
- ★ **Life among the street arabs.** A personal essay on Horatio Alger, Jr., based on his biography by Gary Scharnhorst and Jack Bales.
- ★ **Academia: The beauty of teenage boys according to Örebro University.** A study examined whether teenage boys' "facial attractiveness" affected the quality of their friendships. It didn't, but my interest was the method that the researchers used to define how beautiful their subjects (150 of them) were, as well as the acknowledgement of there being such a thing as objectively measurable beauty.
- ★ **Daniel Björk:** "About a boy." Daniel's point is that despite all predictions, the boy remains an ideal in fashion, as recently seen with Ash Stymest.

Interview with Daniel Björk

Daniel is a Swedish journalist and former editor of fashion magazine Rodeo. I had known him a long time and knew that he was wise and had integrity, so I was not surprised when he accepted my offer to contribute to Destroyer.

What was your reasoning when you agreed to contribute to *Destroyer*?

"I think it is necessary for creativity to be as free as possible, since I think that artistic and creative activity are damaged if cleaned up and restricted. There are of course limits, but they are not God-given and must be debated. That's why I thought it was important to contribute. As a kind of statement."

Had you seen the magazine? What did you make of it?

"I had seen it before, and I thought that it was sometimes dubious, sometimes brilliant, sometimes incomprehensible, sometimes challenging. But I have always considered the project interesting exactly because it is uncomfortable."

Were you happy with your contribution and its context?

"I think my biggest objection is the neo-colonial perspective, which is often evident in the picture series with boys in poor parts of the world. I often see that as unreflective or self-righteous. In the issue with my column there was a reprint of old photos from Naples, but in the 1970s, southern Italy was just as desperate as Kazakhstan is today."

Did you receive any reactions on your contribution?

"Just an appreciative email from Bo I. Cavefors."

Statistics

Right from the start I kept careful statistics about most things to do with *Destroyer*. I set up a simple Excel spreadsheet, which over time grew so much both horizontally and vertically that few other people would be able to navigate it. But I thought it was clearer than a database in Filemaker or something similar. Each customer got one line, and each issue of the magazine a number of columns, where I entered the date the customer ordered it, the date it was sent, how many copies bought (usually just one, but not always), how much was paid for it, and what the shipping and payment service – the one I used at the moment – cost me. At the bottom of the spreadsheet I added up all sums and entered the printing costs. That way, I could see at any given moment how much money each issue had earned, and what the total turnover was.

Destroyer's bookkeeping was done solely in this document, which I had encrypted with 256 bit encryption as I knew that the information was sensitive. The document was perhaps dubious from the point of view of data protection – I don't know the regulations about these things and never bothered to research them as over the four years I never looked upon *Destroyer* as much more than a comparatively small hobby project.

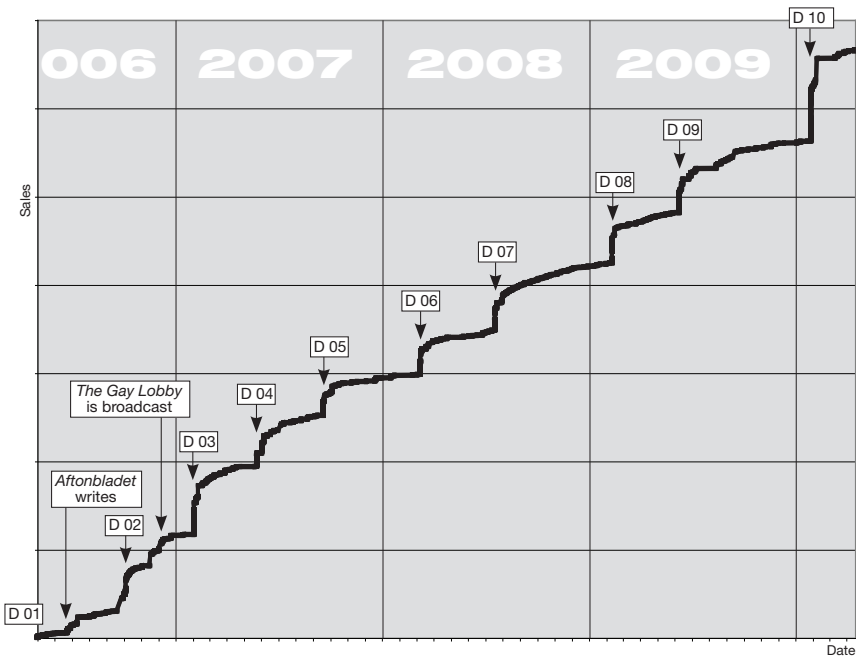
I didn't have to keep a customer database – it would have been easier and faster just to send out the magazine when I got an order and do nothing more. But I have a weakness for the administrative aspects of life, and I liked being able to see if a customer had bought the magazine before, which issues he had bought and what he had paid for them (I sometimes gave discounts to loyal readers), and how long he had to wait before I sent them. I also liked seeing the sales develop – how each issue approached the break-even point, and then passed it, and, of course, how dreadfully much I had paid in total to the Czech

and German postal services for the shipping. For various reasons, I won't reveal here what the total sales were. I sold comparatively large numbers of the early issues, partly because I had two American resellers who bought many copies.

During the financial crisis of 2008 I experienced a decline in orders, but the graph shows that this didn't affect sales. Despite each issue selling fewer copies, especially after the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy in September 2008, new readers often bought several or all of the back issues, thereby keeping my cash-flow surprisingly constant over the four years.

The graph also shows that neither the Stockholm Pride scandal, the radio debate nor my debate articles affected the sales – it was only the first news article in *Aftonbladet*, and to some degree the reportage in *The Gay Lobby*, that got me noticeably more readers.

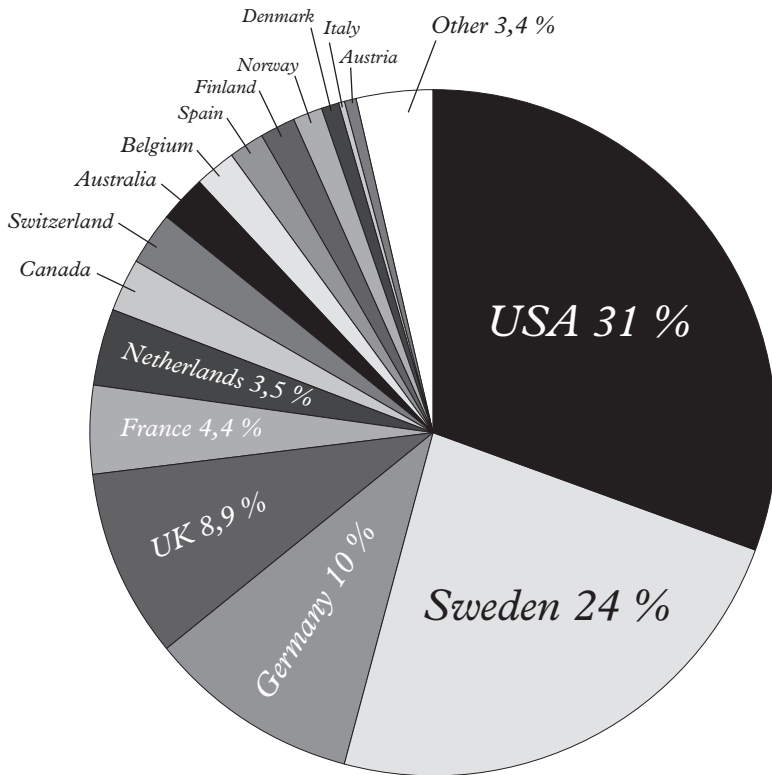
Sales first boomed in Sweden, as that was where the magazine was given attention in the media. But as time passed the rest of the world caught up. When I added up the statistics in May 2010, after four years of publishing, *Destroyer*



Sales from May 2006 to May 2010. The “staircase” effect comes from the fact that it was not possible to subscribe to the magazine, meaning my loyal readers bought each new issue as it was released.

readers lived in 37 different countries, on every continent. That's the readers of the print magazine – those who bought the PDF version of the magazine were spread even more widely.

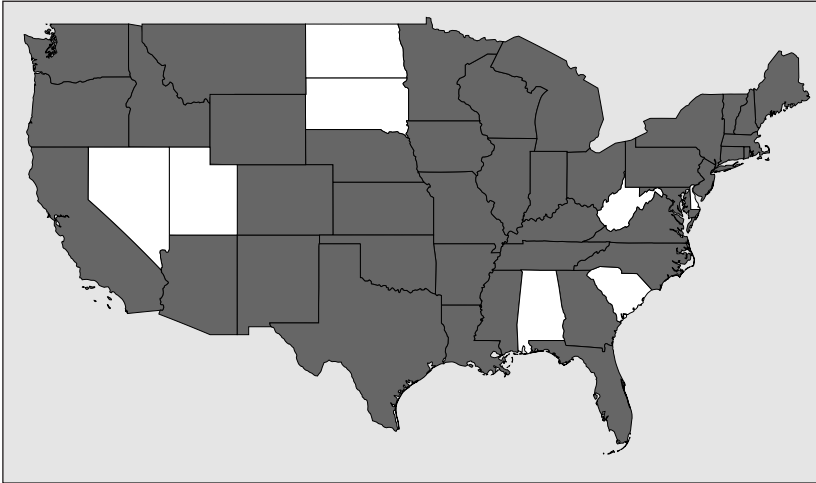
The diagram shows that most readers, almost a third, lived in the USA, which is not surprising given that it is the biggest English-speaking country. Sweden comes up second with almost one quarter of the readers – quite a lot, given Sweden's population of just nine million.



Destroyer worldwide. The graph shows where the readers of the print magazine lived. Other countries include: Brazil, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, French Guiana, Greece, Indonesia, Ireland, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Nepal, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Thailand.



Destroyer in Europe. The European *Destroyer* readers lived in all Western European nations except the so called micro states. There were some readers in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Bulgaria, but not that many. I think the reason for the clear border between East and West was both of a cultural and an economical nature; gay culture in the former Eastern Bloc is not as developed as in Western Europe, and ten euros is a larger sum in Slovakia than in France. This map refers to the readers of the print magazine only – the PDF version had readers in additional countries.



***Destroyer* in the USA.** It took a while for *Destroyer* to “colonise” the US, but after four years there were *Destroyer* readers in almost every state – only counting the print magazine. Most of the readers lived in California, Texas, New York and Florida. Two states are missing from the map: Alaska (no readers) and Hawaii (some readers).

Destroyer 10

Released in February 2010. 68 pages in colour and black and white. Print run: 1,000 copies. Cover photo by Sorin-Danut Radu. Logotype in silver print.

Selected content:

- ★ **And the winner is...** The results from a vote on the *Destroyer* blog, where 1,221 people voted for the best David statue. Michelangelo won with 55 percent.
- ★ **Donald Friend.** On the deceased Australian artist and his diaries, which were published in four volumes by the National Library of Australia and subsequently reached a film maker who accused Friend of child molestation in a documentary where she tracked down some of Friend's "victims".
- ★ **Childhood Hero I: Pierre Joubert.** An exclusive interview with the French illustrator, who is famous for having created the aesthetics of scouting and adventure. Joubert died in 2002, but my freelancer Mark Silver had by chance interviewed him on tape already in 1987, for a publication that was discontinued before he had written the article. So I had the tapes transcribed and the interview translated from French to English. I published it over ten pages along with plenty of Joubert's fantastic drawings and paintings.
- ★ **Childhood Hero II: Will McBride.** The American-German artist's travel photography from the 1960s and 1970s.
- ★ **Phrenology 2.0.** A critical report on a new German law that targets so called "fake underage" – it is now illegal for 30 year olds to act in porn if they look seventeen.
- ★ **The seduction theory.** A review of Gisela Bleibtreu-Ehrenberg's German classic *Tabu Homosexualität* from 1978 – and a short interview with the now 80-year-old author.
- ★ **Let's bust the Greek myth!** Gay men often think of ancient Greece as the golden age of homosexuality. I bust this myth with the help of Harald Patzer's book *Die griechische Knabenliebe* from 1982.
- ★ **Your history?** A summary of two books that claim to write the gay history: *Gay Life and Culture – a World History* by Robert Aldrich (ed.) and *Homosexuality and Civilization* by Louis Crompton. I also review Joseph A Massad's book *Desiring Arabs*, where he argues that the gay mission in the Middle East and other Arab countries is nothing but sexual imperialism.
- ★ **Looking for a new home.** On the German artist Otto Lohmüller.

The End

The tenth issue of *Destroyer* was published in February 2010. Even before sending the fourth issue to print, in spring of 2007, I had decided to stop publishing *Destroyer* with the tenth issue – if I could hold out that long. I’m proud I did.

There were several reasons why I wanted to end with the tenth issue.

Firstly, I don’t consider myself an activist of any kind. I simply want to share my discoveries and theories, but when I have done so, I see no reason to repeat myself. My conclusions, for example about the gay movement, are there for everyone to share. My aim was never to convince anyone, but rather to share the ideas I had gathered through the books I had read on the subject. Or, as I put it in the last editorial, “to ignite a spark in other independent minds”.

Secondly, I always looked upon *Destroyer* as a project with a beginning and an end. Bear in mind that I chose to share my views in the form of a magazine because it is, unlike a website, a limited format; the content is held between the covers. In the same way, the whole project was contained between the first and the last issue. With the tenth issue I *closed* the *Destroyer* project, thus making it as tangible as each issue of the magazine had been. The completeness of it is beautiful, so the completion of the project with the tenth issue was consistent with the magazine’s aim of succumbing to beauty.

And moreover, I think that when you’ve done something for four years, it’s time to stop. The energy never dies, so I was curious to see what other means of expression it would take when I couldn’t divert it into making another issue of *Destroyer*.

By the end of *Destroyer*, the magazine had become my main means of financial support. Each new issue provided money not only to print the next one, but also to support me. Financially, it would have been a good idea to continue the magazine. But that was never an option I considered – it was time to move on.

Conclusion

In this book I have described the indignation that *Destroyer* aroused. A vast range of people and institutions denounced the magazine or were outraged by it: RFSL, Stockholm Pride, the LGBT shows on Swedish public service radio and TV, neo-Nazi groups, the Ombudsman for Children, the tabloid press, left-wing writers, right-wing writers, sex radicals, artists, curators, commercial businesses, close friends and, ultimately, even those potential readers who called themselves boy-lovers.

Everyone was against *Destroyer*.

When interpreting the calls for censorship and other legal measures, one must remember that *Destroyer* was fully legal and had been checked by both the Czech and the German police. This is central when interpreting many of the reactions.

I described and analysed the gay world's reaction to *Destroyer* in the main article of the first issue. Those who accused me of tainting the image of the good gay man and "giving gay people a bad name" thus acted in a predictable (and, in my view, shameful) way, which I had described in the very magazine that they reacted to.

But even though I had anticipated these reactions, I was still surprised at how unanimous the condemnation was, and at the power with which it was expressed. For example, a gay man that I gave a flyer for *Destroyer* at the gay pride march in Stockholm in 2006, when the magazine was quite well-known after being in the media, felt compelled to show his disgust with the magazine by tearing the flyer up and trampling on it. Another example is the blogger Linus Fremin, who commented on the discontinuation of *Destroyer* on 24th May, 2010. I think this excerpt illustrates the unwillingness to understand and the

will to distort and condemn that was characteristic of the criticism of *Destroyer*. I have highlighted some interesting words:

The magazine contained pictures of **nude** boys in their **early teens** and **secretly-taken** pictures of **half-naked**, apparently oblivious, boys on the beach or on the street.

Texts on **masturbation** were mixed with **pornographic** short stories about **older men** having sex with thirteen year olds. Karl Anderson (sic) said on the SVT programme *Böglobbyn* that thirteen-year-old boys are “aware of their sexual allure and proud of it.”

I remember feeling sick from that quote, since that’s just how **paedophiles** think.

On a theoretical level I can understand what’s behind those words: the desire to pose as a good person by flaunting feelings of sickness, the strategic use of the “P” word, and so on. But on a personal level I find it harder to understand. I don’t understand the will not to know, not to understand. It would have been a different matter if the gays had actually read *Destroyer*, thought about it and then argued. But instead they just shut their eyes and ears and ran away screaming.

Why?

Is it really only out of fear of having the image of the gay man tainted, something which could jeopardise the acceptance which they have achieved, but which they seem aware is very fragile? I don’t think so. The panicked reactions suggest they were afraid of something else too, namely that the magazine actually had something important to say. That’s why they overcompensated to the degree of always giving distorted descriptions of the content of the magazine, always mentioning the “P” word in relation to it, and always using swear words. The magazine hinted at something about their own identity that they didn’t want to hear, but maybe knew existed. The fierce reactions proved that I was doing something right.

To me, *Destroyer* was a passionate and unconditional celebration of beauty, and a questioning of the modern gay movement. To those who were confronted with *Destroyer*, the magazine was more of a test. It stirred up strong feelings and forced the reader to reconsider his or her identity; all of a sudden, it became harder to call oneself queer, radical, open-minded and all the other nice words that are easy to use so long as they’re not put to the test. *Destroyer* put things to the test and stretched the concepts to the extremes.

One of those who had railed against *Destroyer* said this once he had cooled down: "I think Karl wants too much with *Destroyer*."

He was right, of course. *Destroyer* wanted too much – from a *strategic* point of view. No one listened to the political message in the articles, as it was overshadowed by the scandalous pictures of young boys, which forced them – especially if they were gay men – to condemn the magazine as a whole. In the same way, no one dared to appreciate the beauty of the boys, as it was placed in a sexual-political context. On their own, each of these parts would have fared much better than they did when brought together. When the two parts were placed next to each other, they destroyed each other, like two safe substances which become explosive when mixed. That was exactly what had happened with *Destroyer* – the magazine was a bomb.

But saying that *Destroyer* "wanted too much" is not the same as saying it was wrong or that I, in retrospect, would have done it in any other way. Because it was exactly that explosive mix that *was Destroyer*, and that made the magazine unique. Just as you could say that it was the mix of Apollonian beauty and Dionysian sexual politics that meant no one would listen to me, you could also say that it was that mix that made it hard to listen to me. And who said it ought to be easy?

BONUS CHAPTER!

Reactions to the book release in Sweden

The story of *Destroyer* wouldn't be complete without an account of the reactions to the Swedish version of this book about it. They were pretty remarkable. Sweden has four main newspapers, the "big four". Three of them gave extensive coverage to *Gay Man's Worst Friend*. Quite a response to a self-published book, especially considering I had only sent out four review copies in total. Oscar Swartz commented on his blog:

The fact that a book with a print run of 500 copies gets a full page on three out of the capital's four big culture pages probably says something, but what?

First out was *Aftonbladet*, the newspaper that first wrote about *Destroyer* in 2006. This time, however, the article was not found in the news section. The book review, entitled "A sad boy dream", dominated pages four and five – the paper's small but important culture section. Several spreads from *Destroyer* were reproduced, along with a picture of the book and this quote as a highlighted excerpt from the article:

Karl Andersson likens the Boy to a new Porsche, sexy but not yet run in, and therefore a risk-taker and a daredevil.

The reviewer Ulrika Stahre did have some criticism, mainly based on the so-called "gender-power order". But on the whole, it was a rave review. Stahre writes:

Reading Karl Andersson's story, I understand his ideas about beauty and the LGBT movement's anxiety to gain acceptance at any cost.

The sadness in the headline refers to this quote:

Or it might just be the ephemerality that grabs me – the whole idea of *Destroyer* exudes despair, the realisation that the Boy is nothing but Time. Soon, both beauty and freedom will have vanished.

After this philosophical passage, she gets back to the book:

It's an exciting contemporary history that is told – about hard work, about vulnerability, about being in-your-face.

In many respects, I can admire this unyielding man. Not least because, in the middle of the decade of paedo-hysteria, he managed to publish this journal.

Since *Aftonbladet* had run the article on my official "review day", 27th October, 2010, it was published the same day as I held a small release party for the book at the art gallery Pony Sugar in Stockholm. Between fifty and a hundred people turned up. Contributors like Oscar Swartz, Unni Drougge, Daniel Björk and Aaron Eklöf mingled with readers, fans, friends and two Swedish members of parliament: Camilla Lindberg (Liberal) and Maria Abrahamsson (Conservative). The latter blogged afterwards:

Karl Andersson's book *Gay Man's Worst Friend* is on my kitchen table. That's where I keep the stack of essential reading.

In the middle of the evening, gallery-owner Snövit Hedstierna interviewed me about the magazine and the book, and the audience was given the chance to ask questions, which many did. Afterwards, I read a part of the chapter where I'm interrogated by the Czech police. During this event the gallery was so full that people crowded on the street outside. And let me tell you, to read aloud from your own book to an audience that, despite the free alcohol, is as quiet and captivated as a class of schoolchildren in the reading hour is a magical feeling. After the years of unanimous condemnation, this was a cathartic experience.

But it didn't stop there. The next day, newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* published a full-page news feature about the book in their culture section. The article was titled "Gay man's worst friend is back" and opened with an account

of the reactions that *Destroyer* had drawn. There followed some quotes from me (I had spoken to the journalist a few days earlier), as well as from Sören Juvas, the former chairman of RFSL (the Swedish Federation for LGBT Rights), who was one of my biggest critics when the magazine first appeared. He didn't hold his fire this time either:

"The whole idea of the magazine appeals to adults who have sex with young boys – I can't interpret it in any other way. In a way, it legitimises some of the sexual abuse that takes place", Sören Juvas says.

Johan Hilton, who made the TV report about me shown on SVT, and who was now the deputy culture editor of the newspaper *Expressen*, was more humble when contacted by the journalist from *Svenska Dagbladet*. The article reads:

He replies to *Svenska Dagbladet's* questions via email, and says that the reportage in SVT wasn't his "greatest journalistic moment".

The article was illustrated by a photo of me, and of five *Destroyer* covers. A sixth cover was shown in a splash on the cover of the culture section, and there was also a text banner on the first page.

On 3rd November, *Expressen* published a piece on the *Destroyer* book – another full page. Culture editor Karin Olsson's article was called "Boy Worship" and was illustrated by a reproduction of Ruben's *The Abduction of Ganymede*, as well as a couple of spreads from the final issue of *Destroyer* (which I sent her together with the two review copies of the book that she asked for).

Olsson defends the right to unrestricted fantasy, and refers to a couple of current cases in Sweden, but criticises the magazine on the grounds that it "depicts real boys". Will McBride's photos from his travels in the 1960s are dismissed as "poor underage boys in loincloths". She concludes:

It may be art, but that doesn't render [Karl Andersson] immune from the journalistic discussion.

She then criticises her fellow journalist at the competing newspaper *Aftonbladet*:

However, [Karl Andersson] is a skilled charmer, and *Aftonbladet's* reviewer Ulrika Stahre is one of those who are taken in. Put a maga-

zine with half-naked pictures of small girls, with a remarkable number from developing countries, in front of Stahre and I doubt she would express her admiration and understanding for the publisher's "ideas about beauty".

This was the most negative one of the articles dealing with my book. But despite the content of the article, it was in some ways a good thing to have the culture editor dedicate a whole page to *Destroyer*. The introduction to her article is telling:

Karl Andersson has brought out a book about his time as publisher of controversial gay magazine *Destroyer*. Karin Olsson reflects on the drawing of the boundaries in the debate about artistic freedom.

Destroyer had started out being vilified in shock-horror articles in the Swedish media, and although this had never been my aim, four years later it had ended up in the newspapers' culture sections and become part of "the debate about artistic freedom".



Entartetes Leben

ISBN 978-91-633-6899-8

The first issue of *Destroyer* magazine dropped like a bomb in May 2006. For the first time since the 1970s, a gay magazine dared to openly celebrate the beauty of the teenage boy, in words and pictures.

Reactions were fierce. The Swedish LGBT establishment cried out against the magazine, claiming it “gave gay people a bad name”. Neo-Nazis were just as upset, and the Ombudsman for Children demanded a change in the law to make the magazine illegal. A police investigation was instigated and *Destroyer*’s editor Karl Andersson was summoned to an interrogation.

Gay Man’s Worst Friend is not only the thrilling story of Europe’s most controversial gay magazine, told from Stockholm, Prague and Berlin. It’s also the story of the gay movement in the 21st century. The outraged reactions to *Destroyer* expose hidden power structures and show how gay identity has been steadily shrunk over recent decades, excluding ever more expressions of homosexuality.

“It’s an exciting contemporary history that is told – about hard work, about vulnerability, about being in-your-face.”

—*Aftonbladet*

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