

Male bonding and the persecution of homosexual men in Nazi Germany¹

Homosexuals were among the persecuted in Nazi Germany. A large number found their way into the concentration camps where they could be recognized by the pink triangle. Their fate was particularly hard because they were not able to count on solidarity from the other prisoners and they usually occupied the lowest position in the camp hierarchy. Some German researchers estimate that between 5,000 and 15,000 primarily male homosexuals were imprisoned in the camps.² There are but a few known cases of women who wore the pink triangle.³ Although further research has yet to be conducted into the fate of lesbians under National Socialism, it is clear that the Nazis considered male homosexuality much more dangerous than female homosexuality. In contrast to male homosexuality, for example, same-sex behavior of women was never criminalized. This difference is undoubtedly related to the Nazi's traditional view of sexuality and role division between man and woman: women were supposed only to perform the passive role.

The Nazis justified their homophobic regulations on the basis of arguments on population policies. They proved so apprehensive of the appearance and spread of homosexuality because it would result in larger numbers of German men no longer procreating children. In the Third Reich sexuality served above all propagation, population expansion, and the purity of the so-called 'Aryan' race.⁴ Indeed, various researchers explain the Nazis' persecution of homosexuals in terms of National Socialist population policies and racism. However plausible this explanation may sound, it is, in my opinion, not entirely convincing nor complete. In this article I will first indicate why it is not satisfactory and then attempt to give an alternative and more sociological explanation of the Nazi-persecution of homosexuals.

In contrast to the 'Holocaust' of the Jews and some other groups, like the gypsies, the persecution of homosexuals was neither wholesale nor systematic. Whereas about 50,000 homosexual men were convicted for 'unnatural vice' by law-courts during the Third Reich and about the same number was registered by the *Reichszentrale zur Bekämpfung der Homosexualität und Abtreibung*, only between 10 and 30% of them were sent to concentration camps. Not all of the homosexual inmates of these camps died.

The measures taken by the Nazi's against homosexuality were highly differentiated. Identified homosexuals who proved themselves not to engage in sexual contacts, in general were not persecuted. For those who were found guilty of homosexual acts, the severity of the punishment depended on the seriousness of the offence; the role one had played (active or passive, the 'seducer' or the one seduced), the number and the age of the sexual partners and some other factors were taken into account. In addition to punishment Nazi authorities also promoted medical, psychiatric and educational therapies to fight homosexuality. So the Nazi regime was not aiming at total extermination of all homosexuals. While some Nazi spokesmen expressed the wish to restore certain old Germanic customs, according to which homosexuals would have been thrown in swamps to be drowned,⁵ in Nazi Germany the death-penalty for homosexual offenses was rather the exception than the rule.⁶

The way the Nazi leaders regarded homosexuality was not unanimous. While it is true that they passed negative judgments, they did not all consider it uniformly dangerous.⁷ Talk among some of the top brass was for a thoroughly pragmatic position. For example, Hitler employed the charge of homosexuality primarily as a means to eliminate political opponents, both inside his party and out. One notorious example is the so-called 'night of the long knives' in 1934, when a large number of the leaders of the SA (*Sturmabteilung*), the powerful paramilitary organization of the NSDAP, was liquidated for political reasons. Some of them, among them the chief of staff Ernst Röhm, were known homosexuals.⁸ The propaganda exaggerated Röhm's homosexual predilection, but in point of fact it was really about settling a political power struggle. Earlier Hitler had always protected Röhm, even though it was a public secret that Röhm was homosexual.

The pragmatic position of certain of the Nazis in power seems evident from the facts that Röhm was not the only homosexual in the

Nazi movement and that before his liquidation homosexuality seems to have been tolerated tacitly in the SA and the *Hitler-Jugend*. Although the Nazis already in 1928, under the slogan *Gemeinnutz über Eigennutz!*, published their rejection of homosexuality as detrimental to the German people, before 1934 the Nazi movement may have had an attraction for some homosexual men, because of its supposedly anti-bourgeois doctrines, the male comradeship in an organization like the SA, and the glorification of masculinity and physical beauty. According to some leaders of the German homosexual emancipation movement, several homosexuals supported Nazism for these reasons.⁹ In 1932, in the newsletter of Hirschfeld's *Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee* a homosexual member of the SA asserted that he had many comrades in the SA whom one 'knew about' and that homosexuals were fully accepted in the Nazi movement as long as they did their duty.¹⁰ It is remarkable that some well-known homosexuals were able to live undisturbed in Germany during the Third Reich. Some homosexual artists, among them the famous actor Gustaf Gründgens, even enjoyed the protection of Nazi functionaries.¹¹ Also in some cities an underground gay subculture subsisted.¹²

Along with the pragmatists however, there were in the Nazi brass some figures, among them the SS (*Schutzstaffel*) head Heinrich Himmler, who considered homosexuality a grave danger and therefore advocated strict regulations. At their instigation Paragraph 175 of the German Penal Code, which punished with a prison term so-called 'vice against nature', was tightened in 1935: unnatural vice now referred not only to anal intercourse, as it had before, but to all forms of physical contact which were 'lustful in intent' and even to expressions of feeling.¹³ The Nazis employed a very broad definition of homosexuality which could cover expressions of friendly affection. The argument for amending the law was, as the Nazi lawyer Rudolf Klare explained in his dissertation *Homosexualität und Strafrecht* (1935), that all German men were exposed to seduction and homosexuality threatened to spread like an epidemic.

Although homosexuality was sometimes labelled as part of the 'evil propensities of the Jewish soul' and the 'typically inferior aberrations of Syrians'¹⁴ and some Nazis assumed that 'racial impurity' was its cause,¹⁵ apparently, most of the leading Nazis did not regard homosexuality in general as a biological feature of a degenerate minority, as might have been expected because of their racism. Instead, they

saw it mainly as a contagious social disease. Racism cannot form an explanation for the regulations against homosexuality, for most of the men who displayed homosexual behavior were in the Nazis' eyes 'Aryans'. Thus Hitler asserted in private conversations that homosexuality had destroyed ancient Greece by its 'infectious activity', which spread 'with the certainty of a natural law among the best and most masculine natures; ... it cut off from propagation precisely those whose offspring a people depended upon'.¹⁶

In the SS newspaper *Das Schwarze Korps*, Himmler's mouthpiece, criticism was brought against the assertion of the German homosexual emancipation movement under the leadership of Magnus Hirschfeld, that homosexuality was an inborn and immutable trait. Barely two percent of the men found guilty of homosexual acts were considered 'incurable'. These 'enemies of the state' of course had to be expelled from society. Some Nazi officials and physicians advocated castration of these offenders, although practice had demonstrated that this operation did not eliminate homosexual desire as such, but only weakened the libido. In Nazi Germany an unknown number of convicted, so-called incurable homosexuals have been castrated; by subjecting themselves to this operation it was possible to receive a partial amnesty.¹⁷ The remaining vast majority of homosexual offenders however, had been seduced, according to *Das Schwarze Korps*. Many 'normal' men were thought especially susceptible to seduction as a consequence of a developmental imbalance in their youth. By means of 're-education' they could be brought back on the right track again.¹⁸

In Nazi Germany physicians, psychiatrists and psychoanalysts sought out the causes of homosexual behavior, as they had done before. They usually distinguished between 'actual', or inborn, and acquired forms of homosexuality. To whatever extent homosexuality was not biologically rooted, there could be discussion of the extent to which the acquired leanings could be cured. In this manner the prominent psychiatrist Johannes Heinrich Schultz, employed at the *Deutsche Institut für psychologische Forschung und Psychotherapie* under the support of Hermann Göring,¹⁹ advanced the claim in his popular guidebook on sexual education *Geschlecht, Liebe, Ehe* (1942) that homosexuality was caused by traumatic childhood experiences or by seduction during adolescence and could consequently be cured by psychotherapy. It is striking that Schultz and other psychiatrists took an explicit stand in opposition to scientists who

claimed that homosexuality was hormonally or genetically determined. 'Many researchers', Schultz wrote, 'preach the still controversial opinion that homosexuals belong in the biological category of degenerates. Even if one were to agree with the adherents to the theory of a hereditary determined homosexuality in a certain number of cases, the fact remains that this explanation does not apply to at least four-fifths of the number of people who behave in a homosexual manner'.²⁰

Schultz's opinion was shared not only by a large number of his colleagues, but by influential Nazis as well. The latter attached great importance to the distinction between inborn and acquired homosexuality, as is evident for example from the directives which applied to the treatment of criminal cases of 'unnatural lewdness' in the German army. Military doctors were expected to review similar acts differently, 'according to the personality of the offender'. The severity of punishment and eventual reinstatement in the army would depend on a number of things, including the judgment of an expert insofar as it concerned 'a homosexual or pseudo-homosexual, especially someone who had been seduced'. Had the defendants rendered themselves guilty of 'lewdness' due to their 'disposition or obvious incorrigible impulses'? Or were they in fact fit soldiers who 'were in essence sexually healthy', but were temporarily derailed as the result of seduction or of 'sexual overexcitement'?²¹

Although such questions could not always be answered with certainty and a 'cure' was often dubious, the distinction between various types of homosexuality proved valuable for the Nazi leaders. The belief in the racial delusion that perversions and psychic disorders were not a part of the pure essence of the German national character was believed to be left undisturbed. Constant vigilance was nevertheless called for, as some Nazis emphasized, due to the danger of contamination by homosexuality. Himmler, for instance, asserted that the 'homosexual problem' did not bear 'merely' upon a degenerate minority. In principle, all men could succumb to homosexual behavior. Racial laws, penalties of imprisonment, concentration camps or the death penalty would not be able to prevent the homosexual epidemic, even within the Nazi movement itself, from repeatedly growing into a menace of alarming proportions.

According to the Nazis homosexuals were dangerous not only because they seduced heterosexual men, but also because they

created cliques and thereby undermined the hierarchical relationships and the unity of their own movement. Some of Hitler's and Himmler's statements in this context were characterized by a peculiar mix of aversion, fear, and envy of homosexuals. In Nazi propaganda homosexuals were generally portrayed as soft, cowardly, cringing, and untrustworthy creatures, but in Hitler's and Himmler's view they nonetheless appeared to possess an imperious character and to have at their disposal special intuitions and aptitudes which were withheld from 'normal' men. They were capable of strongly organizing in secret and thereupon making a grab for power.²²

The danger of the 'homosexual conspiracy' was given a great deal of attention in Nazi propaganda after the Röhm-affair in 1934, when the legal persecution of homosexuals intensified. Immediately following the murder of Röhm and his adherents, the Nazi high functionary Hermann Göring stated to the press that certain SA leaders 'had completely lost sight of the aim of the movement and had placed their own interest, their own ambition and, among a certain portion of them, even their unfortunate disposition in the foreground'. They had allegedly plotted a conspiracy to 'bring down the state and to create another state, which would have become a state of these sick individuals'.²³ Röhm's and others' homosexuality was also the focus of other press statements of the NSDAP. In this way the political quarrels between SA leaders and other party bosses were obscured. Furthermore, Hitler could present himself as a resolute opponent of immoral behavior, which increased his reputation among the German people. In a memo to Röhm's successor, Hitler stated that the purged movement must remain pure henceforth so that every mother could turn her son over to the SA and the Hitler Youth, free of any fear of moral corruption.

A few years earlier anti-fascists had attempted to fan this fear among the German people with the intention of bringing the Nazi movement into discredit. In the years 1931-32 Röhm and other SA leaders were attacked for their homosexuality in the left-wing media. Social Democrats and Communists suggested that nepotism and abuse of power in the SA and the Hitler Youth had contributed to making homosexuality an essential characteristic of the Nazi system.²⁴ At that time the accusations were no reason for Hitler to renounce his trust in Röhm. He went so far as to explain that he preferred in principle not to interfere with the private life of SA members. The SA was, in Hitler's words, 'a gathering of men with a

political aim, an association of raucous warriors' and no 'moral institution for the education of daughters from the better classes'. Privately he added that the National Socialist phenomenon had nothing to do with middle-class virtues. 'We are the vanguard of the nation's power. I would go so far as to say, the power of its loins... I have no use for sneaks or members of the League of Virtue'.²⁵ Two weeks after the liquidation of Röhm and company Hitler declared in the Reichstag, on the contrary, that leaders in the Nazi party, the SA, the SS, and the Hitler Youth, would need to be punished more severely than normal citizens if they were guilty of homosexuality.²⁶ In precisely these organizations, so it turned out, the 'poison' was able to spread rapidly.

Hitler's statements were undoubtedly prompted by opportunism and can be explained by the transformation of the Nazi party from a youthful, anti-bourgeois protest movement into an instrument of power to control the state and society. According to historian George Mosse this 'inherent contradiction between the need for action and the control of discipline bedeviled all of fascism and determined its attitude toward sexuality'.²⁷ The result was that other Nazi leaders, in consequence of both the Röhm affair and accusations from the left, became virtually obsessed with the danger of homosexuality. In the 'Special Measures for Combating Same-Sex Acts' for the *Hitler-Jugend*, the National Socialist youth movement, one could read, for example, that 'homosexual lapses' were particularly dangerous, 'due to their epidemic effect'. 'On occasion one individual seduces ten or more youths or infects an entire group. Many who have been seduced later become seducers so that often... an endless chain of infection occurs'.²⁸ It is remarkable that the Nazis should have regarded all German males as susceptible to homosexual seduction to such a powerful degree. In fact, the consideration forced itself on them again and again that their own movement, which was based on male bonding, might evoke homosexuality.

The Nazis made a reality of the German nationalist ideal of the *Männerbund*, according to which an elite of men, firmly united among themselves, formed the core of the state. Inspired by the anti-Napoleonic Wars of Liberation, fought by volunteers, from the early nineteenth century nationalist intellectuals had celebrated male friendships as the most tangible expression of patriotism and as being superior to the family. In contrast to heterosexual relationships,

these friendships embodying male solidarity guaranteed the control of 'egoistic' passions by means of dedication to collective aspirations. The typically German ideal of the *Männerbund* was infused with new life at the beginning of the twentieth century, ideologically by the ethnologist Heinrich Schurtz²⁹ and in social reality by the German youth movement, the *Wandervogel*³⁰ and especially by trench-war comradeship during the First World War.

It is no coincidence that theories about male bonding became popular among certain groups in Prussian-dominated Germany. Despite the revolutionary rhetoric in which the glorification of male bonding usually was worded - Nietzsche's delineation of the Dionysian, the irrational and ecstatic element in Greek culture, was a thankworthy source of inspiration - in many ways this ideal reflected the prevailing social values in Wilhelminian Germany. These values were for a large part militaristic, and therefore masculine by implication, and they were closely connected to a hierarchical, authoritarian political structure, as well as to a rejection and repression of the feminine. Members of the German ruling elite as well as intellectuals associated the feminine not only with women as such, but to political and social phenomena like democracy, socialism, revolution, and anarchy, and with other nations, like England and especially 'decadent' France.³¹

In the 1920s the ideal of male comradeship played an important and effective role in the military nationalism which opposed the democratic system of the Weimar Republic. Idealizing trench-war comradeship in the First World War several right-wing spokesmen, in memoirs and war novels, invested male friendship with nationalist virtues, as it was associated with communal sense, charismatic leadership, militarism, and self-sacrifice.³² Especially members of the so-called *Freikorpsen*, the nationalistic military troops that fought against left-wing revolutionaries in the civil war after Germany's defeat, and the influential organizations of War veterans propagated a policy which satisfied the (idealized) memory of life in the trenches. The connection of the war experience with the longing for a *Männerbund* was expressed, for example, by the famous writer Ernst Jünger, who invoked the memory of what he described as the 'spirit of the male community ... the great, common battlefront, whose form will also become the form of the new state'.³³

As an anti-bourgeois movement of protest, National Socialism exploited these sentiments. So Alfred Bäumlér, an important collabo-

rator of the Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, wrote in 1930 that each culture must establish the relationship between man and woman for itself and in its own way. Germany was ready for the masculine age that had been predicted by Nietzsche.³⁴ Propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels named National Socialism a masculine movement by nature and Rosenberg characterized the Third Reich as the result of a purposeful *Männerbund*. During the Nazi era several books were published in which the trenches of the First World War were glorified as a school for devotion to duty and sacrifice.³⁵

The *Männerbund*, the community of men united in emotional attachment, fulfilled an important function in Nazism. It was the model for the National Socialist ideal of militaristic manliness, of male solidarity and superiority over women and other outsiders, and of a strict hierarchy for men among themselves. The way one Nazi functionary for education expressed the central role of male bonding in National Socialism was very significant: 'The *Männerbund* of the army and of the SA, the SS, and the Labor Service are all prolongations of the HJ (*Hitler-Jugend*) into the years of manhood. Their central educational task is one and the same. In their ordering and through them is the political German man to be formed, and indeed above all along the path of practice and habit, with the help of methodological efforts which promote the frequently repeated active use of strenghts of body and character, and with emphasis on training of body and will. Intellectual schooling and culture in particular take second place'.³⁶

The Nazi movement was a militant men's community that excluded women from the most important organizations and, to whatever extent possible, from public life. Shortly after his 1933 seizure of power, Hitler issued a decree which stated that all women who held positions in state office were to be dismissed. The family was both supported and disrupted in the Third Reich by the strict differentiation between male and female spheres. The family was the cornerstone of society to the extent that it served population policy. The National Socialist ideology of the family expressed itself primarily in the glorification of woman as mother. While the Nazis extolled the family as a nursery for a great many children, they undermined it as a private sphere and fostered infringements on the ties of affection between man and woman and between parents and children. From males a great deal of time and loyalty was demanded for the benefit of the movement and the army. Although the authority of the father and the role of the mother were propagandized, the upbringing of the youth, especially

boys, was largely withdrawn from the parents. In the virtually sexually separated youth movement the boys primarily owed their leaders obedience and trust. The same was expected from men in the army and other military organizations like the SS and the SA. Close emotional ties with the family were not conducive to the role which the male in close alliance with other men was obliged to fulfill in Nazi Germany. Firm ties between men were considered desirable and various Nazi spokesmen drew attention to the political importance of male friendship and comradeship.

Bäumler, the professor of 'political pedagogy' who promoted Nietzsche to the role of philosopher of Nazidom, stated, for instance, that the German male was born for friendship: 'There is no friendship without a fatherland, but no fatherland either without friendship', he cried in a speech.³⁷ As a 'lifestyle' friendship could exist only in the *Männerbund*; outside the *Bund* it was merely a 'liberal matter'. Bäumler defined the *Männerbund* as an organic system of living in which 'man stood beside man,... men came together, the younger with the younger, or the younger with the older'. In the Weimar Republic, characterized by Bäumler as effeminate and decadent, men were being taken up too much by women. 'Everywhere ... the relationship between man and man, ... friendship withers!' he lamented. The formation of German youths should take place under the guidance of an older friend in the *Männerbund*, for only among males they could realize a 'heroic attitude toward life'. 'Since the German man has a highly warlike disposition, because he is a man, because he is born for friendship, for that reason democracy, which leads to women governing over men, can never flourish in Germany'.³⁸

Other supporters of the Third Reich too, regarded male friendship as the germ of the German nation, referring to the experience at the front during the First World War and to traditions which went back to the eighteenth century or even to the Germans of former ages and the ancient Greeks.³⁹ Thus the Nazi lawyer R.Klare stated that the severe penalties he proposed for homosexuality should not become a hindrance to spiritual love for members of one's own sex on the basis of ancient Greek love of youths.⁴⁰ And in the pseudo-scientific *völkische Germanenkunde* which the Nazis promoted, the *Männerbund* was a central thema. The myth of primordial Germanic male bonding served the purpose of establishing a continuity in German history, of which the Nazis were supposedly the heirs.⁴¹

Like Bäumler, Rosenberg assumed that male bonding and not the

family was the organizing principle of the state. In his *Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* Rosenberg argued that historically the state had arisen out of a comrade-in-arms, the military *Männerbund*; only afterwards was the institution of the family supposedly established.⁴² Rosenberg and Bäumler viewed male friendship from a political point of view as superior to marriage and family, but they did not touch the Nazi doctrine of family. Bäumler invoked Schurtz's *Altersklassen und Männerbünde*. Just as man and woman completed each other in the family, so too family and *Männerbund* completed each other at the level of society. Self-sacrifice was expected of the woman for the benefit of the family, so that the man could dedicate himself to 'higher' tasks exclusively among men.

Although the National Socialist women's organizations subscribed to a similarly rigorous division of roles, a (female) representative nonetheless pointed out the questionable tendencies in the practice and ideology of Nazi male bonding. In her book *Männerbund und Frauenfrage* (1934) the leader of the *Bund deutscher Mädel* and of the women's section of the NSDAP, Lydia Gottschewsky, claimed that the *Männerbund* and the family were growing too far apart from each other, to the effect that marriage was becoming something inferior. In consequence of the idealization of male bonding, sensual love for woman and spiritual love for the male youth were being conceived of as opposites and the latter as superior.⁴³ Gottschewsky did not say it explicitly but it was clear that she perceived homoerotic tendencies in the misogynistic ideology of the *Männerbund*. Soon after publishing her warning Gottschewsky was removed from office.

Of all people it was the militaristic Himmler, the Reich's chief of the super-manly SS, who stated forthrightly that the National Socialist men's state threatened to destroy itself because organizations like the SS and the Hitler Youth could become hothouses for homosexuality. In a (non-public) speech before high-ranking SS officers in 1937 he pointed to the 'too powerful masculinization and militarization' of the Nazi movement, in which the male youth had too little opportunity to associate with the other sex in a relaxed atmosphere. Therefore it was not surprising, according to Himmler, 'that we have trod the path to homosexuality',⁴⁴ since under these circumstances masturbation circles and sexually tinged friendships could quickly spring up among youths. Himmler criticized fellow party members who held women in contempt and who ridiculed other men because

they conducted themselves in a polite manner toward women. They had allegedly adopted this misogynistic attitude from Christianity. The Catholic Church had always been an 'erotic *Männerbund*'; many priests and almost all monks were homosexual, according to Himmler.⁴⁵ If youths in the Hitler Youth and SS members had been made into 'knightly gentlemen' and obtained sufficient opportunity to be in the company of women in a 'natural' manner, they would presumably no longer fall victim to homosexual behavior, thus Himmler concluded.

For utter clarity he felt it necessary to add that he desired no 'Anglo-Saxon' situation. Women in England and America were overly privileged, he claimed, they had misused men's courtesy and had made them into slaves. In this manner Himmler made clear that he desired no equality between men and women in the social domain. The principle of the men's state was therefore not touched in his speech. In spite of the grave dangers he was calling attention to, Himmler, who had been raised as a Catholic and in his youth had been a member of the *Wandervogel*, was a firm protagonist of male bonding. His elitist SS was the *Männerbund* par excellence and therefore he emphasized: 'The men's state is the best arrangement'. Moreover, Himmler showed much interest in research into the supposedly Germanic and Aryan origins of the *Männerbund*, which was to furnish him with a historical justification of his extreme racism.⁴⁶

The *Männerbund* was problematic for the Nazis, however, because since the end of the nineteenth century it had acquired in certain circles, both inside the homosexual movement and out, a distinctly homoerotic tenor.⁴⁷ 'The homoeroticism always latent in nationalist symbols and the ideal of masculinity now faced the danger of coming into conflict with respectability'.⁴⁸ This ambivalence manifested itself even more clearly in the visual arts promoted by Nazism. While Nazi minister of the Interior Frick warned against the dangers of nudism - this practice, according to him, could be the first step towards a violation of Paragraph 175 - sculptors like Arno Breker and Josef Thorak, and photographers like Hans Surèn, Leni Riefenstahl, and others glorified the beauty of muscular male bodies.⁴⁹

Some of the Nazi functionaries were painfully aware of the association of the *Männerbund* and homosexuality: repeated reference was made to Hans Blüher's work to warn that homosexuality could undermine the National Socialist movement from inside out. From the directives for the Hitler Youth and the army it is apparent that the

Nazis paid great attention to the factors which were supposedly significant in the origin and spread of homosexuality in men's groups. Youth leaders and army doctors received extensive instructions in possible preventive regulations.⁵⁰ Illustrative of the preoccupation with homosexuality of some Nazis is a dissertation by a Nazi official charged with youth matters, K.W.Gauhl.⁵¹ Making extensive references to Blüher's work on homoerotic male bonding, Gauhl analyzed the way in which homosexual groups were formed among boys. Close friendships among youths should be regarded with great distrust, according to him, as they often served as a disguise for homosexual debauchery. He held that a distinction must be made between 'friendship' and 'comradeship'. He associated friendship with individualism, personal pleasure, and the forming of cliques, whereas comradeship, which counted as the norm within the Hitler Youth, was rooted in collective action to advance the higher aim. Such comradeship, in combination with the deterrent effect of severe punishment, would guard against the danger of 'clammy friendships' and the homosexual cliques which resulted from them.

Of the Nazi leaders, Himmler declared his position most explicitly in favor of introducing severe penalties for homosexual contacts between men, especially within the Nazi organizations and in the army. As chief of police he stipulated in 1940 that all convicted homosexuals who had 'seduced' more than one partner, would be deported to a concentration camp after having sat out their prison-sentence. In the 1937 speech in which Himmler, referring to Blüher, warned against the homosexual tendencies of the Nazi *Männerbund*, he also imparted that members of the SS who were found guilty of unnatural lewdness, after completing their sentence of confinement in a concentration camp, 'would be shot dead while attempting to escape'.⁵² In 1941 Hitler issued a decree to keep the SS and the police force free of homosexuality. Members of the SS and police officers who committed lewdness with another man or permitted themselves to be misused were to be given the death sentence.

It is noteworthy that some doctors raised objections to the death penalty - they advocated 're-education' in special camps⁵³ - and that the army was expressly excluded from the stipulations of Hitler's decree, even though it was a male community which according to the Nazis stood in grave risk of danger. One made distinctions between various 'types' of homosexuality. The death penalty was appropriate only in 'especially serious cases' for 'incorrigible wrongdoers'. In the

course of the war the regulations grew undoubtedly stricter. Prior to 1942 those considered seduced could reasonably expect to be returned to the army after a penalty of confinement. After 1942 they too, like the 'incurable' homosexuals, could wind up in a concentration camp. It is striking that official penalties for homosexuality were less severe in non-German auxiliary troops,⁵⁴ the same as the persecution of civilians for homosexual offences was less intense in the occupied countries than in Germany itself.⁵⁵

It appears that for the Nazi leadership homosexuality was in the first place an internal problem. The 'homosocial' organization of Nazism, the central role male bonding played in the Third Reich, is of major importance in understanding the persecution of homosexuals in the Third Reich. The fear that the male comradeship necessary for the cohesion of military organizations would degenerate into homosexuality contributed powerfully to the preoccupation of some Nazi officials with same-sex behavior and the diversity of remedies against it. The severe penalties were supposed to have a deterrent effect: they served primarily to guarantee the purity of, and discipline in the National Socialist *Männerbund*. The Nazi persecution of homosexuals can be explained by seeing it against the background of the tension between homosocial and homoerotic tendencies in German nationalism. In Nazism, this latent tension was pushed to extremes.

Notes

- 1 A short version of this article was presented as a paper at the Sorbonne University in Paris in 1986 under the title 'Homosexualité, homosocialité et le national-socialisme'. This text is part of the last chapter of my book on the homosexual emancipation movement in Wilhelminian and Weimar Germany, *The First Gay Journal in the World. Readings from 'Der Eigene', 1899-1931*, which will be published in 1992 by The Haworth Press in the United States. Some parts of this article have been published before in: R.Kolpa, H.Oosterhuis, T.Schut & L.van Vorselen (eds.), *Fascisme en homosexualiteit*, Amsterdam, 1985, pp.51-78.
- 2 For the Nazi persecution of homosexual men and women see R.Lautmann & R.Schmidt, *Der rosa Winkel in den nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern*, in: *Seminar: Gesellschaft und Homosexualität*, R.Lautmann (ed.), Frankfurt am Main, 1977, pp.325-365; H.-G.Stümke & R.Finkeler, *Rosa Winkel, rosa Listen. Homosexuelle und 'Gesundes Volksempfinden' von Auschwitz bis heute*, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1981; V.Erhard, *Perversion und Ver-*

- folgung unter dem deutschen Faschismus, in: Lautmann, *Seminar: Gesellschaft und Homosexualität*, pp.308-325; H.-D.Schilling (ed.), *Schwule und Faschismus*, (West) Berlin, 1983; H.Heger, *Die Männer mit dem rosa Winkel*, Hamburg, 1972; R.Lautmann, The Pink Triangle. The Persecution of Homosexual Males in Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany, in: *The Gay Past. A Collection of Historical Essays*, S.J.Licata & R.P.Petersen (eds.), Binghamton, NY, 1985, pp.141-160; R.Plant, *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War Against Homosexuals*, New York, 1986; G.Hauer, Homosexuelle im Faschismus, *Lambda Nachrichten. Zeitschrift der Homosexuellen Initiative Wien*, nr. 2 (1984), pp.17-26; W.Harthäuser, Der Massenmord an Homosexuellen im Dritten Reich, in: *Das grosse Tabu. Zeugnisse und Dokumente zum Problem der Homosexualität*, W.Schlegel (ed.), München, 1967; H.Schulze-Wilde, *Das Schicksal der Verfernten. Die Verfolgung der Homosexuellen im Dritten Reich und ihre Stellung in der heutigen Gesellschaft*, Tübingen, 1969; B.Jellonnek, *Homosexuelle unter dem Hakenkreuz. Die Verfolgung von Homosexuellen im Dritten Reich*, Paderborn, 1990.
- 3 See: Lesben und Faschismus, in: *Schwule und Faschismus*, H.-D.Schilling (ed.), (West) Berlin, 1983, pp.151-173.
 - 4 See: H.P.Bleuel, *Das saubere Reich, die verheimlichte Wahrheit. Eros und Sexualität im Dritten Reich*, Bern, 1972.
 - 5 K.A.Eckhardt, Widernatürliche Unzucht ist todeswürdig, *Das Schwarze Korps*, 20 (1937), 13.
 - 6 Jellonnek, *Homosexuelle unter dem Hakenkreuz*, pp.34-35.
 - 7 See M.Herzer, Nazis, Psychiatrists, and Gays: Homophobia in the Sexual Science of the National Socialist Period, *The Cabirion and Gay Books Bulletin*, nr. 12 (1985), pp.1-5; B.Jellonnek, The persecution of homosexuals in the 'Third Reich', *Homosexuality, which homosexuality? History*, Vol.I, Amsterdam, 1987, pp.157-168.
 - 8 In Röhm's autobiography published in 1928, one could read that the course of his life 'would cause honest and respectable, narrow-minded citizens to blush'. In 1932 through the press service of the German Social Democratic Party some letters of Röhm were published, in which he wrote that he was not at all unhappy with his disposition, that he was a member of the *Bund für Menschenrechte*, the largest homosexual organization in the Weimar Republic, and that he was in favor of the abolition of Paragraph 175. In National Socialist circles one presumably grew accustomed to his 'criminal tendencies', according to Röhm. (*Die Memoiren des Stabchefs Röhm*, Saarbrücken, 1934, pp.163, 196, 200.)
 - 9 A.Brand, Abwehr und Angriff, *Eros*, nr. 3 (1930), pp.20-21; idem, Politische Galgenvögel. Ein Wort zum Falle Röhm, *Eros*, nr. 3 (1931), pp.1-3.
 - 10 See Stümke, Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen*, pp.99-106.
 - 11 M.Herzer, Hinweise auf das schwule Berlin in der Nazizeit, in: *Eldorado. Homosexuelle Frauen und Männer in Berlin 1800-1950. Geschichte, Alltag und Kultur*, M. Bollé (ed.), Berlin, 1984, pp.44-47; E.Spangenberg, *Karriere eines Romans. Mephisto, Klaus Mann und Gustaf Gründgens*, Reinbek bei Ham-

- burg, 1986.
- 12 Jellonnek, *Homosexuelle unter dem Hakenkreuz*, pp.278-282.
 - 13 This tightened version of Paragraph 175 was upheld in the German Federal Republic until 1969.
 - 14 As could be read in the *Völkische Beobachter* in 1930. Quoted in H.-D.Schilling, *Verfemung, Verfolgung, Vernichtung*, in: *Schwule und Faschismus*, Schilling (ed.), (West) Berlin, 1983, p.8.
 - 15 R.Klare, *Homosexualität und Strafrecht*, Hamburg, 1935, p.117.
 - 16 R.Diels, *Lucifer ante Portas*, Stuttgart, 1950, p.381.
 - 17 Jellonnek, *Homosexuelle unter dem Hakenkreuz*, pp.140-171.
 - 18 Das sind Staatsfeinde!, *Das Schwarze Korps*, March 1937.
 - 19 The Nazis did not reject psychotherapy, including psychoanalysis. The Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute was supported by the Nazi regime, especially at the instigation of Göring, once all Jewish co-workers had been removed and management had certified that psychoanalysis contributed to the control of sexuality. (See Herzer: Nazis, Psychiatrists and Gays.)
 - 20 J.H.Schultz, *Geschlecht, Liebe, Ehe*, München, 1942, p.97.
 - 21 F.Seidler, *Prostitution, Homosexualität, Selbstverstümmelung. Probleme der deutschen Sanitätsführung 1939-1945*, Neckargemünd, 1977, p.220.
 - 22 Diels, *Lucifer ante Portas*, p.381; Seidler, *Prostitution, Homosexualität, Selbstverstümmelung*, p.220; *Witboek over de Duitse Bartholomeusnacht*, Amsterdam, 1935, p.11.
 - 23 *Witboek over de Duitse Bartholomeusnacht*, p.9.
 - 24 W.U.Eissler, *Arbeiterparteien und Homosexuellenfrage. Zur Sexualpolitik von SPD und KPD in der Weimarer Republik*, Berlin, 1980, pp.106-114. For the attitudes of leftists and antifascists towards homosexuality see also J.Meve, 'Homosexuelle Nazis'. *Ein Stereotyp in Politik und Literatur des Exils*, Hamburg, 1990; H.Oosterhuis, The Guilty Conscience of the Left, *The European Gay Review*, 4 (1989), pp.72-80; H.Oosterhuis, Homoseksualiteit en antifascisme. Over Klaus Manns 'Homoseksualiteit en fascisme', in: Kolpa e.a. (eds.), *Fascisme and homoseksualiteit*, pp.79-82.
 - 25 Bleuel, *Das saubere Reich*, pp.8, 111.
 - 26 Seidler, *Prostitution, Homosexualität, Selbstverstümmelung*, p.204.
 - 27 G.L.Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality. Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*, New York, 1985, pp.155-156.
 - 28 Seidler, *Prostitution, Homosexualität, Selbstverstümmelung*, p.204.
 - 29 In his comparative cultural study *Altersklassen und Männerbünde. Eine Darstellung der Grundformen der Gesellschaft* (1902), which was a best-seller and set the tone of the ideology of the *Männerbund* in Germany, Schurtz expounded his theory of the dual primal impulses in man, the sexual and the social drive. Woman, according to him, was governed completely by the urge to procreate and provide for, inherent in her sexual impulse. From that he concluded that her capacities were restricted to what he considered to be the most primitive social unit, the family. Schurtz emphasized that the social impulse, the drive to create communities and political institutions, was

reserved only to the male. The 'instinctive sympathy' between men was the precondition for social life, for patriotism and military virtues. Schurtz was of the opinion that the 'female sphere' of the family had become overdeterminant in the modern 'bourgeois' era.

- 30 The ideal of the *Männerbund* served an important function in the revolt of young men against the older generations and the bourgeois families in which most of them had been born. From the turn of the century in various branches of the youth movement an aversion to family life manifested itself. The function of the family, so several protagonists of the male-dominated youth movement claimed, should be restricted to female activities like housekeeping and the raising of children. As soon as boys had outgrown the stage of childhood, for them, a *Männerbund* should take the place of the family. One of the most important rightwing ideologues of the *Männerbund* in the twenties, Hans Blüher, who propagated a purification of German society under the guidance of all-male brotherhoods, in which members would be devoted to each other by homoeroticism and charismatic leadership, had been one of the first members of the *Wandervogel*. As a young man he caused much sensation in 1912 with his book, *Die deutsche Wandervogelbewegung als erotisches Phänomen*, in which we asserted, on the basis of his own experiences, that homoerotic friendships, fostered by the sex-segregated education in Wilhelminian Germany, were essential for the cohesion and popularity of the *Wandervogel*.
- 31 See N.Sombart, *The Kaiser in his epoch: Some reflections on Wilhelmine society, sexuality and culture*, in: *Kaiser Wilhelm II: New Interpretations*, J.C.G.Röhl & N.Sombart (eds.), Cambridge, 1982, pp.287-311.
- 32 U.-K.Ketelsen, 'Die Jugend von Langemarck': Ein poetisch-politisches Motiv der Zwischenkriegszeit, in: T.Koebner, R.-P.Janz & F.Trommler (eds.), *Mit uns zeiht die neue Zeit: Der Mythos Jugend*, Frankfurt am Main, 1985, pp.68-96; R.Wohl, *The Generation of 1914*, Cambridge, MA, 1979, pp.42-84; K.Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*, 2 Vols., Frankfurt am Main, 1977-78; N.Sombart, *Jugend in Berlin 1933-1943*, Munich, 1984, pp.21-25, 108-111, 178-191.
- 33 E.Jünger, *Feuer und Blut. Ein kleiner Ausschnitt aus einer grossen Schlacht*, Berlin, 1929, p.10.
- 34 Bäumler wrote this in an introduction to the collected works of Friedrich Nietzsche, which was later included in his *Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte*, Berlin, 1943.
- 35 See, for example, T.Kalkschmidt, *Kameradschaft und Führertum an der Front, Dichtung und Volkstum*, nr. 2 (1938).
- 36 K.F.Sturm, *Deutsche Erziehung im Werden. Von der pädagogischen Reformbewegung zur völkischen und politischen Erziehung*, Osterwieck, 1933, p.141.
- 37 This quotation has been adopted from a 1930 speech by Bäumler that was included in his anthology *Männerbund und Wissenschaft*, Berlin, 1940, p.38.
- 38 Bäumler, *Männerbund und Wissenschaft*, pp.38-39. It is curious that some years earlier Bäumler had been an advocate of theories about the matriar-

- chate as the original foundation of society, as had been elaborated by the Swiss Johann Jakob Bachofen in his *Das Mutterrecht. Eine Untersuchung über die Gynaiokratie der alten Welt nach ihrer religiösen und rechtlichen Natur* (Basel, 1861). After he had shifted his attention to Nietzsche and the Nazis applauded his interpretation of the philosopher, he focussed on the *Männerbund* as the main social unit. See J.Hermand, All Power to the Women: Nazi Concepts of Matriarchy, *Journal of Contemporary History*, nr. 4 (1984), pp.649-667.
- 39 W.Rasch, *Freundschaftskultus und Freundschaftsdichtung im deutschen Schrifttum des 18.Jahrhunderts vom Ausgang des Barock bis zu Klopstock*, Halle, 1936, pp.106-109.
- 40 R.Klare, *Homosexualität und Strafrecht*, Hamburg, 1935.
- 41 See K.von See, Politische Männerbund-Ideologie von der Wilhelmischen Zeit bis zum Nationalsozialismus, in: *Männerbände, Männerbünde. Zur Rolle des Mannes im Kulturvergleich*, G.Völger & K.von Welck (eds.), Cologne, 1990, Vol.1, pp.93-102; S.von Schnurbein, Geheime kultische Männerbünde bei den Germanen; Eine Theorie im Spannungsfeld zwischen Wissenschaft und Ideologie, in: Völger & Welck, *Männerbände, Männerbünde*, Vol.2, pp.97-110.
- 42 A.Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20.Jahrhunderts*, Munich, 1934, pp.485-493.
- 43 L.Gottschewsky, *Männerbund und Frauenfrage*, Munich, 1934.
- 44 H.Himmler, Bevölkerungspolitische Rede vor SS-Gruppenführer über die 'Frage der Homosexualität' und ein 'natürliches Verhältnis der Geschlechter zueinander' (1937), in: *Heinrich Himmler, Geheimreden 1933-1945 und andere Ansprachen*, B.F.Smith (ed.), Frankfurt am Main, 1974, pp.93-104.
- 45 In the same year a number of 'morality trials' against members of the Catholic Church were conducted. It was suggested in the National Socialist press that priests sexually abused children on a large scale and that 'conditions of moral insanity' prevailed in monasteries. By doing this the Nazis sought to bring the Catholic Church into scandal in order to reduce its influence in education and the youth movement.
- 46 See R.Greve, Die SS als Männerbund, in: Völger & Welck, *Männerbände, Männerbünde*, Vol.1, pp.107-112.
- 47 See H.Blüher, *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft. Eine Theorie der menschlichen Staatsbildung nach Wesen und Wert*, Jena, 1917.
- 48 Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality*, p.163. In this book Mosse has described the way that the glorification of physical beauty, notably that of males, in nudism and in youth movement was linked with some ideals of German nationalism. According to him, German nationalism radiated homoeroticism in so far as the powerfully built, well proportioned nude male was put on a pedestal - mostly as a warrior - to represent the vigor of the nation and its aspirations. As early as the nineteenth century, classical models - German nationalists liked to see themselves as the heirs of Greece - were put forward to elevate the male body as the visual paragon of beauty, serenity, strenght, and inner purity.

- 49 On Nazi sculpture, see K.Wolbert, *Die Nackten und Toten des 'Dritten Reiches'*, Giessen, 1983; M.Bushart et al., *Skulptur und Macht. Figurative Plastik im Deutschland der 30er und 40er Jahre*, Berlin, 1983. Examples of Nazi photography are: H.Fischer, *Menschenschönheit. Gestalt und Anlitz des Menschen in Leben und Kunst*, Berlin, 1935; E.Lendrai-Dirksen, *Flandern. Das germanische Volksgericht*, Bayreuth, 1942; L.Riefenstahl, *Schönheit im Olympischen Kampf*, Berlin, 1937; H.Surén, *Mensch und Sonne*, Berlin, 1924; reprint 1936). On Riefenstahl and the aesthetics of fascism, see also S.Sontag, Fascinating Fascism, in her *Under the Sign of Saturn*, New York, 1981, pp.71- 105.
- 50 Seidler, *Prostitution, Homosexualität, Selbstverstümmelung*, pp.217-221.
- 51 K.W.Gauhl, *Statistische Untersuchungen über Gruppenbildung bei Jugendlichen mit gleichgeschlechtlicher Neigung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Struktur dieser Gruppen und der Ursache ihrer Entstehung*, Marburg, 1940.
- 52 Stümke & Finkler, *Rosa Winkel*, pp.435-435.
- 53 Stümke & Finkler, *Rosa Winkel*, pp.259-260.
- 54 Seidler, *Prostitution, Homosexualität, Selbstverstümmelung*.
- 55 P.Koenders, *Homoseksualiteit in bezet Nederland. Verzwegen hoofdstuk*, Amsterdam, 1984.