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Harry Oosterhuis

Medicine, Male Bonding and Homosexuality in Nazi Germany

Homosexuals were among those persecuted in Nazi Germany. Various researchers have explained this in terms of National Socialist racist ideology and eugenics, because the Nazis justified their regulations on the basis of population policies. They were apprehensive at the appearance and spread of homosexuality because it would result in larger numbers of Germans no longer procreating. This persecution was inevitable and massive, so the argument runs, because in the Third Reich, sexuality above all served propagation, population expansion, biological health and the purity of the so-called 'Aryan' race.¹

Medical historians have characterized the Nazi régime as a 'biocracy': major social and political issues like the Jewish 'question', ethnicity, gender, poverty, crime, 'asocial' behaviour and sexual deviance, were transformed into and reduced to biological and medical problems, for which there were apparently 'neutral', technical solutions. The willingness of the German medical profession to embrace the National Socialist cause was substantial, and biomedical scientists played an active role in the initiation, administration and execution of Nazi 'biopolitics'.² Thus it has been argued that the Nazi biocracy was based on a strong affinity of the intellectual and social structures of professional medical science with authoritarian politics. The more science became expert knowledge and the domain of privileged professionals and a technocratic élite, the more it was conceptualized as undemocratic. Refuting the current notion that Nazism corrupted, distorted and misused a supposedly neutral biomedical science, these authors assert that biology and medicine were already inherently politicized and that they lent Nazism a specifically

1 H.P. Bleuel, *Das saubere Reich, die verheimlichte Wahrheit. Eros und Sexualität im Dritten Reich* (Bern 1972); G. Grau (ed.), *Homosexualität in der NS-Zeit. Dokumente einer Diskriminierung und Verfolgung* (Frankfurt am Main 1993), 29–34; H.-G. Stümke and R. Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen. Homosexuelle und 'Gesundes Volksempfinden' von Auschwitz bis heute* (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1981).

2 See R.J. Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors. Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York 1986), 43–4; R. Proctor, *Racial Hygiene. Medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge, MA, London 1988), 6, 65, 193, 251, 291; A. Thom and H. Spaar (eds), *Medizin im Faschismus. Symposium über das Schicksal der Medizin in der Zeit des Faschismus in Deutschland 1933–1945* (Berlin 1985); B. Müller-Hill, *Tödliche Wissenschaft. Die Aussonderung von Juden, Zigeunern und Geisteskranken 1933–1945* (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1985); G. Baader and U. Schultz (eds), *Medizin und National-Sozialismus. Tabuisierte Vergangenheit — Ungebrochene Tradition?* ([West] Berlin 1980); P. Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870–1945* (Cambridge 1989), 489–564.

scientific and technocratic character.³ Employing a rhetoric of medical emergency, many leading nazis indeed saw their politics as applied biology. In their biomedical worldview, the German people suffered from deadly diseases. Their 'cure' was racial purification that would progress from coercive sterilization, euthanasia, segregation, and concentration for supposedly 'hygienic' reasons, to direct medical killing and genocide. From the notion that racial hygiene, the nazi vision of a 'total cure' by means of a medically oriented purification, dictated their treatment of homosexuality, it was only a small step toward bracketing homosexuals with Jews, the Sinti and Roma, ethnic minorities, psychiatric patients and hereditarily ill people as principal victims of nazi terror.⁴

However plausible this explanation may sound, it is neither entirely convincing nor complete. In the first part of this article that discusses the relation between biomedical science and nazi politics, I shall indicate why it is not satisfactory. In the second part I shall then attempt to give an additional explanation for the nazi persecution of homosexuals. This explanation focuses on the threat of homosexuality perceived by some important nazi leaders within their all-male military organizations. During the nazi régime the tension between male bonding in German nationalism and latent homoerotic tendencies of the so-called Männerbund was pushed to extremes.

Some German researchers estimate that between 5,000 and 15,000 primarily male homosexuals were imprisoned in concentration camps.⁵ Although some women were incarcerated because of lesbianism, it is clear that the nazis considered homosexuality between males much more dangerous than that between females. In contrast to male homosexuality, for example, same-sex behaviour between women was never criminalized. This difference is undoubtedly related to the nazis' traditional view of sexuality and role division between man and woman, according to which the latter was supposed only to perform the passive role.⁶ Moreover, in a state that extolled manly, martial

3 Weindling, op. cit., passim. Cf. A. Labisch, 'Die soziale Konstruktion der "Gesundheit" und des "Homo hygienicus": zur Soziogenese eines sozialen Gutes', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 3–4 (1985), 60–81, especially 78.

4 See e.g. M. Burleigh and W. Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933–1945* (Cambridge 1991), xiii, 197; Proctor, op. cit., 177, 198–200; Lifton, op. cit., 16, 24, 470.

5 See R. Lautmann and R. Schmidt, 'Der rosa Winkel in den nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern' in R. Lautmann (ed.), *Seminar: Gesellschaft und Homosexualität* (Frankfurt am Main 1977), 325–65; R. Lautmann, 'Categorisation in Concentration Camps as a Collective Fate: A Comparison of Homosexuals, Jehova's Witnesses and Political Prisoners', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 19/1 (1990), 67–88. Cf. H. Heger, *Die Männer mit dem rosa Winkel* (Hamburg 1972); V. Erhard, 'Perversion und Verfolgung unter dem deutschen Faschismus' in Lautmann, op. cit., 308–25; Stümke and Finkler, op. cit.; H.-D. Schilling (ed.), *Schwule und Faschismus* ([West] Berlin 1983); R. Plant, *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War Against Homosexuals* (New York 1986); B. Jellonnek, *Homosexuelle unter dem Hakenkreuz. Die Verfolgung von Homosexuellen im Dritten Reich* (Paderborn 1990); Grau, op. cit.

6 See 'Lesben und Faschismus' in Schilling, op. cit., 151–73; C. Schoppmann, *National-*

toughness, lesbians were less of a threat to the régime than men who infringed its ideals of masculinity.

In contrast to the 'Holocaust' of the Jews, 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, only between 10 and 30 per cent of them were sent to concentration camps.⁷ The measures taken by the nazis against homosexuality in the Third Reich were highly differentiated and the intensity of persecution was characterized by local variation. Identified homosexuals who proved that they did not engage in sexual contacts in general were not prosecuted. For those who were found guilty of sexual acts, the severity of the punishment depended on several factors, such as the seriousness of the offence, the role one had played (active or passive, the 'seducer' or the seduced), and the number and age of the partners. In addition to punishment, nazi authorities also promoted medical, psychiatric and educational therapies. The nazi régime was not aiming at the total extermination of homosexuals. While some nazi spokesmen expressed the wish to restore certain old Germanic customs, according to which homosexuals, in the interest of 'racial purity', would have been thrown into swamps to drown, in nazi Germany the death penalty for homosexual offences was an exception rather than the rule.⁸

Not all nazi leaders regarded homosexuality as dangerous. Some of the top brass adopted a thoroughly pragmatic position. For example, Adolf Hitler employed the charge of homosexuality primarily as a means to eliminate political opponents, both inside his party and out. One notorious example was the so-called 'Night of the Long Knives' or 'Röhm Putsch' in 1934, when a large number of leaders of the SA, the powerful paramilitary organization of the NSDAP, was liquidated for political reasons. Some, including the Chief of Staff Ernst Röhm, were known homosexuals. The propaganda highlighted Röhm's sexual predilection, but in point of fact it was a question of settling a political power struggle. After coming to power, the nazis used the charge of homosexuality for political ends on several occasions. Later in the 1930s, the régime levelled similar accusations against the army Chief of Staff, Werner von Fritsch, who would not comply with nazi policies, against Catholic clerics in order to bring the Church into disrepute so that its influence in education and the youth movement would be reduced, and against branches of the independent youth movement.⁹

The pragmatic position of certain nazis in power seems evident from the fact that Röhm was not the only homosexual in the nazi movement, and that

sozialistische Sexualpolitik und weibliche Homosexualität (Pfaffenweiler 1991); C. Schoppmann, 'Zur Situation lesbischer Frauen in der NS-Zeit' in Grau, op. cit., 35–42, 101–15.

7 Grau, op. cit., 171.

8 K.A. Eckhardt, 'Widernatürliche Unzucht ist todeswürdig', *Das Schwarze Korps*, 20 (1937), 13; Jellonnek, op. cit., 34–5.

9 H.G. Hockerts, *Die Sittlichkeitsprozesse gegen katholische Ordensangehörige und Priester 1936–37* (Mainz 1971); Schilling, op. cit., 28–39, 58–9; Grau, op. cit., 150–1, 277–83.

before his liquidation homosexuality seems to have been tacitly tolerated in the SA and the Hitler Youth. Röhm and other SA leaders had been charged with homosexuality before 1934, both from within the Party and out. At that time the accusations were no reason for Hitler to renounce his trust in Röhm. He had gone so far as to explain that he preferred in principle not to interfere with the private life of SA members and that National Socialism had nothing to do with middle-class virtues.¹⁰ Although as early as 1928 the nazis, under the slogan *Gemeinnutz über Eigennutz!*, had published their rejection of homosexuality on the grounds that it was detrimental to the German people, before 1934 the nazi movement may have attracted some homosexual men because of its supposedly anti-bourgeois doctrines, the male comradeship in an organization like the SA, and the glorification of masculinity, youth and physical prowess and beauty. According to some leaders of the German homosexual emancipation movement, several homosexuals supported nazism for these reasons and some were even affiliated with the Nazi Party, especially the SA and the Hitler Youth. Especially prior to, but also after, 1934 nazi policy was indeed characterized by inconsistency, probably due to a lack of consensus among the nazi leadership.¹¹

Along with the pragmatists, however, there were among the nazi top brass some figures, such as the SS 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 sexual intercourse, as it had before, but to all forms of physical contact which were 'lustful in intent' and even to expressions of feeling. The nazis employed a very broad definition of homosexuality which could cover mere 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 same-sex behaviour threatened to spread like an epidemic.

In nazi propaganda racist, especially antisemitic, terms were often employed to condemn homosexuality. Apparently, some nazis assumed that 'racial impurity' was its cause. For example, in 1930 Wilhelm Frick, representing the NSDAP in the Reichstag, as well as the *Völkische Beobachter*, characterized it as a typical Jewish vice.¹² However, most of the leading nazis apparently did not regard homosexuality in general as a biological feature of a degenerate

10 Bleuel, op. cit., 11, 119.

11 A. Brand, 'Abwehr und Angriff', *Eros*, 3 (1930), 20–1; A. Brand, 'Politische Galgenvögel. Ein Wort zum Falle Röhm', *Eros*, 2 (1931), 1–3; SS-Standartenführer X, 'Warnung', *Die neue Weltbühne*, 9 (1936), 578–81; anon., 'Nationalsozialismus und Inversion', *Mitteilungen des Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees*, 32 (1932), 340–5; cf. Stümke and Finkler, op. cit., 99–106; Jellonnek, op. cit., 68–72, 85–94.

12 Quoted in H.-D. Schilling, 'Verfemung, Verfolgung, Vernichtung' in Schilling, op. cit., 8. Cf. R. Klare, *Homosexualität und Strafrecht* (Hamburg 1935), 117; L.G. Tirala, 'Homosexualität und Rassenmischung', *Verhandlungen der Gesellschaft deutscher Naturforscher und Ärzte*, 93 (1937), 148; Jellonnek, op. cit., 51–3.

minority, as might have been expected because of their racism and the medical interference with homosexuality in the Third Reich. Although the racial hygienist, Professor Lothar G. Tiralá, at a conference of the International Federation of Eugenistic Organizations held in 1934 in Zürich, argued that extermination of homosexuals was necessary to preclude the downfall of the state, and several physicians conducted research into the hereditary causes of homosexuality,¹³ it did not become an important subject for the Nazi programme of racial hygiene. Some Nazi officials and physicians advocated castration of homosexual offenders, although practice had demonstrated that this operation did not offer a 'cure' because it did not eliminate sexual desire as such, only weakened the libido. In Nazi Germany an unknown number of convicted homosexual offenders had been castrated; by subjecting themselves to this operation it was possible to receive a partial amnesty. However, in the Third Reich castration was certainly not carried out routinely to deal with homosexuality.¹⁴

Racial purity appeared to be no guarantee against homosexual behaviour, for most offenders 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'.¹⁵ And Theo Lang, employed at the Bayerische Kriminalbiologische Sammelstelle in München and one of the leading scientific experts on the subject in Nazi Germany, ascertained that there was 'no period in history, not one nation, culture or race that was completely free of homo- or bisexuality'; this held good for Jews as well as Germans.¹⁶ Within the Nazi movement, even SS officers who had passed

13 T. Lang, 'Ergebnisse neuer Untersuchungen zum Problem der Homosexualität', *Monatsschrift für Kriminalbiologie und Strafrechtsreform*, 30/9 (1939); T. Lang, 'Erbbiologische Untersuchungen über die Entstehung der Homosexualität', *Münchener Medizinische Wochenschrift*, 88/35 (1941), 961–5; K. Jensch, 'Zur Genealogie der Homosexualität; Weiterer Beitrag zur Genealogie der Homosexualität', *Archiv für Psychiatrie*, 112 (1941), 527 ff., 679 ff.; T. Lang, 'Beitrag zur Frage nach der genetischen Bedingtheit der Homosexualität', *Zeitschrift für Neurologie*, 155 (1936), 5; 157 (1937), 557; 162 (1938), 627; T. Lang, 'Weiterer Beitrag zur Frage nach der genetischen Bedingtheit der Homosexualität', *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Psychiatrie*, 157 (1937), 557–74.

14 Boeters, 'Zur Entmannung von Sittlichkeitsverbrechern', *Monatsschrift für Kriminalpsychologie und Strafrechtsreform*, 25 (1934), 579–82; 26 (1935), 367–70. Ch. Wolf, *Die Kastration bei sexuellen Perversionen und Sittlichkeitsverbrechen des Mannes* (Basel 1934); H. Puvogel, *Die leitenden Gedanken bei der Entmannung gefährlicher Sittlichkeitsverbrecher*, Diss. (Düsseldorf 1937); C.-H. Rodenberg, 'Zur Frage des Kriminaltherapeutischen Erfolges der Entmannung homosexueller Sittlichkeitsverbrecher', *Deutsche Justiz. Rechtspflege und Rechtspolitik*, 10/37 (1942), 581–7; N. Jensch, *Untersuchungen an entmannten Sittlichkeitsverbrechern* (Leipzig 1944); cf. G. Cocks, *Psychotherapy in the Third Reich. The Göring Institute* (New York, Oxford 1985), 209; Jellonnek, op. cit., 140–71; G. J. Giles, 'The Most Unkindest Cut of All'. Castration, Homosexuality and Nazi Justice', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 27, 1 (January 1992), 41–61; Grau, op. cit., 305–23.

15 R. Diels, *Lucifer ante portas . . . es spricht der erste Chef der Gestapo* (Stuttgart 1950), 381.

16 Lang, 'Erbbiologische Untersuchungen über die Entstehung der Homosexualität', 961.

through rigorous selection processes and therefore, in the eyes of the nazis, simply could not have some unalterable racial flaw, were involved in cases of 'unnatural vice'.¹⁷ Such cases were difficult to reconcile with their racism, and they were therefore more or less compelled to amplify biological theories with psychological explanations. The SS newspaper *Das schwarze Korps*, Himmler's mouthpiece, criticized the assertion of the German homosexual emancipation movement under the leadership of Magnus Hirschfeld, that homosexuality was an inborn and immutable trait. Barely 2 per cent of the men found guilty of such acts were considered 'incurable'. These 'enemies of the state', of course, had to be expelled from society. According to *Das schwarze Korps*, the vast majority of offenders had been seduced. Many 'normal' men were thought especially susceptible to seduction as a consequence of a developmental imbalance in their youth. They could be brought back on the right track again, not by means of such medical treatment as castration, but by psychological methods, especially 're-education'.¹⁸

This ideological view was in itself not in contradiction with current scientific explanations. The claim that there was a fundamental hostility between science and nazism and that the nazis only distorted and abused science and professional expertise, cannot be sustained. In nazi Germany physicians, psychiatrists and psychoanalysts sought out the causes of homosexual behaviour, as they had done in Wilhelminian and Weimar Germany. It should be emphasized that in general this research did not differ from scientific notions about homosexuality before and after the Third Reich. Racist rhetorics were not a matter of course among these scientists, and biological explanations did not necessarily prevail;¹⁹ as before (and after), they usually distinguished between 'actual' or inborn, and acquired forms of homosexuality. Thus one of the leading experts on heredity, Otmar von Verschuer, wrote in his textbooks on 'Erbpathologie' and 'Rassenhygiene' that homosexuality was not only rooted in a biological constitution, but that it was also caused by 'seduction, imitation, and habit'.²⁰

Historians have argued that one of the pillars of nazi ideology was that nature was more important than nurture in the shaping of human character and institutions, and that heredity and not environment or social conditions was the main cause of differences between individuals.²¹ To be sure, proclamations that National Socialism was politically applied biology gave somatic medicine a privileged place among the sciences, but at the same time psychology and psychotherapy, including psychoanalysis, were tolerated and even

17 Giles, op. cit., 50.

18 'Das sind Staatsfeinde!', *Das Schwarze Korps* (March 1937). Cf. H.G. Eckhardt, 'Wider-natürliche Unzucht', *Deutsche Rechtswissenschaft* (1938), 170.

19 Cf. Proctor, op. cit., 212–13; Kater, op. cit., 350; Lifton, op. cit., 483; Weindling, op. cit., 531.

20 O. von Verschuer, *Erbpathologie. Ein Lehrbuch für Ärzte und Medizinstudierende* (Leipzig 1934), 89; O. von Verschuer, *Leitfaden der Rassenhygiene* (Leipzig 1941), 199.

21 Müller-Hill, op. cit.; Proctor, op. cit., 38, 287.

fostered. The Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute, which changed its name to the German Institute for Psychological Research and Psychotherapy, was supported by the nazi régime, at the instigation of Hermann Göring, once all Jewish co-workers had been removed and management had certified that psychoanalysis contributed to the control of sexuality. In the Third Reich, psychologists and psychotherapists became professionals: education and careers were institutionalized, and psychology was established as an officially sanctioned service profession, especially for selection purposes in the army.²²

The nature–nurture debate in medicine and psychiatry continued in nazi Germany; as far as homosexuality was concerned, the nurture side in the controversy even gained some ascendancy. To whatever extent it was not biologically rooted, there could be discussion about the possibility of curing the ‘acquired’ leanings. In this manner the prominent psychiatrist and psychotherapist, Johannes Heinrich Schultz, employed at the Deutsche Institut für Psychologische Forschung und Psychotherapie, advanced the claim in his popular guidebook on sexual education *Geschlecht, Liebe, Ehe* (1941), 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 advocating psychological correction as a cure for many homosexuals, took an explicit stand in opposition to scientists who claimed that homosexuality was hormonally or genetically determined.²³ According to Schultz, the medical opinion that homosexuals belonged in the biological category of degenerates was controversial. The theory of a hereditarily determined homosexuality held only good for a certain number of cases; he had ascertained that it did not apply to at least four-fifths of the number of people who behaved in a homosexual manner.²⁴

Schultz’s opinion was shared not only by a large number of his colleagues, but by influential nazis as well.²⁵ Behind the biologicistic façade of racist nazi population politics was hidden a more ‘sociopsychological’ view of man. Nazi authorities endorsed a psychotherapeutic view that emphasized improvement of mental vigour and psychological repair for mental dysfunction. Psychology and psychotherapy were useful for the nazis to distinguish sexual disorders among ‘Aryans’ that were supposedly correctable, from the organic, congenital degeneracy of ‘inferior’ races. In this way it was possible to leave undis-

22 See Cocks, op. cit.; cf. M. Herzer, ‘Nazis, Psychiatrists, and Gays: Homophobia in the Sexual Science of the National Socialist Period’, *The Cabirion and Gay Books Bulletin*, 12 (1985), 1–5; U. Geuter, *Die Professionalisierung der deutschen Psychologie im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main 1984).

23 Cf. H. Schutz–Hencke, ‘Über Homosexualität’, *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie*, 140 (1932), 300–12; H. von Hattinberg, *Über die Liebe. Eine ärztliche Wegweisung* (München 1936), 67–80; P. Schröder, ‘Homosexualität’, *Monatsschrift für Kriminalbiologie und Strafrechtsreform*, 31/10–11 (1940), 221–34.

24 J.H. Schultz, *Geschlecht, Liebe, Ehe* (München 1942), 97; cf. idem, ‘Bemerkungen zur Arbeit von Th. Lang über die genetische Bedingtheit der Homosexualität’, *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie*, 157 (1937), 575–8.

25 Grau, op. cit., 49–50; Cocks, op. cit., 205–10.

turbed the belief in the racial delusion that inborn perversion was not a part of the pure essence of the German national character. The concern of the nazis about homosexuality — as much a problem within the nazi movement as a perceived threat from without — did lead to the engagement of psychotherapists to work in this area. Homosexual nazis, members of the Hitler Youth and the army were sent to the Institute for Psychological Research and Psychotherapy to be treated, cured, and sent back into the community as 'normal' and productive members of society.²⁶ Nazi leaders 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 vice' in the German army. Military judges and 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' or of other accidental factors?²⁷

Homosexuality was not so much defined in terms of biological degeneration; instead, several leading nazis saw it mainly as a contagious social disease. Due to the danger of contamination by homosexuality, as some nazis emphasized, constant vigilance was called for. Himmler, for instance, asserted that the 'homosexual problem' did not bear 'merely' upon a degenerate minority. In principle, all men, including nazis themselves, could succumb to such behaviour. Racial laws, penalties of imprisonment, concentration camps, castration or even death, would not be able to prevent this epidemic, even within the nazi movement itself, from growing into a menace of alarming proportions. According to this view, 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.²⁸

26 Cocks, op. cit., 207, 220.

27 F. Seidler, *Prostitution, Homosexualität, Selbstverstümmelung. Probleme der deutschen Sanitätsführung 1939–1945* (Neckargemünd 1977), 200, 220; cf. Grau, op. cit., 214, 224–41.

28 Diels, op. cit., 381; Seidler, op. cit., 220; [O. Strasser], *Weißbuch über die Erschießungen des 30. Juni* (Paris 1934), 11.

The danger of the 'homosexual conspiracy' was given a great deal of attention in Nazi propaganda after the Röhm Putsch in 1934, when the legal persecution of homosexuals intensified. Immediately following the murder of Röhm and his adherents, Hermann Göring stated to the press that certain SA leaders 'had placed their own interests, 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'.²⁹ Röhm's and others' homosexuality was the focus of several 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 behaviour, which increased his reputation among the German people. In a memo to Röhm's successor, Hitler stated that the purged movement must henceforth remain pure, so that every mother could turn her son over to the SA and the Hitler Youth, free of any fear of moral corruption. Two weeks after the liquidation of Röhm and company, he declared in the Reichstag that leaders of the Nazi Party, the SA, the SS and the Hitler Youth would need to be punished more severely than normal citizens if they were found guilty of homosexuality. In precisely these organizations, so it turned out, the 'poison' was able to spread rapidly.³⁰

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 as well'.³¹ The result was that other Nazi leaders, in consequence of the Röhm affair, became virtually obsessed with the danger of homosexuality. In the 'Special Measures for Combating Same-Sex Acts' for the Hitler Youth, issued in 1943 by the Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Jugendbetreuung, 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.'³² 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, and that, as a fertile soil for a secret state within the state, it could undermine the National Socialist movement

29 Quoted in Schilling, op. cit., 24; cf. [Strasser], op. cit., 9.

30 Seidler, op. cit., 204.

31 G.L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality. Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York 1985), 155–6.

32 Seidler, op. cit., 226.

from the inside out. The same fear was expressed in the army directives for the treatment of homosexuality:

The danger of homosexual activity is especially acute when healthy, youthful, and virile men live together in close physical and emotional comradeship, and have no opportunity to have sexual relations or friendships with women. This holds good for boarding schools, youth camps, and monasteries as well as barracks and other military facilities.³³

In the biological *Weltanschauung* of the nazis, not only the distinction between superior and inferior races was crucial, but the differentiation of a male and female nature also played an important role. One of the leading experts in racial hygiene and genetics, Fritz Lenz, claimed that sexual differentiation was even more fundamental than racial disparity.³⁴ Rejecting 'artificial' social differences, such as those between classes or religious denominations, the nazis stressed the inevitability of 'eternal', natural boundaries, like those between races, sexes, the healthy and the sick, and age groups. Several nazi leaders, including some women heading women's organizations of the NSDAP, proclaimed the strict segregation between the sexes and distinct male and female spheres as the natural foundation for the organization of fascist society.³⁵

The nazi attacked the ideal of equal rights for men and women and rejected the women's emancipation movement. In fact, the nazi movement was a militant men's community that excluded women from the most important organizations and, to whatever extent possible, from public and political 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. So Alfred Bäumler, an important collaborator 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.³⁶ 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*. In his *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts*, the latter stressed that only men should be judges, soldiers, and rulers of the state, and that there was no place for women in politics.

The nazis made a reality of the German nationalist ideal of the *Männerbund*, according to which an élite of men, firmly united among themselves, formed the core of the state. The *Männerbund* was not a nazi

33 Ibid., 220.

34 F. Lenz, E. Fischer and E. Bauer, *Grundriss der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene* (München 1921–40).

35 C. Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland. Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (New York 1987).

36 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).

invention: an ideal was adopted that had its beginnings in the Bünde of male friendships in the eighteenth century. Inspired by the Wars of Liberation fought by volunteers, from the early nineteenth century nationalist intellectuals began to celebrate male friendships as the most tangible expression of patriotism and as being superior to family relationships. In contrast to heterosexual relationships, these friendships embodying male solidarity guaranteed the control of 'egoistic' passions by means of dedication to collective aspirations.

The ideal of the Männerbund had been infused with new life at the beginning of the twentieth century. In his *Alterklassen und Männerbünde: Eine Darstellung der Grundformen der Gesellschaft* (1902), the ethnologist Heinrich Schurtz asserted that the 'instinctive sympathy' between men was the precondition for social and political life, for patriotism and military virtues. Schurtz was critical of modern society because, in his view, female values and the 'female sphere' of the family had become overdeterminant in the bourgeois era. The ideal of the Männerbund served an important function in the revolt of young men against the older generations and the bourgeois families into 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. One of the first members of the Wandervogel, Hans Blüher, became an important right-wing ideologue of the Männerbund. According to Blüher, sublimated homosexual feeling was an important factor in binding groups together, from the sanctity of religious orders to the youthful spirit of the Wandervogel and the masculine ethos of military organizations. In the 1920s, he 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.³⁷ Blüher's ideal was shared to a large extent by a branch of the homosexual rights movement, the Gemeinschaft der Eigenen, led by Adolf Brand and supported by, among others, the philosopher and biologist Benedict Friedländer. Associating male bonding and intimate friendship with homoeroticism and referring to ancient Greece, they advocated a 'male culture', in which the ideal of the Männerbund played a central role. In their view, close, erotic as well as social bonds among men in general constituted the prerequisite for masculine qualities, which were considered to be fundamental for cultural achievements, education, and patriotic and military virtues. Endorsing nationalism and anti-modernism, especially anti-feminism, the Gemeinschaft der Eigenen embraced a homosocial organization of society, separating a pure male and a pure female sphere.³⁸

In the 1920s the ideal of male comradeship played an important and

37 H. Blüher, *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft. Eine Theorie der menschlichen Staatsbildung nach Wesen und Wert* (Jena 1917); cf. H. Blüher, *Die deutsche Wandervogelbewegung als erotisches Phänomen. Ein Beitrag zur Kenntnis der sexuellen Inversion* (Jena 1917).

38 See H. Oosterhuis and H. Kennedy, *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany. The Youth Movement, the Gay Movement, and Male Bonding before Hitler's Rise. Original Transcripts from Der Eigene, the first Gay Journal in the World* (New York, London 1991).

effective role in the militant 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. Especially members of the so-called Freikorps, the nationalist 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. As an anti-bourgeois movement of protest, National Socialism exploited these sentiments. The nazis glorified the fraternity of the trenches of the first world war as a school for devotion to duty and sacrifice. The sentimental ideal of camaraderie provided an alternative to politics that was based on putatively prosaic social and economic self-interest.³⁹ Ideals of masculinity and male bonding were of crucial importance for the shaping of a concept of politics that was grounded in emotional appeal and aesthetics. Also, those ideals seemed to promise the possibility of an escape from a dull and pointless life in civil society and the family. For example, in his autobiography, Ernst Röhm exalted the role of the soldier and discarded bourgeois respectability. He stated that for the soldier, his captain came first, before his wife and family, because soldierly comradeship, cemented with blood, was much deeper than the marriage bond.⁴⁰

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 male solidarity and superiority to women and other outsiders, and of a strict hierarchy among men themselves. Next to the family, the Männerbund was the cornerstone of nazi society. Within the nazi leadership there seems to have been disagreement about which should come first.⁴¹ In fact, 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. Therefore the National Socialist ideology of the family expressed itself primarily in the glorification of woman as mother. Yet, 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. The boundaries between public and private were abolished, just as for males the dividing line between politics and the totality of life ceased to exist. Not only did eugenic policies intrude on the privacy of spouses, but also a great deal of time and loyalty was demanded of

39 Cf. G.L. Mosse, 'Two World Wars and the Myth of the War Experience', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 21, 4 (October 1986), 491–513.

40 G.L. Mosse, *Nazi Culture. Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich* (New York 1981 [1966]), 101–3.

41 G. Runkel, *Sexualität und Ideologien* (Weinheim, Basel 1979), 110–17.

men 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 youth, especially boys, was largely taken away from parents. In the virtually sexually separated youth movement, the boys primarily owed their leaders obedience and trust. Although officially nazi leaders advocated a 'division of service' between family and the movement, Hitler Youth activity did take boys away from home, and if parents objected, in practice it was the family who lost out and not the organization. The same held for men in the army and other semi-military organizations like the SS and the SA. Close emotional ties with the family did not fit in with the role which the male in close alliance with other men was obliged to fulfil in nazi Germany. Firm ties between men were considered desirable, and various nazi spokesmen drew attention to the political importance of male solidarity 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 asserted in a speech. As a 'lifestyle', friendship could exist only in the Bund and the state; outside these 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 could they 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.'⁴² The liberal ideal of the 'cultivated man' had to be replaced with an educational ideal based upon the fellowship of battle, and in education the importance of physical education and building 'character' was stressed. The way one nazi functionary for education, K.F. Sturm, expressed the central role of male bonding in National Socialism was very significant. According to Sturm, the Männerbund of the army, the SA, the SS, the Labour Service and Hitler Youth, were of crucial importance, because through them the political German man was formed by developing strength of body and character; intellectual schooling and culture took second place.⁴³

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

42 Quotations adopted from a 1930 speech by Bäumler that was included in his anthology *Männerbund und Wissenschaft* (Berlin 1934), 38–9.

43 K.F. Sturm, *Deutsche Erziehung im Werden. Von der pädagogischen Reformbewegung zur völkischen und politischen Erziehung* (Osterwieck 1933), 141.

even to the Germans of former ages and the ancient Greeks.⁴⁴ Thus the nazi lawyer Rudolf Klare stated that the severe penalties he proposed for homosexuality should not be a hindrance to spiritual love for members of one's own sex on the basis of ancient Greek love of youths.⁴⁵ And in the pseudo-scientific *völkische Germanenkunde* which the nazis promoted, the *Männerbund* was a central theme. 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.⁴⁶ Like Bäumler, Rosenberg assumed that male bonding and not the family was the organizing principle of the state. In his *Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Rosenberg argued that historically the state had arisen out of the military *Männerbund*; only afterwards was the institution of the family supposedly established.⁴⁷ 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. Just as man and woman complemented each other in the family, so, too, family and *Männerbund* complemented 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.

At the same time, however, the questionable tendencies in the practice and ideology of male bonding were pointed out by nazis themselves as well as by their leftist opponents. Although the National Socialist women's organizations subscribed to a similarly rigorous division of roles, one of its leaders claimed in 1934 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 seen as opposites and the latter as superior. It was not stated explicitly, but it was clear that homoerotic tendencies were perceived in the misogynistic ideology of the *Männerbund*.⁴⁸ Earlier, in the turbulent years 1930–34, which witnessed the nazis' rise to power, Germany's social democrats and communists had seized upon the homosexual orientation of some nazi leaders, especially Ernst Röhm. They attempted to bring the nazi movement into discredit by fanning the fear among the German people that homosexuality would spread easily in all-male groups and that it was an essential characteristic not just of individual nazis but of their system as a whole. In the 1930s, anti-fascist leftists

44 W. Rasch, *Freundschaftskultus und Freundschaftsdichtung im deutschen Schrifttum des 18. Jahrhunderts vom Ausgang des Barock bis zu Klopstock* (Halle 1936), 106–9.

45 Klare, op. cit.

46 See K. von See, 'Politische Männerbund-Ideologie von der Wilhelmschen Zeit bis zum Nationalsozialismus' in G. Völger and K. von Welck (eds), *Männerbände, Männerbünde. Zur Rolle des Mannes in Kulturvergleich* (Köln 1990), vol. 1, 93–102; S. von Schnurbein, 'Geheime kultische Männerbünde bei den Germanen; Eine Theorie im Spannungsfeld zwischen Wissenschaft und Ideologie' in Völger and Welck, op. cit., vol. 2, 97–110.

47 A. Rosenberg, *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts* (München 1934), 485–93.

48 L. Gottschewsky, *Männerbund und Frauenfrage* (München 1934).

created the impression that homosexuality was widespread in nazi organizations.⁴⁹

Of all people it was Heinrich Himmler, the Reich's chief of the super-manly SS and of the police, who stated forthrightly that the National Socialist men's state threatened to destroy itself because organizations like the SS and Hitler Youth could become hothouses for homosexuality. In a (non-public) speech before high-ranking SS officers in 1937, one of the most revealing nazi statements on this subject, 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.⁵⁰ Therefore it was not surprising, according to Himmler, that the movement facilitated homosexuality, 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. 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 behaviour, Himmler concluded. He supposed that homosexuality often was generated in men because of lack of opportunities to associate with women. For that reason he also condoned and even advocated prostitution — officially not tolerated by the nazi régime — as a remedy against homosexuality.

For utter clarity Himmler 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 on in his speech. In spite of the grave dangers to which he was calling attention, Himmler, who had been raised as a Catholic, had been a member of the Wandervogel in his youth and, as a student, had read Hans Blüher's nationalist plea for a homoerotic Männerbund, *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft* (1917), was a firm protagonist of male bonding. His élitist SS was the Männerbund par excellence and therefore he emphasized: 'The men's state is the best arrangement.' Moreover, Himmler showed much

49 See H. Oosterhuis, 'The "Jews" of the Antifascist Left: Homosexuality and Socialist Resistance to Nazism' in G. Hekma, H. Oosterhuis and J. Steakley (eds), *Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left* (London, New York 1995), 227–57.

50 H. Himmler, 'Bevölkerungspolitische Rede vor SS-Gruppenführer über die "Frage der Homosexualität" und ein "natürliches Verhältnis der Geschlechter zueinander"' (1937) in B.F. Smith (ed.), *Heinrich Himmler, Geheimreden 1933–1945 und andere Ansprachen* (Frankfurt am Main 1974), 93–104.

interest in research into the supposedly Germanic and Aryan origins of the Männerbund, which was to furnish him with a historical justification for his extreme racism.⁵¹

As appears in Himmler's speech, the Männerbund was problematic for the nazis, because since the end of the nineteenth century it had acquired in certain circles a distinctly homoerotic twist. Male bonding had been linked to the glorification of the physical beauty of males, not only by the homosexual movement, but also in nudism, in the youth movement, and by prominent authors like Stefan George and Thomas Mann. 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, as a fertile soil for a secret state within the state, could undermine the National Socialist movement from the inside out.⁵² 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 instruction in possible preventive regulations.⁵³ Illustrative of the preoccupation with homosexuality of some nazis is a dissertation by a nazi official charged with youth matters, K.W. Gauhl.⁵⁴ Making extensive references to Blüher's work on homoerotic male bonding, Gauhl analysed 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 debauchery. He held that a distinction must be made between impure 'friendship' and pure '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 favour of the introduction of severe penalties for homosexual contacts between men, especially in nazi organizations and 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 served their prison sentence. In the 1937 speech in which Himmler, referring to Blüher, warned against the homosexual tendencies of the nazi Männerbund, he also announced that members of the SS who were found guilty of unnatural lewdness, after completing their sentence of confinement in a concentration camp,

51 See R. Greve, 'Die SS als Männerbund' in Völger and Welck, op. cit., vol. 1, 107–12.

52 Klare, op. cit., 32, 123–5; *Das Schwarze Korps* (4 March 1937); Diels, op. cit., 381; Stümke and Finkler, op. cit., 180–1; Grau, op. cit., 277, 280.

53 Seidler, op. cit., 212–28.

54 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).

‘would be shot dead while attempting to escape’.⁵⁵ (However, this order was never executed, one example of the conflict between rhetoric and reality in the nazi movement.) In 1941, Hitler, referring to the contagious nature of homosexuality, affirmed: ‘The party and the army especially have to deal mercilessly with any case of homosexuality; thus the administration of the state will stay pure.’ Three months later, 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.⁵⁶

While the persecution of homosexuals, especially within the nazi movement, was thus intensified, the causes and cure of homosexuality remained a subject of controversial debate among medical authorities. Apparently, some medical scientists tried to preserve their professional autonomy vis-à-vis nazi policies, although they were, of course, in no position to stop the régime from taking drastic measures. Still, in 1941, the physician Theo Lang argued that an objective scientific understanding of homosexuality was necessary before taking measures in the legal sphere or in the field of education and population policies.⁵⁷ Such a statement suggests that there were considerable differences between nazi ideologues and medical technocrats who wanted to impose professional expertise and scientific solutions on social problems. Until the end of the second world war, physicians, psychiatrists, psychotherapists and jurists reached no agreement on the cause and cure of homosexuality, and even in 1944 a study group of several experts was formed to explore the issue in greater depth.⁵⁸ It is noteworthy that some doctors raised objections to the death penalty — advocating instead ‘re-education’ in special camps⁵⁹ — 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, was at grave risk. Also, distinctions continued to be made between various ‘types’ of homosexuality. The death penalty was appropriate only in ‘especially serious cases’ for ‘incorrigible wrongdoers’. In the course of the war, at the instigation of the nazi authorities, the regulations grew undoubtedly stricter. Whereas most of the medical and psychological interference with homosexuality in nazi Germany was not very different from that before 1933 and even after 1945, nazi policies were exceptional, especially when they were dictated by the emergencies of war. Despite reservations among scientific experts, who advocated professional expertise, the policy of the nazi authorities was to cast the net wide, in order to be on the ‘safe’ side. The war may have intensified paranoia about the spread of homosexuality in all-male groups and extreme conditions must have facilitated radical solutions. Prior to 1942, those considered seduced could reasonably expect to be returned to the army after a penalty of confine-

55 Stümke and Finkler, *op. cit.*, 435–6.

56 Grau, *op. cit.*, 214, 244.

57 T. Lang, ‘Erbbiologische Untersuchungen über die Entstehung der Homosexualität’, 961.

58 Cocks, *op. cit.*, 226; cf. Giles, *op. cit.*, 50–3.

59 Stümke and Finkler, *op. cit.*, 259–60.

ment. 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 for non-German auxiliary troops, just as the persecution of civilians for homosexual offences was less intense in the occupied countries than in Germany itself.⁶⁰

Not only racism in general, but more specifically the central role male bonding played in the Third Reich, especially during the war, is of major importance in understanding the nazi persecution of homosexuals. Some nazi leaders were aware of the fact that in Wilhelminian and Weimar Germany the ideal of the *Männerbund* had been employed to advocate homoeroticism, and in consequence of both the Röhm affair and accusations from the left, they became virtually obsessed with the danger of homosexuality within their own movement. The fear that the pure male comradeship necessary for the cohesion of military organizations would degenerate into defiled homosexuality contributed powerfully to the preoccupation of some nazi officials with same-sex behaviour and the diversity of remedies for it. The fierce purification procedures were not only subsumed to biological and medical principles. It appears that for the nazi leadership homosexuality was in the first place an internal problem, which was not so much of a biological as of a social and political nature. The nazi régime was not aiming at the extermination of all homosexuals and they did not become an important object of nazi eugenic and racial policies. 'Homophobia' was not part and parcel of a coherent nazi ideology and neither was homosexuality the object of a unanimous biomedical approach. Although biology and medicine indeed played a central role in nazi racism, a logical connection between nazi 'biocracy' and the persecution of homosexuals can hardly be established. Such a connection has simply been assumed because it is believed that the biomedical worldview of the nazis was all-comprehensive and that therefore politicians as well as scientists only used biological explanations to account for homosexual behaviour.

The attitude of the nazis toward the *Männerbund* and homosexuality shows that there were differences within the nazi hierarchy and contradictions between official ideology and practice. Also, nazi ideology, with the exception of its racism and anti-semitism, lacked coherence. In their treatment of homosexuality, the nazis adopted divergent scientific and ideological viewpoints, medical as well as psychological and social explanations. The way they used these explanations to find remedies for homosexuality was not dictated by their biomedical worldview. In that sense there was no one-dimensional connection between the nazis' politics of persecution and scientific interference with homosexuality. Instead, the nazis used rather pragmatically different scientific explanations to cope with what they considered a political and more

60 Grau, op. cit., 252–75; cf. P. Koenders, *Homoseksualiteit in bezet Nederland. Verzweigen hoofdstuk* (Amsterdam 1984).

or less accidental problem within their own movement. Next to a wide range of medical and psychotherapeutic remedies, severe penalties, including detention in concentration camps, were introduced, mainly because the nazis believed that homosexuality was a contagious *social* disease which could easily spread in all-male groups. 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. Thus, the nazi fight against homosexuality 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.

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