

NAVY

See *Seafaring*.

NAZISM

The ideology and practice of National Socialism, which under the leadership of Adolf Hitler ruled Germany from 1933 to 1945, united several virulent strands of hostility to homosexuality. Inheriting the repressive attitudes of the nineteenth-century sexual purity movements, Nazi ideologues reacted also to the licence they perceived as eroding the social fabric of Germany under the Weimar Republic (1918–33). Popular sentiment among the Nazis favored a strong polarization of male and female roles, which the perception of homosexuals as “the third sex” contradicted. Equating population growth with power, the Nazis also pursued a vigorous pronatalist policy. Their attitude toward male homosexual behavior, regarded as a threat to the survival of the German people, was unequivocally negative. Heinrich Himmler, the Nazi leader most concerned with the question, advocated drowning homosexuals in bogs as a return to the tribal custom of the ancient Germans recorded by Tacitus.

It is a historical paradox that the presence of a few known homosexuals in the ranks of the early Nazi Party, notably Ernst Röhm, the head of the paramilitary Brownshirts (SA), gave unscrupulous opponents and propagandists of the left the leverage required for the superficial plausibility of their myth of the “fascist perversion”—a supposed affinity between sexual deviation and Nazism. In fact, Rohm and his associates were liquidated on Hitler’s orders in the Night of the Long Knives, June 30, 1934.

The jurists of the Third Reich reinforced the existing antihomosexual clause of the Reich Penal Code by adding a new section (175a), but at the same time inserted an article in the Code of Criminal Procedure (154b) that allowed the public prosecutor to take no action in a case in

which the offender had been the object of blackmail—thus acknowledging the validity of Magnus Hirschfeld’s claim that the existing law encouraged the extortion of homosexuals. The prohibition was not extended to lesbians, so that female homosexuality remained legal.

When detected, male homosexuals were arrested and consigned to the concentration camps, where they were placed in the lowest category of prisoners. In the camps homosexual inmates were required to wear the **pink triangle** as an identifying mark; subsequently, this emblem was adopted as a positive symbol by the gay liberation movements of the 1970s. Estimates of the number of pink triangle men killed vary from 10,000 to 250,000; probably the true number will never be known. Sadly, homosexual victims of the Nazis were the only such group denied monetary compensation from the West German government after World War II because of their continuing illegal status. Even today commemorations of the Holocaust often fail to mention them. A bizarre footnote is the appearance of two tiny groups of “gay Nazis” in California in the mid 1970s; this episode is a reflection, probably of ephemeral significance, of the lingering myth of the “fascist perversion.”

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Heinz Heger, *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, London: Gay Men’s Press, 1980; Manfred Herzer, “Nazis, Psychiatrists, and Gays,” *Cabirion*, 12 (1985), 1–5; Rüdiger Lautmann, “The Pink Triangle,” *Journal of Homosexuality*, 6 (1980–81), 141–60; Richard Plant, *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War Against Homosexuals*, New York: Holt, 1986.

Wayne R. Dynes

NEOPLATONISM

A revival and recasting of Platonism—mingling with it Pythagorean, Aristotelean, Stoic, and mystic ideas—Neoplatonism supplanted Stoicism as the dominant philosophy of the classical world from the mid-third century to the closing