

6 July 2004

[Home](#) [About Johann](#) [Archive](#) [Books](#) [Contact](#)

The strange, unexplored overlap between homosexuality and fascism

Many of the leading European fascists of the past thirty years have been gay. Progressive gay people like me shouldn't ignore this

10,000 gay people were slaughtered in the Nazi death-camps. Many more were humiliated, jailed, deported, ethnically cleansed, or castrated. One gay survivor of the camps, LD Classen von Neudegg, has written about his experiences. A snapshot: "Three men had tried to escape one night. They were captured, and when they returned they had the word 'homo' scrawled across their clothing. They were placed on a block and whipped. Then they were forced to beat a drum and cheer, 'Hurrah! We're back! Hurrah!' Then they were hanged." This is one of the milder events documented in his book.

So the idea of a gay fascist seems ridiculous. Yet when the British National Party – our own home-grown Holocaust-denying bigots – announced it was fielding an openly gay candidate in the European elections this June, dedicated followers of fascism didn't blink. The twisted truth is that gay men have been at the heart of every major fascist movement that ever was – including the gay-gassing, homo-cidal Third Reich. With the exception of Jean-Marie Le Pen, all the most high-profile fascists in Europe in the past thirty years have been gay. It's time to admit something. Fascism isn't something that happens out



"fantastically gripping and provocative...one of the most convincing books on the monarchy you'll ever read".

[Independent on Sunday, June 16th 2002](#)

Latest Articles...

How do we back the Iraqis and the Nicaraguans?

Inconsistencies?

[Harry's Place - 04/07/2004](#)

Now hand over the suspects America is harbouring, Mr President

Union Carbide's CEO and Oliver North would be a good start

[The Independent - 03/07/2004](#)

Peter Singer - an interview

On killing disabled babies, saving animals and the dangers of superstition

[The Independent - 01/07/2004](#)

Attacks on Johann - from the Sun and the Guardian

Fat and sweaty: it's a consensus

[The Sun and the Guardian - 01/07/2004](#)

there, a nasty habit acquired by the straight boys. It is - in part, at least - a gay thing, and it's time for non-fascist gay people to wake up and face the marching music.

Just look at our own continent over the past decade. Dutch fascist Pim Fortuyn ran on blatantly racist anti-immigrant platform, describing Islam as "a cancer" and "the biggest threat to Western civilisation today." Yet with two little fluffy dogs and a Mamma complex, he was openly, flamboyantly gay. When accused by a political opponent of hating Arabs, he replied, "How can I hate Arabs? I sucked one off last night."

Jorg Haider blasted Austria's cosy post-Nazi politics to rubble in 2000 when his neo-fascist 'Freedom Party' won a quarter of the vote and joined the country's government as a coalition partner. Several facts always cropped up in the international press coverage: his square jaw, his muscled torso, his SS-supporting father, his rabid anti-Semitism, his hatred of immigrants, his description of Auschwitz and Dachau as "punishment centres". A few newspapers mentioned that he is always surrounded by fit, fanatical young men. A handful went further and pointed out that several of these young men are openly gay. Then one left-wing German paper broke the story everybody else was hinting at. They alleged Haider is gay.

Rumours of an Indian waiter with "intimate details" of Haider's body broke into the press. The Freedom Party's general manager Gerald Miscka quickly quit, amid accusations that he was Haider's lover. Haider's close gay friend Walter Kohler – who has been photographed showing off a holstered pistol while Haider chuckled – declared his opposition to outing politicians. Haider – who is married and has two children – kept quiet while his functionaries denied the rumours. He has quietly dropped out of politics since.

On and on it goes. If you inter-railed across Europe, only stopping with gay fascists, there aren't many sights you'd miss. France's leading post-war fascist was Edouard

A misconceived debate about fetuses

These new pictures are misleading

The Independent - 30/06/2004

Pfieffer, who was not batting for the straight side. Germany's leading neo-Nazi all through the eighties was called Michael Kuhnen; he died of AIDS in 1991 a few years after coming out. Martin Lee, author of a study of European fascism, explains, "For Kuhnen, there was something supermacho about being a Nazi, as well as being a homosexual, both of which enforced his sense of living on the edge, of belonging to an elite that was destined to make an impact. He told a West German journalist that homosexuals were 'especially well-suited for our task, because they do not want ties to wife, children and family.'"

And it wouldn't be long before your whistlestop tour arrived in Britain. At first glance, our Nazis seem militantly straight. They have tried to disrupt gay parades, describe gay people as "evil", and BNP leader Nick Griffin reacted charmingly to the bombing of the Admiral Duncan pub in 1999 with a column saying, "The TV footage of gay demonstrators [outside the scene of carnage] flaunting their perversion in front of the world's journalists showed just why so many ordinary people find these creatures repulsive."

But scratch to homophobic surface and there's a spandex swastika underneath. In 1999, Martin Webster, a former National Front organiser and head honcho in the British fascist movement, wrote a four-page pamphlet detailing his 'affair' with Nick Griffin. "Griffin sought out intimate relations with me," openly-gay Webster explained, "in the late 1970s. He was twenty years younger than me." Ray Hill, who infiltrated the British fascist movement for twelve years to gather information for anti-fascist groups, says it's all too plausible. Homosexuality is "extremely prevalent" in the upper echelons of the British far right, and at one stage in the 1980s nearly half of the movement's organisers were gay, he claims.

Gerry Gable, editor of the anti-fascist magazine 'Searchlight', explains, "I have looked at Britain's Nazi

groups for decades and this homophobic hypocrisy has been there all the time. I cannot think of any organisation on the extreme right that hasn't attacked people on the grounds of their sexual preference and at the same time contained many gay officers and activists."

Griffins' alleged gay affair would stand in a long British fascist tradition. The leader of the skinhead movement all through the 1970s was a crazed, muscled thug called Nicky Crane. He was the icon of a reactionary backlash against immigrants, feminism and the 'hippy' lifetsyle of the 1960s. His movement's emphasis on conformity to a shaven, dehumanised norm resembled classical fascist movements; Crane soon became a campaigner and leading figure in the National Front. Oh, and he was gay. Before he died of AIDS in the mid-1980s, Crane came out and admitted he had starred in many gay porn videos. Just before he died in 1986, he was allowed to steward a Gay Pride march in London, even though he still said he was "proud to be a fascist."

The rubber-soled friction between gay fascists and progressive British gay people sparked into anger in 1985 when the Gay Skinhead Movement organised a disco at London's Gay Centre. Several lesbians in particular objected to the "invasion" of the centre. They felt that the cult of "real men" and hypermasculine thugs was stirring up the most base feelings "in the very place, the gay movement, where you would least expect them."

And this Gaystapo has an icon to revere, an alternative Fuhrer to worship: the lost gay fascist leader Ernst Rohm. Along with Adolf Hitler, Rohm was the founding father of Nazism. Born to conservative Bavarian civil servants in 1887, Ernst Rohm's life began – in his view – in the "heroic" trenches of the First World War. Like so many of the generation who formed the Nazi Party, he was nurtured by and obsessed with the homoerotic myth of the trenches – heroic, beautiful boys prepared to die for their brothers and their country.

He emerged from the war with a bullet-scarred face and a reverence for war. As he put it in his autobiography, "Since I am an immature and wicked man, war and unrest appeal to me more than the good bourgeois order." After being disbanded, he tried half-heartedly to get a foothold in civilian life, but he saw it as alien, bourgeois, boring. He had no political beliefs, only prejudices – particularly hatred of Jews. Historian Joachim Fest describes Rohm's generation of alienated, demobbed young men humiliated by defeat as "agents of a permanent revolution without any revolutionary idea of the future, only a wish to eternalize the values of the trenches."

It was Rohm who first spotted the potential of a soap-box ranter called Adolf Hitler. He saw him as the demagogue he needed to mobilize support for his plan to overthrow democracy and establish a "soldier's state" where the army ruled untrammelled. He introduced the young fascist to local politicians and military leaders; they knew him for many years as "Rohm's boy." Gay historian Frank Rector notes, "Hitler was, to a substantial extent, Rohm's protégé." Rohm integrated Hitler into his underground movement to overthrow the Weimar Republic.

Rohm's blatant, out homosexuality seems bizarre now, given the gay genocide that was to follow. He talked openly about his fondness for gay bars and Turkish baths, and was known for his virility. He believed that gay people were superior to straights, and saw homosexuality as a key principle of his proposed Brave New Fascist Order. As historian Louis Snyder explains, Rohm "projected a social order in which homosexuality would be regarded as a human behaviour pattern of high repute... He flaunted his homosexuality in public and insisted his cronies do the same. He believed straight people weren't as adept at bullying and aggression as homosexuals, so homosexuality was given a high premium in the SA." They promoted an aggressive, hypermasculine form of homosexuality, condemning "hysterical women of both sexes", in reference to feminine gay men.

This belief in the superiority of homosexuality had a strong German tradition that grew up at the turn of the twentieth century around Adolf Brand, publisher of the country's first gay magazine. You could call it 'Queer as Volk': they preached that gay men were the foundation of all nation-states and represented an elite, warrior caste that should rule. They venerated the ancient warrior cults of Sparta, Thebes and Athens.

Rohm often referred to the ancient Greek tradition of sending gay soldier couples into battle, because they were believed to be the most ferocious fighters. The famous pass of Thermopylae, for example was held by 300 soldiers – who consisted of 150 gay couples. In its early years, the SA – Hitler and Rohm's underground army – was seen as predominantly gay. Rohm assigned prominent posts to his lovers, making Edmund Heines his deputy and Karl Ernst the SA commander in Berlin. The organisation would sometimes meet in gay bars. The gay art historian Christian Isermayer said in an interview, "I got to know people in the SA. They used to throw riotous parties even in 1933... I once attended one. It was quite well-behaved but thoroughly gay. But then, in those days, the SA was ultra-gay."

On June 30th 1934, Rohm was awoken in a Berlin hotel by Hitler himself. He sprang to his feet and saluted, calling, "Heil Mein Fuhrer!" Hitler said simply, "You are under arrest," and with that he left the room, giving orders for Rohm to be taken to Standelheim prison. He was shot that night. Rohm was the most high-profile kill in the massacre known as 'the Night of the Long Knives'.

Rohm had been suspected by Hitler of disloyalty, but his murder began a massive crackdown on gay people. Heinrich Himmler, head of the Gestapo, described homosexuality as "a symptom of degeneracy that could destroy our race. We must return to the guiding Nordic principle: extermination of degenerates."

German historian Lothar Machtan argues that Hitler had Rohm – and almost all of the large number of gay figures within the SA – killed to silence speculation about his own homosexual experiences. His ‘evidence’ for Hitler being gay is shaky and has been questioned by many historians, although some of his findings are at least suggestive. A close friend of Hitler’s during his teenager years, August Kubizek, alleged a “romantic” affair between them. Hans Mend, a despatch rider who served alongside Hitler in the First World War, claimed to have seen Hitler having sex with a man. Hitler was certainly very close to several gay men, and never seems to have had a normal sexual relationship with a woman, not even his wife, Eva Braun.

Rudolph Diels, the founder of the Gestapo, recorded some of Hitler’s private thoughts on homosexuality. “It had destroyed ancient Greece, he said. Once rife, it extended its contagious effects like an ineluctable law of nature to the best and most manly of characters, eliminating from the breeding pool the very men the Volk most needs.” This idea – that homosexuality is ‘contagious’ and, implicitly, tempting – is revealing.

Rohm is venerated on the Homo-Nazi sites that have bred on the internet like germs in a wound. They have names like Gays Against Semitism (with the charming acronym GAS), and the Aryan Resistance Corps (ARC). Their Rohmite philosophy is simple: while white men are superior to other races, gay men are “the masters of the Master Race”. They alone are endowed with the “capacity for pure male bonding” and the “superior intellect” that is needed for “a fascist revolution.” The ARC even organises holiday “get-togethers” for its members where “you can relax amongst the company of our fellow white brothers.”

So it’s fairly easy to establish that gay people are not inoculated from fascism. They have often been at its heart. This begs the bigger question: why? How did gay people – so often victims of oppression and hate – become integral to the most hateful and evil political movement of all? Is it

just an extreme form of self-harm, the political equivalent to the gay kids who slash their own arms to ribbons out of self-hate?

Gay pornographer and film-maker Bruce LaBruce has one explanation. He claims that "all gay porn today is implicitly fascist. Fascism is in our bones, because it's all about glorifying white male supremacy and fetishizing domination, cruelty, power and monstrous authority figures." He has tried to explore the relationship between homosexuality and fascism in his movies, beginning with 'No Skin Off My Ass' in 1991. In his disturbing 1999 film "Skin Flick", a bourgeois gay couple – one black, one white – are sexually terrorised by a gang of gay skinheads who beat off to 'Mein Kampf' and beat up 'femmes'. He implies that bourgeois gay norms quickly break down to reveal a fascist lurking underneath; the movie ends with the black character being raped in front of his half-aroused white lover, as the racist gang chant, "Fuck the monkey."

I decided to track down some gay fascists and ask them directly. Wyatt Powers, director of the ARC, says, "I always knew in my heart racist and gay were both morally right. I don't see any conflict between them. It's only the Jew-owned gay press that tries to convince us that racialism is the same thing as homophobia. You can be an extreme nationalist and gay without any contradiction at all."

One comment board on a gay racist website goes even further into racist lunacy. One gay man from Ohio says, "Even if you are gay and white, or retarded and white, YOU ARE WHITE, BOTTOM LINE! Instead of letting the white race go extinct because of worthless races such as the Africans or Mexicans popping out literally millions of babies a day, we have to fight this fucked up shit they are doing. They are raping our country." It's true that racism and homophobia do not necessarily overlap – but as Rabbi Bernard Melchman explains, "Homophobia and anti-Semitism are so often part of the same disease." Racists are usually homophobic. Even after reading all their web

rantings, I didn't feel any closer to understanding why so many gay men ally themselves with people who will almost always turn on them in the end, just as the Nazis did.

Gay rights campaigner Peter Tatchell has a sensitive and intriguing explanation. "There are many reasons for this kind of thing," he says. "Some of them are in denial. They are going for hyper-masculinity, the most extreme possible way of being a man. It's a way of ostentatiously rejecting the perceived effeminacy of the homosexual 'Other'. These troubled men have a simple belief in their minds: 'Straight men are tough. Queers are weak. Therefore if I'm tough I can't be queer.' It's a desperate way of proving their manhood."

'Searchlight' magazine – the bible of the anti-fascist movement, with moles in every major far-right organisation – offers an alternative explanation. "Generally condemned by a society that continues to be largely hostile to gays, some men may find refuge and a new power status in the far right," one of their writers has explained. "Through adherence to the politics espoused by fascist groups, a new identity emerges – one where they aren't outcasts, because they are White Men, superior to everyone else. They render the gay part of their identity invisible – or reject the socially less acceptable parts, like being feminine – while vaunting what they see as superior."

But there's another important question: will fascist movements inevitably turn on gay people? In the case of the Nazis, it seems to have been fairly arbitrary; Hitler's main reason for killing Rohm was unrelated to his sexuality. From my perspective as a progressive-minded leftie, all fascism is evil; but should all gay people see it as inimical to their interests? Is it possible to have a gay fascist who wasn't acting against his own interests? Fascism is often defined as "a political ideology advocating hierarchical government that systematically denies equality to certain groups." It's true that this hierarchy

could benefit gay people at the expense of, say, black people. But given the prevalence of homophobia, isn't that – even for people who don't see fascism as inherently evil – a terrible risk to take? Won't a culture that turns viciously on one minority get around to gay people in the end? This seems, ultimately, to be the lesson of Ernst Rohm's pitiful, squalid little life.

The growing awareness of the role gay men play in fascist movements has been abused by some homophobes. In an especially nutty work of revisionist history called 'The Pink Swastika', the 'historian' Scott Lively tries to blame gay people for the entire Holocaust, and describes the murder of gay men in the camps as merely "gay-on-gay violence." A typical website commenting on the book claims absurdly, "The Pink Swastika shows that there was far more brutality, rape, torture and murder committed against innocent people by Nazi homosexuals than there even was against homosexuals themselves."

Yet we can't allow these madmen to prevent a period of serious self-reflection from the gay movement. If Bruce LaBruce is right, many of the mainstream elements of gay culture – body worship, the lauding of the strong, a fetish for authority figures and cruelty – provide a swamp in which the fascist virus can thrive. It's time all gay people realised that fascists will not bring on a Fabulous Solution for gay people. They will bring a Final Solution for us all.

Attitude - 24/06/2004