

Acknowledgements

When in January 2017 I first accepted the Federal Ministry of Defense's commission to research the history of the Bundeswehr's attitudes and policies towards homosexual soldiers, a colonel and colleague at ZMSBw asked me what qualified me for the job, outside of my own sexual orientation. It was a sharp question, though intended in collegial fashion, and gets at a point that should give us pause for reflection: You do not have to be Roman to write the history of ancient Rome. Still, an interest in antiquity and some knowledge of Latin does not hurt. The same holds true for other topics, those addressed in the present work included.

Empathy and understanding for the topic at hand proved essential in what turned into quite a complicated search for sources and contemporary witnesses. I would like to thank all those who were willing to share highly personal, at times intimate memories and experiences, with me. All of the interviews contributed valuable pieces to the puzzle, so no one will be singled out by name here. Thanks also to those who were not directly affected but shared their observations of how homosexual soldiers were treated – the staff officers, generals, jurists, civil servants and politicians, as well as decision-makers. A complete list of names at this point would go beyond the scope of these acknowledgements, and many expressed a desire not to be mentioned by name.

Beyond the list of interviewees given in the sources section, I would especially like to thank retired State Secretary Peter Wichert, retired Parliamentary State Secretary Brigitte Schulte and retired General Harald Kujat for their willingness to cast light on the decision-making processes as they played out behind closed ministry doors around the turn of the millennium. I would also like to thank retired General Wolfgang Altenburg, whose generous hospitality I still think back to fondly, and with whom I shared a series of illuminating conversations about the Wörner–Kießling affair. My special thanks go to some of the first employees of Military Counterintelligence, whose willingness to talk was of tremendous help in what was probably the most challenging aspect of this research project. Thanks go in particular to retired Colonel Heinz Kluss, who provided a great many helpful insights into MAD's work through numerous conversations, letters and emails starting in 2013. Heinz Kluss unfortunately was not able to witness the publication of this book, as he passed away in January 2019. Retired Surgeon General Dr. Horst Hennig also shared valuable reflections and criticism over a long series of conversations; his perspective as a military physician during the Second World War brought my own research forward. Unfortunately, he did not live to see the publication of this book, either; Horst Hennig passed away in May 2020. Now that the book has been published, I think of both with a great sense of gratitude.

In addition to individual accounts, this study is based on documents from the Federal Archives (BArch) and the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the GDR State Security Service (BStU). I hereby thank all of the employees involved in research at both archives, especially Cynthia Flohr, Christine Reibel, Captain Michael Herden, Master Sergeant Markus Schäfers and Daniel Jost at the Federal Military Archives Department in Freiburg im Breisgau; and Astrid Rose at the BStU in Berlin. Thanks to Dr. Georg Meyer in Freiburg for many entertaining discussions, often accompanied by a good meal and a glass of wine, as well as background information on how the Reichswehr and the Wehrmacht dealt with homosexuality. In Unna I have city archivist Dr. Frank Ahland to thank for sharing sources from the North Rhine-Westphalia State Archives. I am indebted to my colleagues at the ZMSBW's research department for military history after 1945 for a number of insightful and helpful pointers, including to sources beyond the immediate scope of the project: Dr. Jörg Echternkamp, Dr. Dorothee Hochstetter, Dr. Frank Käser, Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Dieter Kollmer, Dr. Bernd Lemke and Dr. Christoph Nübel, as well as those outside my more immediate circle – Lieutenant Colonel Michael Peter, Dr. Thorsten Loch, Dr. Helmut Hammerich, Dr. Heiner Möllers, Dr. Christian Stachelbeck, Navy Captain Dr. Christian Jentzsch and Captain Sebastian Schroeckh. In medical matters, I owe a debt of gratitude to Lt. Col. (MC) Ralf Vollmuth for useful references and background information.

Among others I have Lieutenant Colonel Michael Peter, Michael Lindner, Thomas Odenthal, Vincent Benedikt Seidl and Victor Marnette to thank for casting a critical eye on the manuscript. Government Director Guido Gutzeit and Lieutenant Colonel Wolf Günther Halama at the Center for Leadership Development and Civic Education in Koblenz offered valuable commentary and critique from a legal perspective. I would also like to thank Senior Government Counsellor Hartmut Stiffel in Koblenz for facilitating contact with Michael Lindner in Hamburg as an eyewitness in 2016. Even before the BMVg commissioned this work I had already had an interest in this subject and had begun to assemble sources for a possible future project.

My thanks to Dr. Ursula von der Leyen, Federal Minister of Defense from 2013 to 2019, for her initiative in commissioning the study, as well as to her successor Anne-gret Kramp-Karrenbauer for resolving to publish the work in a timely manner. My thanks are due as well to State Secretaries Gerd Hoofe, Colonel Dr. Burkhard Köster, Colonel Dr. Sven Lange, Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Rudolf J. Schlaffer and Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Thorsten Loch for their kindly assistance at the ministry in the years leading up to publication.

Such prompt publication of the study would not have been possible without the support of my superiors and colleagues at the ZMSBW, especially for their support, Naval Captain Dr. Jörg Hillmann and Dr. Michael Epkenhans.

My special thanks for facilitating the English translation goes to Colonel Dr. Sven Lange, Colonel Dr. Martin Hofbauer and Dr. Heiko Biehl. Above all I have Professor Dr. Jörg Echternkamp and Dr. Christian Adam to thank for their dedication and continued professionalism in realizing this English translation within a period of just two years, and especially to Mr. Noah Harley from New York State for his outstanding translation work.

In listing all the sources of support, two names are still missing: Dr. Rüdiger Wenzke, the longtime leader of the research department for military history after 1945, and retired Colonel Dr. Winfried Heinemann, the former chief of the research department for GDR military history. It was not just the years they spent accompanying the work, casting both a benevolent and critical eye (Winfried Heinemann was the one who asked the author what qualified him for the research project), it was Rüdiger and Winfried who first opened the doors of academic research to me at the former Military History Research Office (Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, or MGFA) in 2006–2007, and who have remained steadfastly by my side from the very beginning. I have them to thank for much of the academic work I have completed since then. Both have since taken well-deserved retirement; this study is dedicated to them.

Klaus Storkmann