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**DESTRUCTIVE AND SELF-DESTRUCTIVE TRENDS IN
CRIMINALIZED SOCIETY**

A STUDY OF TOTALITARIANISM

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*Thanatolatry—Idolatrous Delight in Death—A Perversion
of the Attitude Toward Death*

The criminal activity of the SS culminated in murders on an unprecedented scale; mass murders, according to preconceived diabolic schemes which were to serve the master plan of genocide, as well as murders of those considered useless, disagreeable or disloyal were perpetrated. Finally wanton murders were committed for the sake of murdering alone, possibly with the idea of "hardening" the men who were carrying out the murders, and tying them irrevocably to the SS.

This eruption of aggressive-destructive activity brought about, probably as a means of psychological defense, a fundamental perversion of the idea of death into a heathen concept, which I should like to call "idolatrous delight in death," or more briefly, *thanatolatry*. The first open statement of this type is probably the astounding remark made by Goering in one of his speeches early in the war, in which he said, "With every German airman who is killed by the enemy our Luftwaffe becomes stronger." This statement is illogical unless one assumes that the spirit or the strength of the dead man somehow entered into the substance of the Luftwaffe and thereby made it stronger in an irrational and mystic manner reminiscent of Voo-Doo beliefs. There is more evidence than this, that the Nazi Germans actually entertained such superstitious beliefs, for they actually believed that dead bodies could give strength to inanimate matter. Human bodies, living and dead, were encased in the concrete of fortifications and bunkers, as reported by many reliable witnesses. At the Herman Goering steel works, according to one report ob-

tained by Wing Commander John Thompson of FIAT, people, living and dead, were thrown into the molten steel in order to see whether some substance of the human body, some mineral, or some secret mystical something might add more strength to steel than the customary alloys.

The concept that dead people can give strength and character to inanimate matter is also inherent in Rosenberg's and Darré's blood and soil theory, which declared that the soil in which people of Germanic race were buried itself became German and in turn could also give German characteristics to people who nourished themselves from the products of that soil and that thus German people could be progressively Germanized by feeding from soil in which Germans were buried. Conversely, the dead were also to make the soil increasingly German.

This concept of blood and soil, which is thanatology in essence, was admittedly responsible for Himmler's frequent, otherwise senseless, transfers of SS divisions during campaigns because he wanted "his SS" to shed its blood and leave its dead on every part of every battlefield. This concept may also have been responsible for placing the main genocidal slaughter houses and extermination camps outside the confines of the German-speaking Reich, in spite of the fact that the deportations, for instance from Holland to Oswiecim (Auschwitz), taxed the German transportation system, and the problem of secrecy could have been equally well accomplished at some lonely spot within Germany, the Harz Mountains for instance; besides Germany was anyway full of concentration camps which killed people at a somewhat less rapid rate.

In spontaneous statements, interrogations, and court testimony the Nazi leaders revealed such thanatolatrous concepts and others in many ways. I asked one of the defendants in the medical case, SS *Obergruppenfuehrer* Dr. Karl Brandt, whether it was ethically permissible to kill five people in a medical experiment in order to save 500 or 5000.

He replied:

Do you think that one could obtain any worth-while fundamental results without a definite toll of lives? The same goes for technological development. You cannot build a great bridge, a gigantic building; you cannot establish a speed record with a new racing engine, without deaths!

That concept was extremely prevalent among the SS, and it is quite likely that Pohl systematically worked 1200 captive French officers to death within six weeks in the Dora Mines, the underground factories where the first V-1's and V-2's were manufac-

tured (see Dr. Katzen-Ellenbogen's testimony), in order to be able to tell his Fuehrer that these wonderful weapons must be strong and wonderful because 1200 young French officers of military age had worked themselves to death in the first six weeks of their manufacture. In other countries we would have regarded such casualties of an industrial project as due to criminal inefficiency as indeed it was since these 1200 Frenchmen did not work themselves to death because they were particularly enthusiastic or eagerly over-efficient and indefatigable in their task but merely because they were not supplied with food and were not given sufficient rest and adequate clothing in the dark and humid underground caves. It is very likely that a well-fed and well-clad but far smaller group of men would have done far more efficient work without casualties, or with only negligible ones. But men perverted to thanatolatrous thinking like Pohl, Himmler, and Hitler must have felt that the weapon whose manufacture caused so many deaths must be something quite strong and wonderful, a hope which was not warranted by reality and which therefore failed.

In a similar vein is a statement which one of the defendants in the medical case, SS *Obergruppenfuehrer* Gebhardt, made on the stand (p. 4162 of the German court record, p. 4136 of the English transcript). In enumerating what he regarded as the positive accomplishments of his late friend Heinrich Himmler, who in his opinion had been misinterpreted and misunderstood, he also praised the fact that Himmler had made training in the SS so realistic, "that we in the SS already had dead men at every maneuver and on every training field at all times, already in peacetime." ("so dass es bei uns in der SS schon auf jedem Truppenuebungsplatz, jederzeit, schon in Friedenszeit, Tote gab.") In other countries fatalities during training even with live ammunition were always regarded as a sign of inefficiency, and nobody except the thanatolatrists would point to such deaths proudly, as proving something grand or strong.

Himmler himself believed that strength can be derived from inflicting deaths and from having remained unmoved by it. In his famous, or, rather, infamous speech to his *Gruppenfuehrers* (generals) in Posen on October 4, 1943, he said (pp. 64 and 64 of the original document, 1919-PS):

I will now talk to you here in all frankness about a rather grave chapter. Among ourselves it should be mentioned quite frankly and yet we will never speak of it publicly. . . . I mean the clearing out of the Jews, the extermination of the Jewish race. It is one of those things that is easy to say. "The Jewish race is being exterminated," says every party member, "That's quite clear. It is our program, elimina-

tion of the Jews, extermination—we do it.” . . . Of all those who talk that way nobody has witnessed it, nobody has stood through it. But among you, most of you know what it means when 100 corpses are lying together, when 500 lie there, or when 1000 lie there. To have lasted through this and—apart from exceptions caused by human weaknesses—to have remained decent fellows,¹ that has made us hard. This is a page of glory in our history which has never been written and is never to be written.

The murdering of 100, 500, or 1000 helpless, unarmed people, many of whom had been deprived of their weapons by cunning before the massacre, and to gaze at their corpses could in no way be construed as constituting hardening in the soldierly sense of the word. Only if one understands the concept of thanatology and the destructive phantasy life which it represents is this statement understandable.

This distorted, destructive-sadistic thinking is also expressed in the way in which Himmler in the same speech refers to the Russian army when he said (p. 9 of the original document 1919-PS):

With him (the Russian) only the mass counts, and this mass must therefore be crushed by our feet, stuck to death and slaughtered off. It is, for once to use a quite brutal example, as with a swine that must be stuck and must gradually bleed to death.

It is one of the laws of psychology that destructive urges of great magnitude and depth, and destructive concepts arising therefrom, cannot remain limited or focused, but must inevitably spread and be directed also against one's own group and ultimately against the self. This is in harmony with similar more general physiological principles. It was dramatically though quite involuntarily expressed in the selfsame speech by Himmler when close to the end he spoke about the future (pp. 114-116 of the Posen speech, Document 1919-PS). What Himmler had in store for the SS itself was by no means peace and happiness but a perpetuation of fighting in the East with its dangers, hardships, and death, including even the promise of unequal, gigantic battles in which they would be outnumbered five to one:

I requested of the Fuehrer today that the SS—if we have fulfilled our task and our duty by the end of the war—should have the privilege of holding Germany's most easterly frontier as an armed frontier. I believe this is the only privilege for which we have no competitors. I believe not one person will dispute our claim to this privilege. We shall be in a position there to exercise every young age-group in the use of arms. We shall impose our laws on the East. We will charge ahead and push our way forward little by little to the Urals. I hope

¹ What is probably meant is “in dealing with each other,” a phrase which recurs in other connections in this speech.

that our generation will successfully bring it about that every age-group shall have fought in the East, and that every one of our divisions spend a winter in the East every second or third year. Then we shall never grow soft, then we shall never get wearers of our uniform who come to us only because it is distinguished or because the black coat will naturally be very attractive in peacetime. Everyone will know that: "If I join the SS, there is the possibility that I will be killed." He has contracted in writing that every second year he will not dance in Berlin or attend the carnival in Munich, but that he will be posted to the eastern frontier in an ice-cold winter.

(This would indeed be one convenient way for Himmler to eliminate idealists or recalcitrants among the SS, especially people who insisted on remaining at the fringe of criminal activity, or who expressed the desire to leave the SS, or those otherwise suspected of disloyalty. Chances are that he would not have sent those members of his inside circle there, who could be relied upon to do his bidding such as Rascher, for instance, whose transfer to the Russian front he prevented during the war.)

Then we will have a healthy elite for all time. Thus we will create the necessary conditions for the whole Germanic people and the whole of Europe, controlled, ordered, and led by us, the Germanic people, to be able in generations to stand the test in her battles of destiny against Asia, which will certainly break out again. We do not know when that will be. Then, when the mass of humanity of one to one-and-a-half billions lines up against us, the Germanic people, numbering I hope 250 to 300 millions, and the other European peoples making a total of 600 to 700 millions (and with an outpost area stretching as far as the Urals) —must stand the test in its vital struggle against Asia. It would be an evil day if the Germanic people did not survive it. It would be the end of beauty and "Kultur", of the creative power of this earth. This is the distant future. It is for that that we are fighting, pledged to hand down the heritage of our ancestors.

This is indeed a strange prophecy on the part of a man who claimed to be a German patriot. As a psychologist one stands in amazement before a destructive urge culminating in self-destructiveness, which has engulfed an entire nation. Himmler continued:

We see into the distant future because we know what it will be. That is why we are doing our duty more fanatically than ever, more devoutly than ever, more bravely, more obediently, and more thoroughly than ever. We want to be worthy of being permitted to be the first SS men of the Fuehrer, Adolf Hitler, in the long history of the Germanic people, which stretches before us. Now let us remember the Fuehrer, Adolf Hitler, who will create the Germanic Reich and will lead us into the Germanic future. Our Fuehrer, Adolf Hitler. Sieg Heil, Sieg Heil, Sieg Heil!!

The cause of this perverted thanatolatrous attitude toward death must be looked for indeed in a tremendous destructive-

aggressive urge which found its expression in the basic destructive attitude and preoccupation of the Nazi movement and particularly of its driving core, the SS. Like many other concepts of National Socialism, it also harkens back to primitive destructive attitudes and to the attitude of primitive peoples. It is a primitive destructive drive coupled with magic thinking which is so prevalent in small children and primitive people. This concept is contrary to reality and therefore during normal development it becomes repressed, rejected, sublimated, and surpassed by the mature individual and the mature social group.

The re-awakening of this destructive drive in the leaders and followers of Nazism and its symbolic expression, the thanatolatrous concept, made it easier and more desirable for SS men to kill by facilitating a greater and unhampered emotional satisfaction to be derived from the act of killing. Killing also became further removed from reality because of the distortion of reality by the thanatolatrous concept; and conversely, dying likewise became more removed from reality also. At the same time, however, by its removal from reality death also was deprived of its real meaning and cheapened in the process. Thus, the thanatolatrous concept which started with a perverted exaltation of death, at the same time debased the value of life and thereby deprived death of its tragedy and dignity. The ultimate expression of this distortion of the meaning of life and death is a letter which we found in the files of the concentration camp Buchenwald, that laboratory for debasement of human values administered by the WVHA² of the SS, which was written by Dr. Hoven, one of the men convicted and sentenced to death in the medical case (Doc. No. NO-2148). This letter was addressed to the commanding officer of the camp and was a request to eliminate lengthy individual death reports in favor of simple lists in order to save time and paper. This letter read as follows:

It is requested to examine whether it is necessary to issue reports of the death of political Russians. According to a directive issued last week, the filling out of only one form was required. This may effect a saving of paper but as political Russians form the greatest contingent among the various categories of dead prisoners at the present time, more time and paper could be saved if these death reports were dropped completely. Simple notifications of death could be made as before, as for the Russian prisoners of war.

The drastic expression of this attitude which culminated in self-destruction is inherent in the Nazi enthusiasm for euthanasia. In the film, *I Accuse*, a propaganda film for euthanasia, its Nazi writer, probably Brack, lets one of the jurors emphatically

² Economic and Administrative Main Office of the SS.

demand for his countrymen the right to die, since the State has the right to command its citizens to die in time of war.

It is inevitable that the aggressive and destructive drive finally turns against the own group and ultimately against the self. The thanatologic, ktenologic, and thanatolatrourous trends in the medical researches inspired by the SS have been dealt with already in a separate study; but it is interesting to note in this connection that Dr. and Mrs. Rascher's secretary and household companion, Lulu Muschler, who was a cousin of Mrs. Rascher, committed suicide by allowing herself to freeze to death on a snowy hillside (the Raschers had been working on death from prolonged exposure to cold); and Himmler killed himself with the aid of a glass vial containing cyanide, the dosage, size, and thickness of which had been worked out by Rascher on Himmler's orders in his experiments in the crematorium of the Dachau concentration camp as early as 1943.

Some Self-Punitive Consequences of the Basically Destructive Nature of the Socio-Psychologic Structure of the SS

The release of these destructive drives referred to above is a dangerous and double-edged weapon because, by the law of psychology, these destructive drives ultimately turn also against associates and finally against the self. We see examples of this in the hateful and murderous relationships which finally broke out among the ranks of the SS themselves, directed against each other. This ultimately and inexorably brought down the destruction of the group and the individuals it composed, expressed in the marked turnover of personnel, many of whom found their deaths in SS bunkers at the hands of their former comrades—they were those who lost in the constant fratricidal struggle euphemistically termed the self-selection of leaders (*Fuehrer-Selbstausslese*).

It is inevitable that the aggressive and destructive group and individual finally turns against itself or himself. Himmler was aware of this tremendous chasm in the polarity of the behavior which he claimed to have desired when he stated in the above-quoted passage of his speech that his SS men knew what it meant to look upon heaps of 100, 500, and 1000 freshly murdered corpses, but that they yet had remained decent fellows "apart from exceptions caused by human weaknesses." If Himmler had known the laws of psychodynamics more than superficially, the only laws which even he could not break, then he would have known that these "exceptions" were bound to become the rule. There is an "all or none" law of fundamental psychological

attitudes. A man cannot for long be criminal in one type of relationships and decent in others. The destructive drive, once unleashed, is bound to engulf the whole personality and occupy all its relationships. In many places in his speech Himmler expressed the vain assumption that this might not be so. On pages 23 and 24 of his Posen speech he stated:

One basic principle must be the absolute rule for the SS man: We must be honest, decent, loyal, and comradely to members of our own blood and to nobody else. What happens to a Russian, to a Czech does not interest me in the slightest. What the nations can offer in the way of good blood of our type we will take, if necessary by kidnapping their children and raising them here with us. Whether nations live in prosperity or starve to death interests me only in so far as we need them as slaves for our Kultur; otherwise it is of no interest to me. Whether 10,000 Russian females fall down from exhaustion while digging an antitank ditch interests me only in so far as the antitank ditch for Germany is finished. We shall never be rough and heartless when it is not necessary, that is clear. We Germans, who are the only people in the world who have a decent attitude toward animals, will also assume a decent attitude toward these human animals. But it is a crime against our own blood to worry about them and give them ideals, thus causing our sons and grandsons to have a more difficult time with them. When somebody comes to me and says, "I cannot dig the antitank ditch with women and children. It is inhuman, for it could kill them," then I have to say, "You are a murderer of your own blood because if the antitank ditch is not dug, German soldiers will die, and they are sons of German mothers. They are our own blood." That is what I want to instill into this SS and what I believe I have instilled into them as one of the most sacred laws of the future. Our concern, our duty is our people and our blood. It is for them that we must provide and plan, work and fight, nothing else. We can be indifferent to everything else. I wish the SS to adopt this attitude to the problem of all foreign non-Germanic peoples, especially Russians. All else is vain, fraud against our own nation, and an obstacle to the early winning of the war.

It is only one step from this attitude to the callousness of sacrificing his own men ruthlessly and without consideration which is so striking in the many military blunders committed and to the callous inclusion of their own women and children into the final *Götterdaemmerung* of the Party bosses. The rigid and ruthless manner in which all were crushed who came within reach of the German heel, not only Russians, Poles, and Jews, but the Dutch and French as well, undermined true loyalty in their own German ranks by reason of the fear unleashed. The correspondence between Himmler, Brandt, Greiser, and Blome in regard to the extermination of tubercular Poles gives ample evidence that the reason why these measures were to be kept secret was the fear that their own German population, if they

knew the details of these measures, would assume that such measures might soon apply to them too; as indeed they did in regard to those groups who dared to dissent and who were incarcerated in concentration camps where extermination of "invalids" was a matter of daily routine. The ruthless abuse of their own troops brought it about that transfer to the Russian front was finally regarded as punishment, even among the so-called elite troops of the SS; and appalling are the many instances of abject and degrading behavior which members of the SS officers' corps lowered themselves to in order to avoid transfer to the Russian front. What happened to the remainder of the vaunted moral fiber of the SS? In his Posen speech in 1943 Himmler already had a good deal of fault to find with his SS. On pages 80 to 90 he discussed truthfulness, reliability, and responsibility. He said:

I now come to a fourth virtue which is very rare in Germany—truthfulness. One of the greatest evils which has spread during the war is the lack of truthfulness in messages, reports, and statements which subordinate departments in civil life, in the State, the Party, and the services, send in to the departments over them. The message, the report is the basis of every decision. It is actually a fact that one can now in many spheres assume in wartime that 95 out of 100 messages are untrue or only half true or semi-correct . . .

He also found fault with the way agreements were being kept by the SS. He went on to teach the following lesson (pp. 83 and 84):

If we conclude agreements, we must keep them. If I make a contract with an agent, even with a blackguard, I keep the contract. I take my stand unreservedly on this point of view. If I announce in the General Government that anyone who informs against a Jew who has sought shelter and gone into hiding shall have a third of the Jew's property, then it often happens that Secretary Huber or Second Lieutenant (SS) (*Untersturmfuhrer*) Huber—who when he can makes illegal trips, or does not hesitate to order a new telephone or new pencils, who, that is, never saves—suddenly begins to save for the German Reich. He says for instance: "This Jew has 12,000RM. What! That means I would have to pay out to the Pole who denounced him 4000 RM. No, I'll save that for Germany. The Pole shall get only 400 RM." So a little man goes and breaks the promise of a whole organization. That sort of thing should be impossible.

What is really impossible but what Himmler obviously did not understand when he gave this absurd schoolbook example is that it is impossible to develop or retain morality while engaged in immoral behavior. The subsequent passage is therefore vain and unreal phantasy (pp. 85 and 85):

If we make a promise, it must be kept. If the Reichsfuehrer-SS pledges to anyone support for his organization—as may very often be the case

now in the Balkans—this pledge must be kept. We must acquire such a reputation for the keeping of contracts in the whole world, we in the SS, that we thereby gain for Germany advantages of the greatest value, namely faith through confidence. Many will come to us who will not approach official departments. The Balkans are always in a state of confusion. That is a blessing. If they were united it would be terrible. Things are chaotic in the Caucasus and in Russia. We can only see to it—this is also a precept—that the territories we have occupied and the people we rule over never become united, that they always remain disunited. For they would only be united against us. If therefore we pledge our protection to a party (*Splittergruppe*) who approach us, it must be quite out of the question for any member of the SS or the police, any member of the whole organization, to go and break the promise. This promise must be sacred.

How could anyone fail to unite against the evil monstrosity that was Nazi Germany? Only a Hitler and a Himmler and those seduced or blinded by them could fail to see that. They united, at least for a time, in spite of such naively diabolical schemes as the “whipping order” in concentration camps which decreed that Russians should always be flogged by Poles and vice versa, which applied even to women’s concentration camps (Docs. 804 PS, 853 PS). That Himmler himself, however, had a realization of the wrongfulness of the acts committed by his own group is surprisingly clearly expressed in the next chapter of his speech, which dealt with honesty (pp. 90-94):

5. Honesty

I come now to the fifth point: sacredness of property, honesty, probity. I must say that is a complex of questions which is very depressing in Germany. We have become—I say that now behind locked doors and this is intended only for this small circle—a very corrupt nation.

He then gives an example:

A family lives in the eastern territory. Now they have labor personnel in rich abundance. They grab themselves this Russian and that Russian or a Russian woman. The lady of the house no longer works; she does no more cooking and does no longer beat her carpets. Why should she, after all, we are a *Herrenvolk*. But no one thinks who pays for this labor force which could better be used in a munitions factory.

Himmler then went on to say that after Eicke went to the front, such things also went on in concentration camps “because of the unclear chain of command.” “There were quite a number of families who had an inmate here and an inmate there, and another family suddenly had new furniture and who knows what.” He then promised that all the cases still pending in the docket would be tried:

It is also theft to use a labor force to which one has no right and if the labor is not vital. Today 100 men who are used only for reasons of luxury in such positions are a loss to the German armament. Beyond

what I have said so far, unclarities also result from the condition of need in which we lived since the years 1936-1937. Since this time we no longer have all the wares we need, which the human heart desires, and which one likes, whether it is silk or stockings, chocolate or coffee. Because of that, unclear conditions arise. We don't want to be executioners here. Temptation is great. Can one buy this, or can one not buy this? Maybe one can get it in France or in Belgium, or elsewhere for a special price. These are the things which of course make education difficult. For this reason I don't stir up these controversial questions, in this time of need, for a good many do not think that they are doing anything bad; but I announce already today that at the moment in which we, after the war, get normal conditions in Germany, I shall take the sharpest conceivable measures in regard to these things in the SS. If we will then keep that up through 20 years of peace we shall obtain by education a blameless conception of all these questions in the future. I want to mention one more point. It is for me a matter of course that the old fighter, the longer he has fought for the movement that much more is he under obligation to conduct himself decently in all these matters. If someone comes to me and says, "But that is an old fighter," then I must answer, "Sir, permit me: Have we fought for the Third Reich essentially for that reason that we now ourselves slay it to death with an axe, so that we now ourselves forcibly murder the respect which the people had for us?" Especially the old Nazi, if he commits a breach, will be gotten hold of and be given penance to do, or—if the case is very bad—will pay with his life. In this matter we cannot show any consideration. If we punish him and tell the others that, we will save 99 others. But if we let one go through our fingers and say, "He is an old Nazi. He is an old SS Fuehrer; one cannot really condemn Fuehrers"—then the next 99 will become guilty of the same offenses and gradually the whole organization will suffocate from it.

What Himmler did not understand was that what he himself deplored as a deterioration of the sacredness of property, honesty, and probity was the inevitable and inexorable result of the policy of spoliation, trickery, robbery, and murder which he and his henchmen had themselves instigated, but which they wanted to be directed only against the Jews and the nationals of occupied territories. But the destructive principle had, as inevitably it must, gotten out of hand. The complete destruction of all moral principles by the SS itself, the complete destructive demoralization of the Third Reich is exemplified by nothing more striking than by the men who composed the WVHA of the SS; and the cunning trickery and cheating which they practiced on their victims they ultimately also practiced in dealing with the German State and with the German people themselves.

We must see in the destruction of the morals, the institutions, the ideals, and the towns of Germany the ultimate realization of this destructive drive which was in no other organization of the Nazi State so shamelessly unleashed as it was in the SS. The self-destructive mechanism which is inherent in all destructive

thinking and activity in spite of superficial constructive rationalizations is well exemplified in the activities of the *Lebensborn*, belying its name which literally means "fountain of life." While the ostensible purpose of this SS organization was to further life and fertility it actually destroyed not only fertility of the women physically because of the spread of venereal disease inevitably associated with the pattern of its activities, but it also destroyed the structure of the German family while claiming to want the opposite. It also destroyed the respect for German womanhood which was supposed to be enhanced by the concept of the Nurnberg laws and the concept of racial value and so forth. As a result of this demoralization the very word for a young German woman, namely the term *fraulein*, has become a derogatory term among the occupation troops. This is not due to some order from the higher occupation authorities but due to the teaching which these women have received from the false prophets of SS immorality. We heard in the medical trial that the high command of the SS was aware of the fact that venereal disease soared to an all-time high in the vicinity of SS garrisons as compared to the environs of *Wehrmacht* garrisons; and while an argument ensued about this point between Himmler and the chief medical officer of the SS, *Obergruppenfuehrer* Genzken, who is one of the men condemned to life imprisonment in Case No. 1 of the Subsequent Proceedings, nothing was done about it in keeping with the general destructive tendency of the SS. That same blight of destructiveness characterized all other ostensibly constructive principles of this destructive organization, the SS.

This general destructive tendency also revealed itself in the above-described peculiar and perverted attitude toward death which accounted for the fact that killing became to the SS man not merely the grim business of a soldier at war, and dying the grim necessity for a soldier at war, but gave death a peculiar distorted and heathen meaning which was obviously designed to increase the readiness to die. This, however, by the peculiar inherent tendency of all destructive principles, grew into a concept which eventually became self-destructive when Himmler finally demanded of the SS man an exultant gladness over his own death (*Sterbefreudigkeit*). Concentration camps again became the training and proving ground of this attitude which was to develop in the SS man the extreme of readiness to kill (*Tötungsbereitschaft*) as well as gladness over dying (*Sterbefreudigkeit*). This peculiar attitude was the above-described thanatolatrous perversion.