Chapter 4: Nazi Elite Boarding Schools and the Attempted Creation of a New Class System

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On 26 December 1940, the Vienna edition of the Nazi Party newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, published a richly-illustrated feature with a headline taken from one of Hitler's recent speeches: "We envision a state in which birth means absolutely nothing, and achievement and ability everything!"[1] However, the article did not merely regurgitate the Führer's characterisation of social mobility in the Third Reich as predicated on its citizens' "achievements", but aimed to demonstrate that such principles had already been put into practice in the sphere of education. While the text of the article itself hymned the triumph of the new "socialist state of the future", and the final fulfilment of the slogan "Make way for the capable!" (*Freie Bahn dem Tüchtigen!*), a telling combination of images and captions showcased pupils at a type of educational institution for whom these ideals had ostensibly become reality: "*Jungmannen*" at the National Political Education Institutes (*Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten*). These institutions, otherwise known as NPEA or Napolas, formed an extensive system of state-run boarding schools which admitted boys from the age of ten, and aimed to prepare them for leadership positions in all walks of life.[2] By 1945, there were more than forty Napolas scattered across the "Greater German Reich", educating around 10,000 pupils (approximately two per cent of the total number of school leavers).[3]

The article's captions, which quoted directly from letters written by pupils (who were known as *Jungmannen*), highlighted the unprecedented opportunities for social mobility and an impressive all-round education which these boarding-schools offered. Thus, one boy commented:

> My home is in the Wachau; my father works there in a stone quarry. I also have three brothers, and my father could never have permitted me to continue my studies, since this is hardly possible without any money. Here, at the "Napola", this possibility was given me […]. We have countless advantages over a normal *Gymnasium* (secondary school). So, for example, we have our own indoor swimming pool; we learn to ride

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> horses and drive motorcycles, and we get to know the whole of Germany through trips by train and by bike. Later on, I want to become an army officer [...].

One of the other *Jungmannen* in question, whose father was a manual labourer too, also stressed the potential for social advancement which education at a Napola might offer: "At some point, I would like to attend the Diplomatic Academy, and here at school I'm seeking to prepare myself as well as possible." Ostensibly, what could better substantiate the notion that the Nazi regime was making good on its promises of social inclusivity?

This type of propaganda was extremely commonplace in press reports on the Napolas—with relentless stress being placed on the fact that the schools were constantly providing opportunities for boys from the very poorest backgrounds.[4] Just as luxury holidays were propagandistically offered even to the Nazi state's most humble workers, via the Strength Through Joy state recreation organisation (*Kraft durch Freude*), so a visit to the Napola could reveal that now "Workers' sons are studying! Every opportunity for career advancement stands open to those who are high-achievers."[5] In accordance with Point 20 of the NSDAP Party programme, numerous articles and programmatic documents written by or on behalf of the government authority responsible for the schools, the Inspectorate of the Napolas, stressed that the social status of candidates, in particular their parents' wealth or standing, made no difference whatsoever to whether they would gain a place at a Napola—not even if their father were one of the earliest and most loyal Nazi Party members.[6] A particularly favoured conceit was the idea that the "spirit of socialism" ruled supreme at the Napolas, so that (for example), the son of a Major might live and work alongside the son of a foreman in a tram garage.[7] As August Heißmeyer, the Inspector of the Napolas, put it in an interview with the Reich Youth Press Service in September 1936, "It would be a betrayal of National Socialism if we were to make the education of our future leaders a question of wealth or pedigree."[8] Instead, physical, racial and academic fitness were supposed to be the paramount factors in determining which applicants would gain a place at a Napola, and which would not.[9]

If this propaganda did indeed possess a sound basis in fact, then it would appear that the Napolas incorporated, or even embodied, some of the most "socialist" elements of National Socialism, and that they might have been able, at least in part, to realise the quintessentially Nazi ideal of the racialised national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) as a classless society based on achievement, and stratified on racial rather than financial grounds of inclusion and exclusion.[10]

However, as always with the claims made by National Socialist organs and functionaries in this regard, one must beware of mistaking propaganda for reality. On the face of it, the Napolas were utterly opposed to the supposedly stultifying aspirations of the middle classes; indeed, the schools and their adherents often made most virulent pronouncements against the degenerate effect of "bourgeois comforts".[11] But how far was this actually the case? How effective was the schools' programme of social engineering in practice? And were the Napolas really as revolutionary—and as divorced from previous, socially exclusive models of education—as they liked to pretend?

This chapter will begin by considering the various ways in which the Napolas sought to efface class differences among their pupils—beginning with the extensive system of free and subsidised places which the schools provided, as well as other forms of assistance which were on offer in order to facilitate pupils' social mobility. In this connection, I will also consider the programme of "missions" (*Einsätze*) which all *Jungmannen* were expected to embark upon at the age of 16 or so, during which they spent several weeks living and working with mine- and factory-workers, in order to experience the travails of the German labourer at first hand, providing an avenue for inclusion into an imagined *Volksgemeinschaft* beyond the boundaries of the school.

I will then move on to explore some of the class tensions which were still manifest within the Napola system, including both the predominantly middle-class nature of the schools' recruits, and the school authorities' desire to retain certain elements of "middle-class cultivation" (*bürgerliche Bildung*) in their programme. Finally, I will conclude by assessing how successful the Napolas may really have been both in terms of fostering social mobility, and in their crusade to eradicate "bourgeois elements" (*Bürgerlichkeit*).[12]

Effacing class differences through social engineering: Mining "missions" and subsidised places

The Napolas had first been founded in April 1933 by Bernhard Rust, then Prussian Culture Minister and later Reich Education Minister, as a birthday present for Hitler. The first three Napolas took over the buildings of the former Prussian cadet schools in Potsdam, Plön and Köslin, and the schools were often portrayed as inheriting (or appropriating) the military ethos of the Royal Prussian Cadet Corps and its hierarchy of "Prussian" virtues: discipline, responsibility, orderliness, toughness, fortitude, courage, and so forth. Those boys who were subjected to the schools' gruelling week-long entrance examination would be expected not only to demonstrate their physical and intellectual prowess (as well as their "racial fitness"), but also

to perform pure "tests of courage" (*Mutproben*), which involved feats of daring such as jumping from a third-floor window or balcony into a blanket without hesitating, or diving from a three-metre high diving-board into the sea when they were unable to swim.[13] Rust and his acolytes, some of whom (including the first Inspector of the NPEA, Joachim Haupt) had been cadets themselves, saw the cadet-school tradition as an important model for their brainchild, even giving the schools the "motto of a great Prussian soldier" (Moltke), "Be more than you seem!" (*Mehr sein als scheinen*)[14]

However, the "caste arrogance" which the cadet corps had tended to foster was anathema to the founders of the Napolas—as was the "cloistered" privileging of intellectualism cultivated at the *Gymnasien*. To this end, a generous means-tested system of free and subsidised places was constructed, in which approximately ten per cent of pupils were charged no fees at all, with a series of incremental steps rising from Class B (c. 240 RM per year, or 20 RM per calendar month) to Class M (c. 1440 RM per year, or 120 RM per calendar month), according to parents' net income.[15] Free places were also offered to certain categories of Prussian and Reich civil servants.[16] Individual schools were also encouraged to seek support from local government, town councils, firms, and party organisations to sponsor subsidised places for boys from their local area, in order to provide even more opportunities for the children of financially disadvantaged citizens (*Volksgenossen*)—some of these initiatives do seem to have achieved some degree of success.[17] In addition, those Napolas with so-called "*Aufbauzüge*" attached—classes starting at around the age of thirteen, for those boys who had missed out on being selected at the age of ten in their primary school (*Volksschule*)—offered a far higher ratio of free places, in a deliberate attempt to bring a larger proportion of working-class youth into the schools.[18]

A report from NPEA Rottweil from June 1939, in response to a demand from the Inspectorate for information about what social strata pupils' parents belonged to, gives an interesting example of how this system worked in practice (this is a source with further implications, to which we shall return later on):

> The fathers of our *Jungmannen* were:
> Civil Servants 33, Salesmen 32, Teachers 19, Craftsmen 11, Landowners 7, Officers 5, Wehrmacht officials 1, Party or Party organisations 6, Engineers 5, Doctors 4, Foresters 3, Reich Labour Service 2, Careers Advisors 1, Publicans 2, Manufacturers 3, Architects 2, Solicitors 1, Pharmacists 1 […]

In the year 1938, the contributions lay between 200 and 1,200 RM. The average rate comprised 510 RM.

The contributions were distributed as follows:

6 *Jungmannen* paid the full rate of 1,200 RM

10 paid between 1,000 and 1,200 RM

12 paid between 750-1,000 RM

62 paid between 510-750 RM

48 paid between 300-519 RM

15 paid under 300 RM

4 had free places.[19]

In this connection, it is worth noting that the Inspectorate made it a point of honour that no *Jungmann* should be expelled simply because his parents or guardians were unable to pay the school-fees, and, in 1936, Heißmeyer concluded an agreement with Reich Organization Leader Robert Ley that, in cases where the local Mayor, Party offices (*Kreisleitung*), or Gauleitung were unable to stump up the funds for a scholarship or a sponsored place, Ley's German Labour Front (DAF) would foot the bill. Any other outcome, Heißmeyer declared, would be a negation of the schools' paramount selection principle (*Auslesеprinzip*), in which social background and parental circumstances should have no role whatsoever to play.[20]

Such social assistance not only covered the payment of school fees, however, but also extended to all areas of school life. The Napolas provided their pupils with all the requisite uniforms and equipment, so that—as in the Hitler Youth—variations in social status among the *Jungmannen* could never be revealed by differences in dress.[21] All pupils received exactly the same amount of pocket money (around 10 RM per month), and their families were strictly forbidden from sending further tips or top-ups to supplement this.[22] Moreover, each headmaster (*Anstaltsleiter*) was charged with the duty of forcing all social distinctions to vanish from his Napola, and "particularly worthy, but socially badly-off *Jungmannen*" were to be provided with funding at his discretion to smooth their path, without their having to ask for it, and without their schoolmates knowing anything about it. This institutional generosity might include paying for journeys home in the holidays, or subsidising particularly expensive school trips. In 1934, the school authorities requested 3,000 RM to be set aside in the 1935 Prussian state budget for this specific purpose.[23]

The Inspectorate even made arrangements with bodies such as the Reich Student Affairs Office (*Reichsstudentenwerk*) that less well-off *Jungmannen* would be put forward for their

funding-streams without having to participate in a special course or *Lehrgang* (which all "normal" applicants would have been expected to undergo as a matter of course). *Jungmannen* were also given especially detailed careers advice, both by the *Reichsstudentenwerk* and by the SS-Central Office, while those exhibiting particular potential for and interest in the diplomatic service would be automatically put forward as candidates for the Foreign Office's fast-track course, as well as being presented to Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop in person at their graduation.[24] Perhaps, in some measure, the ambassadorial dreams of the labourer's son quoted in the *Völkischer Beobachter* were not so far-fetched after all?

One of the Napolas' most innovative "social" programmes of all, however, was the series of "missions" (*Einsätze*) which the *Jungmannen* undertook on farms, in factories and down mines.[25] These "missions" were intended to break down class boundaries and barriers of social exclusivity by giving pupils first-hand experience of the hardships which working-class Germans and "ethnic German" farmers and labourers had to undergo. As Heißmeyer put it in a report to the Head of the Party Chancellery, Hans Lammers, in October 1940:

> The schools' "total curriculum" anticipates that every *Jungmann* in the 6th *Zug* (class) will work for an eight-to-ten-week period in the land service (*Landdienst*) alongside a farmer or settler, and that every *Jungmann* in the 7th *Zug* will work for eight to ten weeks down a mine. The aim of the land service is not that of harvest help or help on the land. During their land service, the *Jungmannen* live individually with farmers and settlers […] in the borderlands, or in an "ethnic German" area. During this time, they perform all the work that farmers' sons or landworkers of their age have to perform, and share the anxieties and joys of the farming families. […] During the mine service the *Jungmannen* live individually with miners' families and therefore learn to know their entire way of life and thinking. They work for around 14 days above ground; the rest of the time, under the supervision of a trustworthy miner, they work down the mineshaft. The aim of the schools' mining service is […] to give the *Jungmannen* a forceful impression of the labourer and his world of work.[26]

These undeniably "socialist" initiatives certainly featured extensively in the propaganda and press releases put out by the school authorities—indeed, very often, articles might begin with an eyecatching headline such as "Fifth-formers down the mine", before launching into a much more generalised appraisal of the schools' programme, only a small proportion of which would be devoted to the *Einsätze* per se.[27] Still, the experiences that the *Jungmannen* had to undergo

were nonetheless real for all that—as one of the foremen interviewed about the initiative for a feature with the SS periodical *Das Schwarze Korps* put it, despite the fact that "our work here isn't child's play", "they work as if they were one of us".[28]

Accounts by the *Jungmannen* themselves demonstrate how far they were assimilated into the world of backbreaking labour in the factories or mines in which they worked:

> We've fully settled in. We can't be distinguished any more from the other *Kumpels* (miners); our togs filthy, hands square and chapped, we don't burn our trousers any more on the mining lamps or bang our heads any more on every spur of rock. Above all, we replace a labourer, and they recognize our labour.[29]

Sometimes, this could involve suffering minor injuries—or even witnessing horrific accidents—at first hand.[30]

A recurring theme throughout these accounts—whether by the boys themselves, their teachers, the "Kumpels" alongside whom they worked, or the firms employing them—is the respect which the *Jungmannen* quickly earned, due to their willing and disciplined demeanour, and their exceptional ability as apprentices. In the words of one of the mine foremen who came to visit Oranienstein, his original supposition that "How can schoolkids do so much work; they'll just be a burden for us", was soon vanquished by the reports which the miners brought in: "The biggest surprise for me was when I heard that the *Jungmannen* had paid for our visit from their own wages which they had earned [down the mine]."[31]

Whether the families with whom the *Jungmannen* stayed would have been as impressed with their constant attempts to discuss the thornier facets of the Nazi *Weltanschauung*—which was considered an equally important aspect of their "mission"—is harder to judge. Nevertheless, this extremely "hands-on" method of studying the "social question",[32] could hardly be seen as anything other than a triumph over previous class divisions, with boys proudly extolling the virtues of "comradeship of labour", or even proclaiming "I've become one of them."[33] That the relationship with the workers was not wholly onesided can be exemplified not only by an exchange with a factory in Dinslaken, in which ten apprentices came to the Napola in question to take the place of the *Jungmannen* and experience the rigours of their training at first hand, but also by the frequent invitations to the miners and their families to attend celebrations at the schools, and the genuine penfriendships which seem to have been forged between *Jungmannen* and labourers.[34]

Some *Anstaltsleiter* even saw these connections as providing a golden opportunity for recruiting still more pupils from the working-classes; as Friedrich Lübbert, headmaster of NPEA Oranienstein, put it at a celebration to which all of "their" miners had been invited in 1937:

> "It would be a particular pleasure for me to see one or another [of the miners] here again next year. Perhaps he will come with a *Jungmann* who has worked alongside him, but perhaps he will also bring his son to the entrance exam here." [The *Jungmannen* writing the report continue:] We had all already told the *Kumpels* that every capable lad could come to Oranienstein. The father's wealth makes no difference. His ability alone is decisive. However, the *Kumpels* had been unable to think beyond the difference between rich and poor. […] Now they heard that we sometimes didn't even know what the profession of our room-mate's father was. My *Kumpel* proclaimed enthusiastically, "Oranienstein is the best social institution in the Third Reich."[35]

But how far was this high praise for the schools' "socialism" and social inclusivity truly justified?

Recruitment Processes and Educational Practices at the NPEA: Pseudo-Inclusive or Genuinely Inclusive?

As we have seen already, some statistics on the family background of pupils at the Napolas have survived. As the source from NPEA Rottweil (discussed above) shows, a whole spectrum of social strata were represented among the schools' clientele. But the overwhelming majority of these boys' fathers were arguably still employed in a fashion which could at the very least be deemed *kleinbürgerlich* or lower middle class—many could even be deemed *bildungsbürgerlich*, or part of the intellectual middle classes—and a similar state of affairs can also be found in the other cases where information from individual Napolas is still available.[36]

However, even more telling in this regard is a comprehensive graph comparing social origins for all NPEA-*Jungmannen* and all "*Pimpfe*" at the Adolf-Hitler-Schools, the other prominent type of elite secondary boarding-school (which paid all pupils' fees in full), with baseline statistics from across the Reich, which was published in the *Statistische Monatshefte* by the SS Statistical Office (*SS-Erfassungsamt*) in November 1940.[37]

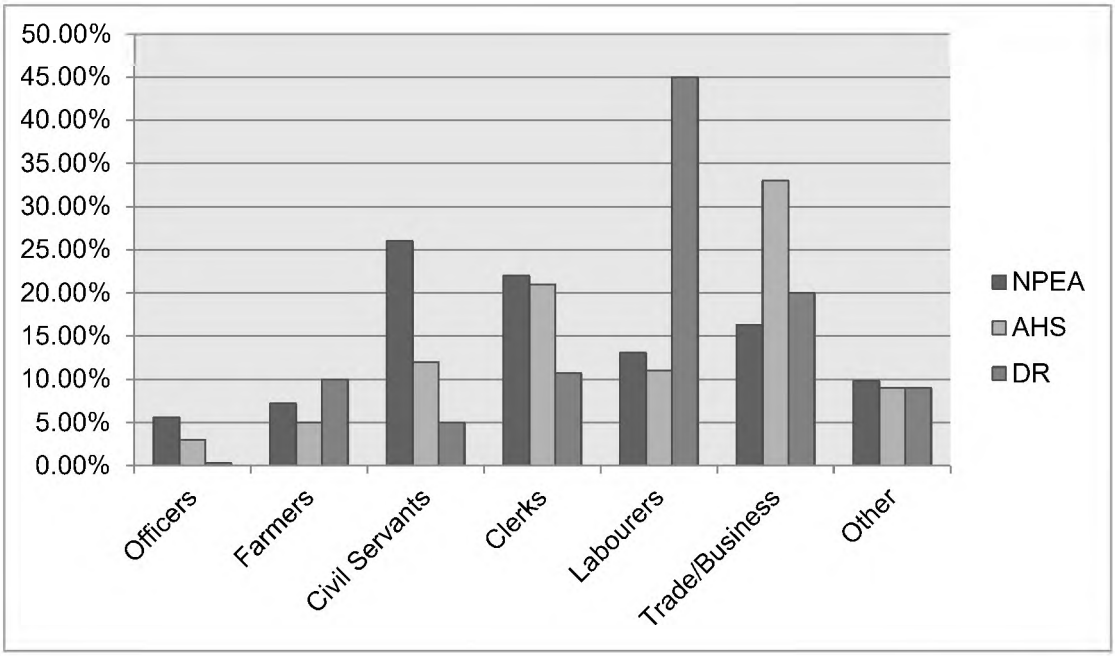

Figure 1: Die Jungmannen der Nationalpolitischen Erziehungsanstalten bezw. Pimpfe der Adolf Hitler-Schulen nach der sozialen Stellung des Vaters im Vergleich zur sozialen Gliederung des Deutschen Reiches in Prozent (Percentage distribution of NPEA pupils and Adolf-Hitler-School pupils according to their fathers' social station, compared with the social organisation of the German Reich).

Although, according to this data-set, the Napolas do seem to have come somewhat closer to achieving their vaunted socialist goals than the Adolf-Hitler-Schools, the percentages still speak for themselves. The comparison need not surprise too much, given that the Adolf-Hitler-Schools had only been in existence for less than five years at this point, and there were far fewer of them in any case (only twelve were ever founded). Only 13.1% of the *Jungmannen* were the sons of labourers, and 7.2% the sons of farmers; clerks and civil servants were still far better represented. All the free places and bursaries that the schools could offer were only a drop in the ocean in terms of educating the sons of workers. Indeed, unlike the Adolf-Hitler-Schools, the Napolas *needed* at least some proportion of their pupils to pay higher fees, just in order to balance the books. What was more, the fact that a certain number of free places were explicitly reserved for the sons of government officials would hardly have helped to redress the balance. One might even surmise, as Heidi Rosenbaum has suggested in connection with the surprising predominance of Hitler Youth leaders from bourgeois backgrounds, that middle-class children would simply have been more likely to possess the kind of prior educational experience and fostering of their intellectual, sporting and extracurricular talents (or perhaps even something as basic as more balanced and extensive nutrition) that would allow them better to survive the rigours, first, of the schools' gruelling week-long entrance examination, and then of daily life at a Napola.[38]

Meanwhile, although the programme of "missions" was explicitly designed to acquaint the *Jungmannen* most forcibly with "how the other half lives", in a sense, it presupposed that this was by no means the kind of life they would otherwise have experienced at first hand.[39] Thus, the programme assumed—or even *enhanced*—the idea of class distinctions, except that the distinction this time was drawn according to a perceived paucity of political rather than financial capital. Even as the Napola authorities trumpeted the annihilation of all such class-based stratifications, ideas of "them" and "us" were being reinforced once again, only this time with the notion that these workers were not only poor, but less *politically enlightened*, and therefore needed "help".

Of course, it is hard to pinpoint any recruitment measures specifically aimed at (or even *against*) the bourgeoisie. It was repeatedly emphasised in the schools' promotional literature that the key to admission was pure ability and "racial fitness" alone, and some prospectuses went out of their way to stress that primary-school teachers (who were the main agents of pre-selection for the entrance examinations) should *never* put candidates forward just because they were "social cases" without any redeeming aptitude; the Napolas were infinitely far removed from mere "social care institutes".[40] But the end result remained the same: a higher proportion of middle-class *Jungmannen* than the sons of humbler *Volksgenossen*.

Moreover, many of the educational ideals that the schools held dear still had some connection with the middle-class ideals of *Bürgerlichkeit*, whether in the form of the quintessentially English ideal of the "gentleman", as embodied by the British public schools which formed one of Heißmeyer's most beloved models for the Napolas, or in the links that Rust and his acolytes insisted upon retaining with the old ideal of humanistic learning at Napolas such as Ilfeld and Schulpforta. Of course, these ideals were smeared over with a veneer of National Socialist "brown" varnish—as one commentator put it:

> The majority of the schools are based on the *Realschule* curriculum, but some also follow a humanistic curriculum. However, the humanistic foundation is not external, but draws on the inner spirit, the *Weltanschauung*, which supported the heroic way of life among the classical Greeks and Romans.[41]

Nevertheless, the links to a more *bürgerlich* past were there, if one only knew where to look. Even some of the pastimes which the *Jungmannen* had to engage with as a matter of course—riding, sailing, skiing, fencing—were activities which would previously only have been open to those in the higher social echelons.[42]

In fact, one could arguably suggest that there was rather less an eradication of class differences taking place at the Napolas, than a sort of sneaking gentrification in National Socialist guise. For, if *Bürgerlichkeit* can indeed be considered a question of culture, as many leading proponents of research on the German *Bürgertum* have argued, then it makes sense to search for survivals of that culture in determining how "*bürgerlich*" the Napolas really were.[43] One does not need to be wholly seduced by outmoded historiographical exaggerations, such as the notion that Nazism was a fundamentally "lower middle-class phenomenon",[44] or that it represented the ultimate triumph of bourgeois illiberalism—what Hans-Ulrich Wehler has termed a bourgeois "pathology"[45]—in order to acknowledge the continuities and connections which did exist between *bürgerlich* values and certain aspects of National Socialism. These "spheres of contact" can be discerned both in general terms, and with particular regard to educational practice—which may go some way towards explaining why many parents from middle-class backgrounds seem to have been more than happy to have their sons educated at an Napola.

Of course, there were certain aspects of *bürgerlich* culture which would never have been easily assimilated with the Napolas' educational policy as a boarding school. Importantly, the Napolas were explicitly opposed to the German *bürgerlich* ideal of close-knit family life, which Jürgen Kocka has termed "an inner sanctum protected from the world of competition and materialism, from politics and the public, a sphere of privacy", in which sons as well as daughters were far more firmly bound to the family home throughout their adolescence; for boarding-school life to replace family life as a matter of course was a far rarer thing in Germany than it had ever been in England, even during the first half of the twentieth century.[46] This reluctance to entrust one's children to the tender mercies of boarding-school life was a foible which the NPEA authorities explicitly wished to combat, as an article written for the women's magazine *Frauen-Warte* by a member of the Inspectorate makes abundantly clear. The author, Gustav Skroblin, gently mocks parents' willingness to send their daughter to a *Pensionat* so that she can learn "delicate bourgeois manners", when they are so apprehensive of letting their children experience the true "social education" which the Napolas had to offer.[47]

On the other hand, the Napolas also offered, perhaps in a more extreme form even than the Hitler Youth, a programme which could also appeal to the predominantly middle-class adherents of the *bündisch* turn-of-the-century youth movement.[48] As Ian Kershaw has noted, "the bourgeois youth movement inculcated in many young Germans an idealism that emphasised an organic, unpolitical love of Heimat and Volk, seen as self-consciously different from the patriotism, nationalism, and imperialism associated with France and Great Britain."[49]

This was therefore another, though almost diametrically-opposed, middle-class tradition on which the idealistic, supposedly progressive ethos of the schools could draw.

Finally, we come to the question of social mobility. As we have seen, the idea of "progress through achievement" was in some sense written into the Napolas' constitution from the outset—but did it work in practice? Opportunities to enter the diplomatic corps or gain privileged access to university scholarships aside, did the NPEA genuinely promote upward mobility and social inclusivity for their pupils?[50] And what would the implications be, if so?

One telling set of documents which has survived in Merseburg may give us some clues in this regard, in the absence of more comprehensive statistics. Two files held in the Landeshauptarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt contain a collection of CVs written by graduands at NPEA Schulpforta in 1938-9, which, crucially, contain information about parents' professions, as well as the pupil's chosen career.[51]

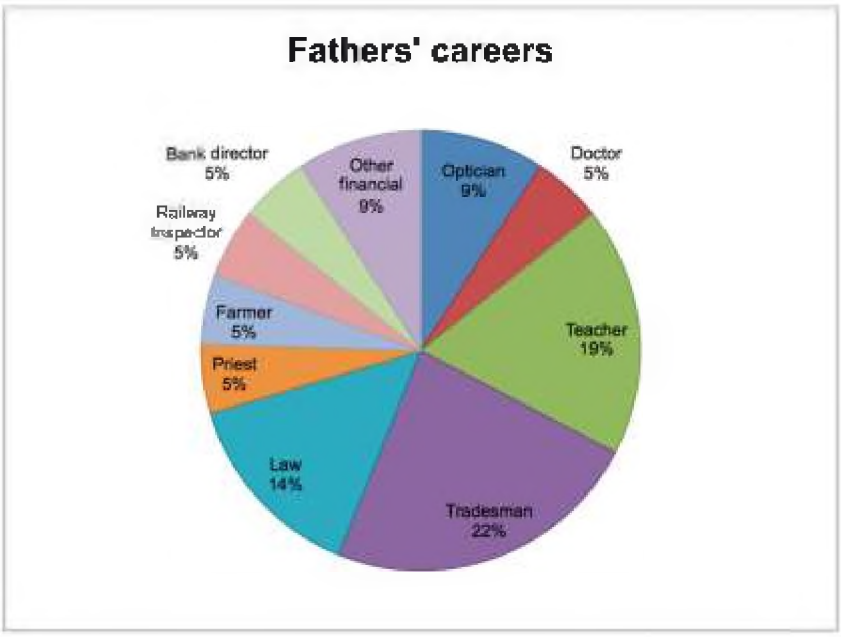

Figure 2: Careers of fathers of graduands at NPEA Schulpforta in 1938-9

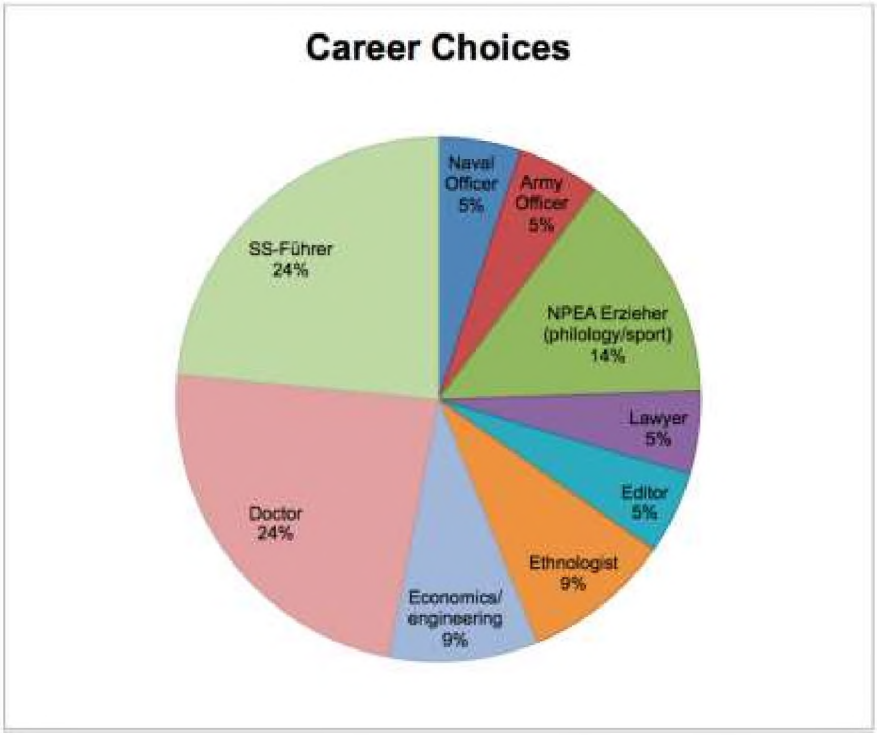

Figure 3: Career choices of graduands at NPEA Schulpforta in 1938-9

Although this sample is statistically negligible in one sense, in another, it demonstrates quite graphically that the majority of the graduands in question were pursuing careers in the professions or in leadership positions which were at least equal to, and sometimes of higher social standing than, those of their parents.

Interpreted in one way, this picture portrays less a levelling-out of class distinctions than what we might term a type of Nazified "bourgoisification", in which working-class children were even more surely raised into a higher and better-educated social caste (which placed some emphasis on previously *bürgerlich* values) than if they had attended a British public school. Thus, in response to the rhetorical question raised by Martina Steber and Bernhard Gotto in their introduction to a recently-published compendium of essays on the *Volksgemeinschaft,* "How and where […] were life aspirations of a basically bourgeois kind reconciled with the demands of a radically anti-individualistic state doctrine?",[52] one might present the NPEA as providing one answer. From this perspective, we might conclude that the Napolas were in fact rather more successful than institutions such as the Hitler Youth or the Reich Labour Service in promoting what Norbert Frei has termed a "perceived equality" between youths of different backgrounds, despite their inherent elitism.[53] However, As Rüdiger Hachtmann has so tellingly put it,

> *Volksgemeinschaft* and elitism: at first sight the two concepts appear mutually exclusive. While *Volksgemeinschaft* suggests social equality for its members (the German *Volksgenossen*), elitism implies hierarchies and harsh social distinctions. Closer inspection, however, shows that this contradiction is only a surface one. Though the National Socialists did indeed want to "de-proletize" German society and turn it into the master race above other nations, racial exclusivity did not conflict with internal differentiation: it was rather that boundaries of class were simply less important than boundaries of race. The Nazis were not aiming for a socially equal society. On the contrary, in numerous speeches and tracts they denounced such levelling as Marxist collectivism or naked Bolshevism.[54]

Yet this, too, would have had its attractive side for bourgeois and working-class parents alike. For working-class families, the opportunities offered by the NPEA could well have appeared to occupy a significant position within the constellation of Nazi social welfare programmes which offered middle-class opportunities and cultural practices to even the poorest "racially valuable" citizen, rewarding individual achievement and encouraging upward mobility which could, in some cases, be genuine enough.[55] For the middle-classes, too, the opportunities which the Napolas could provide for their sons' advancement—as potential future leaders of their country—would also have seemed extremely attractive (even if this did mean that they were being schooled alongside a certain proportion of lower-class pupils) —thus helping to reinforce the idea that the new National Socialist society based on the *Volksgemeinschaft* could offer all of its citizens unprecedented opportunities for personal development.[56]

Conclusions

To conclude, then: the Napolas' mission to "widen participation" radically seems to have only been partially successful. Yet, arguably, instead of diluting bourgeois predominance in elite education, the NPEA enabled it to continue unabated, despite the authorities' avowed policy to enable social mobility above all for the sons of workers and farmers. Was this a failure of the "socialist" element in the Napolas' National Socialist programme—or an instrumentalisation of sorts by the middle-classes? One might suggest that such a development was more or less inevitable from the outset, given the gruelling demands made of applicants, which still implicitly favoured those with access to sports clubs or good sports equipment, and an above-average academic education.

Still, given sufficient time, it seems highly likely that the Napolas would ultimately have become instrumental in helping to consolidate a new, National Socialist caste structure—a class system of stratification based no longer on the twin pillars of bourgeois society, "*Besitz und Bildung*" (property and education), but on the uncompromising—and fatally exclusive—core values of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*: "racial purity" and the "will to achieve" (*rassische Reinheit und Leistungsfähigkeit*). In this context, the Napolas also possess a wider significance for the future of education in the Third Reich more generally, since they formed the prototype for a planned network of non-elite boarding schools which were to be established throughout the Greater German Reich, the *Deutsche Heimschulen*; at Hitler's specific request, these also operated under August Heißmeyer's aegis (in his capacity as *Inspekteur der Deutschen Heimschulen*). Although such plans could not be fully carried out during the war, it was intended that a far higher proportion of German children should attend these boarding-schools after the "final victory".[57]

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Notes

[1] Anon (1940b).

[2] For more on the history of the NPEA in general, see Roche (2021).

[3] Roche (2013), p. 181.

[4] Although there also existed four Napolas for girls, my analysis here will concentrate on the boys' schools, which formed the overwhelming majority of the schools in the Napola system.

[5] *Frontarbeiter* 1942. An implicit comparison with KdF practice is made in Anon (1940b). (emphasis original): "Holiday trips aren't an unaffordable luxury for the workers of the fist any more either. Higher education can be attained just as easily by the *son of a labourer* as the professor's lad." On the KdF more generally, see Baranowski (2004).

[6] Anon (1936); Anon (1939a); Anon (1939b). One might contrast the state of affairs at the Adolf-Hitler-Schools, which were far readier to admit pupils who were the sons of high-ranking Nazis, even if their personal achievements left something to be desired—for more on this, see Feller and Feller (2001).

[7] Anon (1940a); Nees (1936).

[8] Walberg (1936).

[9] Cf. the various prospectuses and entrance requirements distributed by the schools, many of which can be found in Bundesarchiv Lichterfelde (BArch), R 3903/2249.

[10] For more on this nexus of ideas in general, see e.g. Bajohr and Wildt (2009); Buggeln and Wildt (2014); Fritzsche (2008); Steber and Gotto (2014).

[11] See, for example, Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg (StAL), F 455–8, speech by Reinhold Gräter, manuscript p. 5.

[12] For an overview and some initial reflections on this theme, see Frei (2018). In the pages which follow, I will use the terms "bürgerlich", "middle class" and "bourgeois" more or less interchangeably, following the lead of German *Bürgertumsforscher*.

[13] For example, Hans P., former pupil of NPEA Rügen, private correspondence, 4 December 2009; Dietrich Schulz, former pupil of NPEA Rügen, private correspondence, 17 November 2009.

[14] BArch, R 5/3362, Bernhard Rust, 'Non scholae sed vitae discimus!', speech from 22 April 1941. For more on the close relationship between the Napolas and the cadet schools, and on Haupt's background, see Roche (2013), pp 182–94.

[15] See: BArch, R 2/19991, 'Erläuterungen zu dem Muster eines Kassenanschlages für eine Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalt', The amounts set for each class might shift from year to year, but the principle of "*gestaffelte Beiträge*" remained the same.

[16] See in particular BArch, R 3003/24494.

[17] On local initiatives organised by individual Napolas, see Roche (2021), p. 27, n. 83.

[18] BArch, NS 45/35, 'Vom Wesen der Nationalpolitischen Erziehungsanstalten'; See: BArch, R 5/5280, letter dated 11 April 1942.

[19] StAL, E 202 Bü 1747, letter from the acting Anstaltsleiter, Dr. Eichberger, dated 15 June 1939.

[20] Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, 11125 Nr. 21351, Bl. 148-9, letter from Heißmeyer dated 30 April 1936.

[21] See Fritzsche (2008), p. 98.

[22] BArch R 187/270b, Bl. 104. 'Merkblatt für die Aufnahme in Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten'.

[23] Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, I. HA Rep. 151 Nr. 1093, Bl. 193, Anmeldung für den Staatshaushalt 1935, 30 October 1934.

[24] Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, BEA 49, letter dated 4 February 1939; StAL, E 202 Bü 1747, letters dated 26 January 1939 and 31 January 1939; *Der Jungmann. Feldpostbericht der NPEA Oranienstein*, 9. Kriegsnummer, 86.

[25] On the predominance of such militaristic terminology throughout all spheres of life in the Third Reich, see Fritzsche (2008), p. 55.

[26] BArch R 43-II/956b, Report from Heißmeyer to Lammers dated 22 October 1940, Bl. 62–3.

[27] See Anon (1939c).

[28] Anon (1937a).

[29] Brenner (1937), pp. 10–1.

[30] Ueberhorst (1942), pp. 80–1.

[31] Anon. (1937b), pp. 53–4.

[32] Anon (1937a).

[33] Jansen (1935); Fraude (1935).

[34] Cf. Roche (2021), pp. 172–4, for an extended discussion of this theme.

[35] Anon. (1937b).

[36] For the purposes of this essay, I follow Thomas Nipperdey (and others) in considering the *Kleinbürgertum* or the *Mittelstand* as essentially *bürgerlich*—cf. Nipperdey (1987), especially pp. 145–6.

[37] IfZ MA 125/13, Statistische Monatshefte November 1940. Bearbeitet vom SS-Erfassungsamt, p. 14: Die Jungmannen der Nationalpolitischen Erziehungsanstalten und Pimpfe der Adolf Hitler-Schulen nach dem Beruf des Vaters.

[38] See Rosenbaum (2014), p. 177.

[39] For similar comments on the failed social engineering effected by the RAD, see Stephenson (2008), especially p. 102.

[40] On this point, see Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Abteilung Magdeburg, Rep. C 28 II, Nr. 2361, 'Erfahrungsbericht, zusammengestellt von Hundertschaftsführer Brenner, Betr: Jungmannen-Auslese', April 1944, especially Bl. 133.

[41] Zogelmann (1936).

[42] See Rosenbaum (2014), pp. 282–6, on the quintessentially *bürgerlich* nature of many of these activities.

[43] See, for example, Kocka (1987), especially p. 43; Nipperdey (1987); Hettling and Hoffmann (2000).

[44] On the dangers of such an approach, see Fischer (1991).

[45] See, Wehler (1987), especially p. 244.

[46] Kocka (1993), p. 6; Rosenbaum (1982); Budde (1994), p. 213.

[47] Skroblin (1941).

[48] On the connections between the *bündisch* youth movement and the bourgeoisie, see, for example, Mommsen (2003).

[49] Kershaw (2014), p. 33.

[50] On the difficulties of elucidating pupils' postwar fates in general, see Roche (2021), pp. 397–8.

[51] Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Abteilung Merseburg, C 23 Nr. 1 and 2.

[52] Steber and Gotto (2014), p. 18.

[53] See Frei (2005), pp. 107–28; also Bajohr and Wildt (2009), p. 9.

[54] Hachtmann (2014), p. 200.

[55] Baranowski (2004), pp. 2–12.

[56] For more on those aspects of Nazism which appealed particularly to citizens' desires for self-fulfillment, see Föllmer (2013), especially p. 9, p. 111, p. 128.

[57] See Klare (2003).