

Diary of a British Schoolboy in Nazi Germany

Helen Roche

Helen Roche reads the diary of a British schoolboy on an exchange programme in Nazi Germany in 1936. Her commentary highlights the benefits of an outsider's diary to a historian of Nazi Germany (its attention to details unremarked upon in comparable German sources, the lack of retrospective reinterpretation that might be seen in a memoir) and its drawbacks (chiefly the diarist's apparent susceptibility to Nazi propaganda). Importantly, however, Roche emphasizes that even these drawbacks are revelatory, offering insight into mentalities towards Nazi Germany that were not uncommon in pre-war Europe.

Source 4: Extract from a diary written by Dick Hargreaves while on a school exchange in Germany, spring 1936.

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R. S. Hargreaves.

Friday April 24th 1936

Dancing at the East Cornwall Hunt Ball till 1.45. Got to bed at 2.15. Had to get up and catch an early train. Got up at 6 am – train left Launceston 7.24am. Mummy came with me – slept for 2 ½ hours in train – boring journey.

Met Reyn & co at 2.30pm at Victoria. Boat train left at 3.0 – arrived Dover at 4.30pm. Boat left at 4.45pm. “Prince Baoudouin” – Belgian boat – very comfortable. Superb crossing – sea smooth as a b’s B [baby’s bottom?].¹ Didn’t feel in the slightest sick. Arrived Ostende 8.10pm. Had supper – bought .c’s and walked around Ostende till 10.40 p.m. when the train left. Graves and I shared a 3rd class carriage – soon fell asleep – wrapped up in flea bag – woken occasionally by long-nosed officials with rifles – arrived Aachen at 4.30 a.m. on Saturday morning when we were inspected by customs officials on board train. Continued journey – still fast asleep to Cologne where we arrived at 6.20am. Had a sandwich costing 1/6 on station. Left Cologne in a local train at 7.0 am. Gorgeous scenery down the Rhine – castles, barges and girls galore! Arrived Dietz at 9.40am to be met by a crowd of boys from Oranienstein – all dressed in Nazi uniform – got into an army lorry and arrived at the Schloss at 10.0.

We were shown our rooms – damn nice – washed and had breakfast – [bacon, eggs and ham] ~~German sausage~~ – then shewn round the School – superb – and came in for lunch – German sausage (~~different form~~). After lunch we rested and slept from 2–3 when some of us heard the Geek giving a running commentary on the cup

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final – very good – then we had a snack tea – two buns and a cup of milk. Chatted for a while then we had an hour and three quarters' bathe in warm bath – jolly good fun. Then ~~we bathed and~~ had supper – German sausage (yet another style!) and are now either writing, smoking, playing chess, talking, walking or playing ping-pong. Everyone is extraordinarily decent and very smart indeed – light khaki courdoroy breeches, black riding boots, khaki coat, red arm band with swastika, brown coat lapels, blue shoulder straps and a dagger thing. The school itself is a huge castle done up modern and very posh – armchairs, super labs; stables, 50 20 school bicycles and heaven no's what! Everyone lines up for inspection before meals and the little kids with shorts come trooping in singing. There seems to be no respect for seniority because the kids tease and cheek the seniors like blazes and nothing happens and the workmen are considered on the same level as the Masters – they all use the Masters Common Room for coffee. Whenever two of these blokes pass they salute and say "Heil Hitler". It is the largest military school in Germany and appears to be a damn good place. We go to bed at 10 o'clock to-night still feeling very tired after the journey. Goodnight!

Sunday 26th [April]

Got up at 7.45 after an excellent night's rest. They paraded before breakfast when we had 4 pieces of black bread and jam and coffee without milk. Explored the grounds and forest – watched sports and Handball – they build huts in the trees and forest. Storm troopers marching around – riding examinations – villagers competing for sports badge. Went with Graves to the Café for coffee and cake – large cup of coffee 25 pf. and large slice of cake 30 pf. For lunch we had meat, potatoes and spinach and rice – very good. In the afternoon we walked to Limburg – 2 ½ miles and went to a large fair there. Shooting ranges, swing boats, dancing, roundabouts etc. Stayed there 2 ½ hours and spent 1 mark 50 Pf – then we came back by train. After supper we went down and watched some boys diving for a watch which had been dropped into the Lahn – very strong current – then we came up and listened to one of their boys [Rammelkamp ?and Menendez?] playing the piano till 9.15 then we went to bed. We undress in our sitting room and rush up to the dormitory in our rugger shorts – damn cold – we are getting tough here.

Monday 27th [April]

We got up at 6.15 this morning – had breakfast bread and cocoa – then we read and went into classes – German, History and Music. Some people actually went into Physics and Chemistry! We still find it necessary to go to the Café at 11 o'clock to prevent starvation. After we had had lunch of meat and potatoes and semolina (I think), Winstanley, Lylian and I scouted and got it over. We have to sit for 2 ½ hours in a stuffy room doing practical scouting – Morse, Compass, Map-reading etc. From 5–7 we had our first German lesson with their English master. It is all very simple because only three of us no any German at all. We all thought that two hours a day for a fortnight is too much. After supper we went down to Wren's room and gassed and practised singing, then I came back up here and wrote. I find that it pays to go to bed as soon after nine as possible.

Tuesday 28th [April]

Up at 6.30 again! At seven o'clock the platoon on duty comes out and salutes the flag going up. I went into German and Latin only yesterday. The master didn't turn up at all so we scrapped with sponges, dusters and chalk. During the last two periods Wonn and Taffy and I went down to Dietz to muck about. Taffy and I bought cigarette lighters. Graves met Long again. All we had for lunch to-day was meat, potatoes and stewy salad. In the early afternoon we watched our platoon fencing and later on some of us bathed and watched new boys passing a swimming exam to get into the school! They had to do backward somersaults etc.! Then we had our German lesson – I did my prep two minutes beforehand! Holidays!! After a supper of bread and tea we went up to Herr Lubert's room and had a sing-song with thirty or so boys, some Hitler Jugend leaders who are staying here and some Storm Troopers. All Germans seem to be damn good singers. H_2O_2 and co wrecked Mittelhaus's bed in the dormitory and he got rather peeved.² Always sleep very well.

Wednesday [29th April]

Just getting used to the early rising stunt. At 6.20 a Zugführer comes round the dormitories and shouts "Wach werden" (wake up) and then at 6.30 he comes again and says "Aufstehen". Then we fold up our blanket and sheet, which has a blanket wrapped up inside it. Then we shove on our shorts and track off to the washhouse where we wash with cold water. Then down to our rooms to get dressed. Then the formal morning hand shakes and after we have cleaned our shoes and gone to sleep again the bell or siren for "Appell" or parade goes and everyone troops out and lines up – they salute the flag with "Heil Hitler" and have their kit inspected – very smart with heels clicking etc. After that we troop into breakfast of two slices of bread and coffee or cocoa. After breakf. there is half an hour before work begins at 8 o'clock. The morning's work is split up into six periods with 10 minute breaks in between – work stops either at 12.15 or 12.55. At 1.0 o'clock we have lunch consisting either of meat and two vegetables or some soup muck and a kind of sweet such as rice, macaroni or blackcurrants. To-day all the classes I went into were French and History. In the afternoon some of us went to the Limburg fair again – it wasn't very crowded and so not much fun – all the booth[s] are very cheap though – shooting – 3 shots a penny. Bought Nazi flag – After the usual tea and milk and buns we had another German lesson and learned a song "Könige auf dem Meer". After supper of bread and coffee we had a rehearsal of a play we intend to do for them "The Little Man" – it went off quite well. One or two German[s] have parts. Went to bed at 9.30.

Thursday [30th April]

Didn't go into any classes this morning, feeling too damn tired. Walked down to Dietz in the morning and took one or two photographs. Everywhere flags are being put up in thousands in preparation for the 1st May. There is great excitement everywhere and people can hardly contain themselves. In the afternoon Williams and I and Sim had arranged to go riding but the ruddy horses didn't turn up so we went and had a super bathe instead. In the evening we went down with our Kameraden to Dietz and watched

the Maypole being hoisted and folk dances by the Hitler Jugend and heard speeches by some of the big bugs of the town. There was also community singing in which we all took part. There was a good bit of "Heiling" which we also did because we were in a huge crowd. It was a magnificent scene – the old castle towering above the market-place in which were thousands of enthusiastic peasants lit by torch and candle light. This minor festival ended at about 10 o'clock when we had some coffee and trooped back to school

Friday !! [1st May]

Frühlingsfest! We had to get up at 6 o'clock to salute the flag and parade. After a hearty breakfast we paraded at 7.15 and marched down to Dietz – the band in front, then Herr Lübbert, then the Zugführers and lastly the boys. We were in Dietz by 8 o'clock – the school had to line two sides of the square. At 8.30 when all the Hitler Jugend had arrived and the Motor School we had to stand still for 1 ¼ hours listening to Hitler speaking on the wireless!! After this ordeal was over, it was just about 10 and we marched back to the Schloss again and for the rest of the morning we sat and recovered. After the usual lunch we marched down to parade in Dietz again. We all the citizens the Motor School and the Labour camp people had marched into the respective places in the square we had to listen to Hitler speaking for 1 ¾. He worked himself into such a frenzy and was able to move the crowd so tremendously that we saw three people faint. Not from fatigue or crush but just by his amazing oratory powers. Then after Hitler had been "heiled"... off the earth Goering spoke for ½ hour! Then all the military and otherwise people paraded the streets of Dietz, then the School marched back to Oran: The tea to-day was Truly amazing. Everyone had five cakes each and super coffee – all boys parents etc. were invited, there was a band of concertinas and ukeleles playing music and singing competitions for which Herr Lübbert gave prizes and cakes. Everyone forgot themselves and shouted and sang and pushed their masters off the benches. We had to sing and the maids had to judge the competition. The maids had tea with us – no class distinctions at all. After this feast we went outside and mucked about with pillow fighting on greasy poles, hitting nails into wood, sack races, breaking bottles, climbing the may-pole to get sausages and going in these large circular things in which you wizz round!! At 6 o'clock 11 boys from Harrow came and 2 from Westminster and 1 from Eton to play Oran. at Soccer and fencing. They were quite decent blokes but appeared to be rather snobs, "Harrer arxent". In the evening we had a singsong with the German blokes in our rooms. Went to bed early after all this revelling. Everyone ragging around in the dormitories.

Saturday [2nd May]

Got up at 6.30 once more. Didn't do any work in the morning. Watched their Gym team doing their stuff. Damn good on the parallel bars and swinging bar. Herr Weber is the instructor. At 9.30 we went and bathed with the German swimming team who were giving a demonstration. Five of us raced them – two lengths each. They won by just over a length. We bathed till 20 to 11 by ourselves. For the rest of the morning we read, talked, and wrote. We had an early lunch because the match was at 2 o'clock. Nearly all Dietz turned out to watch[;] the match was extraordinarily good considering

the Harrow blokes normally play rugger. The two teams march to the field accompanied by the band then they "Heil Hitler". The final score was 3–2 in Germany's favour. After another slap up feed like the day before with singing etc. there was the fencing in the Gym. Firstly there was the rapier fighting, England won 5–4. On the English side there was the Champion Public Schoolboy – Waddington, but he was beaten once by a German – a new boy! who is a marvellous fighter. In the sabre fighting England won 6–3. Waddington fractured his thumb so could only fight one fight. The German and English coaches gave a demonstration fight which was most amusing because there were no referees. One of the referees is fighting for Germany at the Olympic Games this year. In the interval a Harrow bloke played some bagpipes much to the Germans' astonishment. The Harrow blokes left about 6.30 with much cheering and band playing. We are going to bed early again because we are going to play them at football at 9 o'clock tomorrow – Sunday!

Sunday [3rd May]

Got up at 7.30 – changed into games clothes before Appell and breakfast. At 9 o'clock we had to march from the Schloss to the games field. Nasty drizzle – ground muddy. I played left half. We lost 3–1 after a very good game, in fact the referee congratulated on our fine spirit. Had a shower after game. At 11 o'clock there was a service in the chapel – not religious – patriotic – praising Germany in song and recitation. Superb organ. Lunch at 12.15 after which Wickham, Sim and I and Wonn went to Limburg fair. Some boys went to Starnberg castle – good view. Large crowd – good fun. We arranged to meet Mittelhaus at 3.30 but we didn't get to the meeting place till 3.50 so we had to run to Dietz 2 ½ miles to get to the flick there in time. First there was the news. The Queen Mary in Southampton, the Grand National, Hitler and the voting. Then after that we saw the main film. It was an anti-war thing. A film of the war – Flanders Cambrai etc. Then last part showed an English officer dying in a German dug-out. The Germans play music and light a tree because it is Xmas day. Whenever a Frenchman appeared everyone shouted and hissed. On the whole it was quite good, bits of it were very ridiculous though. A tank was set on fire by a bomb! Then we came back and had supper. After supper we had a muck around in our rooms and I went to bed just after 8 o'clock.

Monday [4th May]

Rested on my bed nearly the whole morning. In the afternoon five or six people went rowing, but Wonn, Batten and I went shooting. We had 2 rounds of five shots each. I was the only person of both English and Germans to score a bull. The range is down by the Lahn and is out of doors. The people who went rowing made up a four and rowed up to Limburg. After tea we had a bathe. After supper we went up and listened to someone playing the piano and then went to bed early – 8.30.

Tuesday [5th May]

Had to get up at 5.30 this morning in order to go to Heidelberg. We had breakfast at 6.0 and started at 6.20. We went in one of the school Mercedes-Daimler Lorries. We were held up for 20 minutes just the other side of Limburg because a tractor had gone

into a ditch. We stopped at Frankfurt for ½ hour and looked over the Kaiser's palace and the place where the first Reich was held. Then just after Frankfurt we joined one of these Auto-Bahns, huge military roads up to the front. The roads are made of concrete and lined with trees. [drawing] Along this road we did a steady 40 whilst some cars were well over 80. These roads are almost dead straight and lead right up to the war fronts. Before we reached Frankfurt we had to cross a huge range of mountains – gorgeous views. This Auto-Bahn took us right into Heidelberg where we met Head and party who were boating on the river. Graves and I hired a canoe and mucked about for an hour then we went and had some lunch, careered around the place till 2.30 when we met Head and Wren etc. We then went up to the Schloss and saw the largest beer barrel in the world – 20 feet diameter – and looked across the Neckar over Heidel. – magnificent! Then we went up and saw the open air theatre about 1000 feet above Heidelberg. We left H. about 5.0 and came back via Wiesbaden. Ragged around in the lorry. Arrived home at 8.30 very tired after a super day – gorgeous summer weather.

Wednesday [6th May]

In the morning I climbed up to the cave and we had 1 ½ bathe from 10.15 to 11.45. In the afternoon Williams and I went riding. Quite good fun. Round a paddock, jumping and gymnastics on the horses! At 5.0 we played the 3rd XI at Handball – we lost 6–3 – very good fun. After this we bathed again. In the evening played cards and gambled for money.

Thursday [7th May]

Mucked about with Williams Graves and Winstanley in the punt in the morning. Went down with Wren & Co. to Dietz later on to get some money – bought a pair of sandals. Went out in a canoe with Simcox till 3 o'clock then went shooting – only scored 26 but it was the best. Gorgeous weather still. Midsummer heat.

Friday [8th May]

We all piled into the lorry at 8.0 to go to the labour camp at Nassau. It was only an hour's drive or so right up the Lahn valley – magnificent gorges and woods. We saw right round this grim establishment. They have the same food and beds as here. They have a stage, and their dining hall has large propaganda paintings on it. There [is] no military side to it at all. Their only weapons are spades. They have a jolly good orchestra. They work 7 hours a day including march to the working place. Their pay is 25 pf a day. It is compulsory for all Germans for 3 or 6 months. They are at this camp working on planting a huge vineyard on the side of a hill overlooking the Lahn. All the boys from here are compelled to go to a labour camp for some period of time. The types of work they do are making new woods, clearing forests, planting trees and building. They have to march to their work – sometimes an hour or so's march. They also have a bootmakers shop and an engineering shed in which the lads etc work. Not only does it help to solve the unemployment problem but also shows that everyone must do their bit to help the Vaterland. In the afternoon I went out in a canoe with Graves super quick thunderstorm, we had to keep within sight of the landing stage because some inspector blokes were coming from Berlin to see everything – riding, fencing, rowing

and shooting. After tea some of us had a superb bathe for almost an hour by ourselves. After supper we had a singsong with Zuf. Dreyfuss's blokes. They seem to take their singing so seriously and patriotically – no fun and rioting.

A party of ten of their boys went off to England to stay at Westminster the other day. These boys are getting v. excited.

Saturday [9th May]

Rested and read on my bed most of the morning. In the afternoon we went out in a canoe with Simcox got up to Limburg – superb weather – getting sunburnt. After tea mucked around. Had a sing-song with little boys from the Kameradschaftshaus from 7.30 to 8.30. They picked up English songs very quickly.

Sunday [10th May]

Went out in a canoe with Batten from 10–12. Went past Limburg. Still hot weather – rather close. After a good lunch of meat, potatoes and french beans and blanchemanche, I rested and read in the afternoon – binged in the café and mucked about in our rooms till supper. Went to bed fairly early.

Monday [11th May]

The weather was quite good – warm but the sun was not shining. Had breakfast at the normal time. Loaded up the lorry with food for the trip, bread, butter, jam, ham, sausages and potatoes (cooked and hot). All we took was a p. of pyjamas, p. of slippers and toilet necessities. We started at about 8.30 – stopped in Dietz to get some money. We arrived at Frankfurt at 10.30. We were given permission to roam around till 1.15 – bought a jackknife for 3 marks. Went round the market and old parts of the town. Grand old town – timbered houses and painted on the outside. We had lunch a few kilometres outside Frankfurt. Hot potatoes and meat, bread and jam and tinned plums. Then we went through Mainz and stopped to see the memorial and Rüdesheim. Then we went on to Kaub(?) and everyone had 1934 Rhine wine – they all said it was "Prima" – we had it in a little inn in Whisper-Strasse!

Then we doubled back for a little way to cross by a auto-ferry but it wasn't working so we went into Kaub where there is a castle midstream and crossed here. Then we went back up the other bank to Bachanach. We arrived at the Deutsche Jugendburg at about 7.15. It is a large castle which has been restored, parts of it are still ruins. It is beautifully done up inside – panelled and spotlessly clean. There was a party of 100 girls from all over the country. About 20 boys and one or two other small parties. They charge 20 pf a night (about 1 ½ d!) We had a small impromptu sing-song. We saw the Graff Zeppelin come over – all lighted up – with a powerful spotlight on the Rhine to be directed by. It was magnificent. We went to bed at 10.0. We slept in two storey bunks in a large dormitory. We had two blankets and two sheets.

Tuesday [12th May]

We got up at 7 o'clock and washed in cold water. We had a breakfast of bread and jam and tea. After tea we had a short parlez-vous with some of the youth and packed up

the lorry again. We left the castle at about 10.30. Then we went down into Bacharach and saw all the old sites and the old wall and cathedral. Then we went down the river a bit and crossed at Kaub. Here again we looked around then we went on to Loreley and saw the rock and the Labour Camp there. They seem to have such tough hands yet they make excellent models. Here we had lunch – sandwiches, bread, jam, tea and tinned plums. Then we went on to Braubach and saw the castle there and the street on the old wall. We didn't get right up to the top of the hill where the castle was. Then we went on to Koblenz where we arrived at 4.15. We left Koblenz at 5.30 after having had something to eat and having looked around the town. We went into Woolworths and bought a knife, fork and spoon affair for 50 Pf. From Koblenz we went straight back to Oran. where we arrived at 7.0. After supper some of us went up to the café and binged then five of us had an hour's bathe by electric light with nothing on!! Super! Prima!! We went to bed at 10 – tired, clean and happy.

[Wednesday 13th May]

Left Oranienstein at about 6.15 and left Dietz by train at 6.35. We arrived at Cologne at 10. Went into the town and had a huge supper and walked around the town – left at 1.15. Dropped a brick about "Scheissen". We arrived at Ostende 8.30 – had breakfast – walked on promenade. Left by boat at 11.30 – calm crossing – arrived at Dover at 2.30. Left Dover 3 arrived Victoria 4.45. Met Daddy and went to Joan's then to Regent Palace.

Commentary

In spring 1936, teenage schoolboy—and later war hero—Dick Hargreaves was given the chance to go on an all-expenses-paid exchange trip to Germany. But this was no ordinary school exchange—Hargreaves' destination was Oranienstein, one of a system of new elite boarding schools known as National Political Education Institutes (Napolas for short). The schools educated boys from the age of ten upwards, training them as future leaders of the Third Reich. By taking part in the exchange, Hargreaves and his ten companions from Dauntsey's School in Wiltshire would soon be exposed to the Napolas' 'total' programme of education, indoctrination and National Socialist propaganda.³

During the 1930s, hundreds of pupils at British public schools took part in this programme of exchanges and sporting tournaments, which had been planned by the Napola authorities since 1934. Just to take one example, between 1935 and 1938, Napola Oranienstein took part in exchanges with British private schools including Westminster, St Paul's, Tonbridge School, Dauntsey's and Bingley School in Yorkshire. The school also entertained headmasters and exchange teachers from Shrewsbury School, Dauntsey's and Bolton School, and was involved in sports tournaments with Eton, Harrow, Westminster, Winchester, Shrewsbury, Bradfield and Bryanston. Ultimately, the Nazi regime wanted the German boys and staff to act as the Third Reich's 'cultural ambassadors', garnering sympathy for Hitler's policies and spreading pro-Nazi propaganda. Many British

headmasters of the time were persuaded of the wisdom of these exchanges, including Mr Olive, the head of Dauntsey's School.⁴

When I first came across Dick Hargreaves' diary account of his exchange visit to Oranienstein in spring 1936, it seemed ideally suited to exploring the history of lived experience during this period from varying perspectives. Firstly, it presents a youthful view, which, while somewhat naïve, is nevertheless wholly untainted by hindsight. As such, its value in illuminating contemporary responses to Nazism in Britain at the time is unparalleled. Meanwhile, it also sheds light on wider networks of transnational exchange and international relations during this turbulent period of inter-war history, as well as presenting new microhistorical perspectives on the history of the Third Reich. Ultimately, I was sure that such an intimate and everyday ego-document could improve our understanding of the nature of dictatorship and the power of popular opinion, as well as illuminating broader tendencies in Anglo-German relations during the inter-war years. As a 'miniature', it certainly seemed to possess considerable value in terms of the light it could shed on various facets of the bigger historical picture. While it is always necessary to be careful when approaching diaries from a methodological standpoint—they cannot simply be read as unfiltered reports of 'what happened' to the author, since they are essentially performative and descriptive, potentially stylizing, ameliorating or leaving out aspects of the writer's experience—such sources can nevertheless provide a valuable window onto how ordinary people (in this case, an ordinary British public schoolboy) experienced the emotions, ideas, values and practices of the National Socialist dictatorship.⁵

Recent studies which consider the Third Reich from outsider perspectives (whether those of tourists, journalists or other foreign nationals temporarily resident in Nazi Germany) have stressed the utility of this type of account for highlighting aspects of everyday life which might go unmentioned or unremarked in sources by German contemporaries.⁶ From this perspective, Hargreaves' diary provides a fount of fascinating observations, aided not least by the matter-of-fact nature of his narration. The diary highlights those aspects of the new Germany which English visitors of a similar background to Hargreaves might have considered noteworthy at the time, without any adjustment for hindsight in the face of the Nazi dictatorship's future atrocities (which might be found in a memoir penned long after the fact, or in a contemporary ego-document later edited for publication). In general, the diary does not seek to criticize Germany or the boys' German hosts in the first instance; indeed, the frequent praise and superlatives found throughout the diary entries suggest that the author is genuinely impressed with the welcome and facilities that the Nazi elite school has to offer.

Moreover, we can see that National Socialism is perceived merely as part and parcel of Hargreaves' general experience, rather than as something explicitly remarkable—take, for instance, the author's casual, offhand mentions of the SA's presence in a nearby village, or aspects of politicized tourism such as buying a Nazi flag as a souvenir. One can also note Hargreaves' marked interest in the pleasurable ('Gorgeous scenery [...] castles, barges and girls galore') and, indeed, the edible(!), rather than perceiving any attempt on his part to excavate

or isolate political aspects of the trip from the outset. Some days' entries in the diary (for instance, 27 April, or 4, 6 and 7 May) show not only how easily the political backdrop of dictatorship could fade into the background of visitors' lived experience, but also provide a vivid contrast with those moments at which the regime comes firmly to the forefront of the author's consciousness.

Most notable in this regard are Hargreaves' dispassionate observations of the National Socialist May Day celebrations in the neighbouring town of Diez. Here, the way in which foreign observers could easily be swept up in the fervour of 'heiling' and Hitlerism around them is made poignantly clear—although the interminable speeches by Hitler and his henchmen seem to have palled soon enough. Such an account is invaluable for the light that it can shed on an outsider's experience of National Socialist spectacle, perhaps especially given its focus on a local, microhistorical level—as opposed to an account of a larger, nationwide display of 'political religion' such as those held at the Reich Party Rallies at Nuremberg (so chillingly documented in Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*), or at the Nazi Harvest Thanksgiving Festival, held annually at the Bückeberg near Hamelin. Similarly, Hargreaves' observations on the ostensibly 'classless' society created by the Nazi national community also mesh well with existing approaches to the so-called *Volksgemeinschaft* more broadly within studies of the Third Reich.⁷

Since I was working at the time on a general history of the Napolas, I also found the diary useful as a form of corroborative source. That is to say, it proved valuable not only for the light it shed on the history of the exchanges between the British public schools and the Napolas, though this was considerable—not least because Dauntsey's was a highly atypical public school, in that it welcomed boys from all forms of agricultural background, and therefore would not necessarily present a view steeped solely in the ideals of the highest echelons of the political and ruling classes. While Hargreaves' diary does indeed demonstrate how easy it could be to establish friendly relations between boys of different nationalities from schools with very different ideals and ideological backgrounds, as well as showing how commonplace these Anglo-German connections and interactions were, in the form of his references to the visits by teams from Eton and Harrow to conduct football and fencing matches which took place at the same time as the Dauntsey's exchange, it also contained elements of comparison which were useful in a more detailed, Napola-specific context. For instance, Hargreaves' amazement at the trials which candidates taking the Napola entrance test at Oranienstein had to undergo ('backward somersaults etc.!) corroborates the broader picture we possess of the utterly gruelling nature of the schools' week-long aspirants' examination (*Aufnahmeprüfung*), which included 'tests of courage' as well as straightforward observation and testing of candidates' academic and physical prowess.⁸

However, there are also aspects of Hargreaves' diary as a source which are more problematic, and which necessitate a more thorough contextualization—his account is certainly not able to answer every question that we might pose. Most importantly, the diary demonstrates a certain susceptibility to Nazi propaganda—perhaps most explicitly in Hargreaves' description of the boys' visit to a labour camp run by the Reich Labour Service (RAD), where he seems to take the

ostensible benefits of the labour service programme more or less at face value. Nor is there any hint that Hargreaves picked up on the propagandistic intentions of his hosts in staging the exchange programme either. From this perspective, Source 4 is necessarily mute when it comes to elucidating German intentions and perceptions of the English (which tended more towards the competitive and critical). In general, the Napola authorities intended that the exchange programme should conceal manifold propagandistic aims behind a façade of fostering international cooperation, seducing their English guests with a plethora of enticing sightseeing trips and new experiences. While a meeting of minds between German and English boys was one intended outcome, as was the improvement of Napola praxis through observation and improvement of the public-school model, pupils were also charged with a vital propagandistic mission—to counteract and neutralize the effects of anti-Nazi accounts in the foreign media, forming opinion and influencing future foreign views of the Third Reich. To highlight these aspects of the exchange programme, then, we must turn instead to sources such as the Napolas' own school newsletters, which often published accounts of exchanges by both pupils and staff. Fascinatingly, the Oranienstein school newsletter contains a teacher's account of the reciprocal exchange visit to Dauntsey's School which followed the visit to Oranienstein by Hargreaves' party. This source is much more obviously moulded by the Napolas' proselytizing aims—for instance, the author attempts to garner British sympathy for the 'Jewish question' and other aspects of Nazi policy during his stay.⁹ Such aspects of the exchange programme could scarcely have been extrapolated from the diary presented here.

Yet in this sense, too, Hargreaves' diary is a document redolent of its time—not wholly unsympathetic to the perceived achievements of Hitler's new Germany, seeing much there as praiseworthy, and generally being willing to give the Third Reich the benefit of the doubt, happily oblivious of the terrors to come thereafter—including the war in which Hargreaves himself would subsequently receive military decorations for bravery in the fight against the German 'enemy'.

Notes

- 1 Editor's note: any comments enclosed in square brackets in the source are additions made by Helen Roche in the act of transcribing the source. Here she speculates that the letters 'b's B' may intend 'baby's bottom'. A [?] in the source indicates words in the transcribed handwritten text where Roche wished to indicate her questioning of her correct reading of the handwriting.
- 2 Probably a nickname for a boy with very blond or bleached hair, since H_2O_2 is the chemical formula for hydrogen peroxide.
- 3 For more on the history of the Napolas in general, see Helen Roche, *The Third Reich's Elite Schools: A History of the Napolas* (Oxford University Press, 2021). The exchanges with British public schools and US academies are covered on pp. 157–65.
- 4 For a detailed exploration of the Napola exchanges with British public schools, as well as a survey of general secondary literature on British encounters with the Third Reich, see Helen Roche, 'Zwischen Freundschaft und Feindschaft: Exploring Relationships Between Pupils at the Napolas (*Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten*) and British Public Schoolboys',

Angermion: Yearbook for Anglo-German Literary Criticism, Intellectual History and Cultural Transfers / Jahrbuch für britisch-deutsche Kulturbeziehungen, 6 (2013), pp. 101–26.

- 5 For more on this, see e.g. Christopher Duggan, *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy* (Vintage, 2012), pp. xii–xiii; Janosch Steuwer, 'Ein Drittes Reich, wie ich es auffasse': *Politik, Gesellschaft und privates Leben in Tagebüchern 1933–1939* (Wallstein, 2017), pp. 21–34 – now available in English translation as *A Third Reich, as I See It: Politics, Society, and Private Life in the Diaries of Nazi Germany, 1933–1939*, trans by. Bernard Heise (University of Indiana Press, 2023).
- 6 See for example Julia Boyd, *Travellers in the Third Reich: The Rise of Fascism Through the Eyes of Everyday People* (Elliott & Thompson, 2017); *Travels in the Reich 1933–1945: Foreign Authors Report from Germany*, ed. by Oliver Lubrich (University of Chicago Press, 2010).
- 7 For more on the notion of *Volksgemeinschaft*, see: *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany: Social Engineering and Private Lives*, ed. by Martina Steber and Bernhard Gotto (Oxford University Press, 2014).
- 8 For more on this, see Roche, *Elite Schools*, Chapter 2.
- 9 Zugführer Goos, 'Mit zehn Jungmannen in der Dauntsey's School', *Der Jungmann: Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalt Oranienstein/Lahn*, 2.3–4 (1936), pp. 48–50. For further discussion of this source, see Roche, 'Zwischen Freundschaft und Feindschaft', pp. 111–13.