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ABSTRACT

The English fascist and friend of Hitler, Unity Mitford, remains a controversial figure. She embodies the key social and political conflicts of the 1930s. There is considerable popular fascination with her life, yet Mitford's unique access to leaders and events of Britain and Nazi Germany makes her relevant to academic scholarship on interwar Europe. Her bizarre relationship with Adolf Hitler, the sensational media coverage of her story, and her desire to leave Britain in order to support Nazism from within Germany make Unity Mitford a fascinating lens through which to learn about gender, class, relations between European countries, and the appeal of fascism in the years before the Second World War. Her rebellions illuminate the normative values she rejected. Popular biographies and moralizing media hype are nonetheless the only texts to examine Mitford thus far. This dissertation will provide the first academic evaluation of Mitford’s experience. Using feminist theory to dissect her public image as the prototype “groupie” and microhistorical methodology to move beyond biographical format, British and German sources will be integrated for the first time to provide a new contribution to understanding fascism and interwar Europe.
RÉSUMÉ

La fasciste anglaise et amie de Hitler, Unity Mitford, demeure un personnage controversé. Elle incarne les principaux conflits sociopolitiques des années 1930. Bien qu'il existe une fascination populaire considérable envers ce que fut la vie de Mitford, l'accès privilégié dont elle a joui auprès des dirigeants de la Grande-Bretagne et de l'Allemagne nazie, ainsi que lors d'événements marquants de l'époque, en font un sujet pertinent de recherche sur l'Europe de l'entre-deux-guerres qui mérite une étude plus approfondie. Sa relation bizarre avec Adolf Hitler, la couverture médiatique sensationnelle de son histoire et son désir de quitter la Grande-Bretagne afin de soutenir le nazisme au sein même de l'Allemagne font de Unity Mitford une lente fascinante à travers laquelle examiner les genres, les classes humaines, les relations entre les pays européens et l'attrait exercé par le fascisme au cours des années qui ont précédé la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Ses révoltes mettent en lumière les valeurs normatives qu'elle a rejetées. Jusqu'à présent, biographies populaires et battage médiatique moralisateur ne constituent néanmoins que les seuls écrits dont Mitford a été l'objet. Le présent mémoire va fournir la toute première évaluation universitaire de l'expérience de Mitford. En mettant à contribution la théorie féministe pour disséquer l'image publique de cette femme en tant que prototype « groupie », d'une part, et la méthodologie microhistorique pour aller au-delà du genre biographique, d'autre part, pour la première fois des sources britanniques et allemandes y sont intégrées en guise de contribution nouvelle pour comprendre le fascisme et l'Europe de l'entre-deux-guerres.
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Many individuals have contributed to this research project in its various phases. It began as an undergraduate thesis at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. The thesis supervisor was Dr. Stephen Balzarini, and my undergraduate advisors were Dr. Roderick Stackelberg and Dr. Andrew Goldman. All three professors provided key support and guidance. Stephanie Mgebroff and Jessica Valder served as peer editors of that early paper. During those years, my first experiences with feminist theory came from the Gonzaga University Women's Studies Department, particularly Dr. Cate Siejk and Dr. Jane Rinehart. I very much appreciate their guidance in the complexities of theory and its application to scholarship. I wrote the last sections of this dissertation while teaching at Seminole State College of Florida. I want to thank my colleagues there for their support during that process of writing and editing. Special thanks are due to Cornelia Dietzel for her help deciphering old German handwriting.

At the graduate level during both my Masters and Doctorate programs at McGill University, Dr. Elizabeth Elbourne has been willing to support even the most unusual ideas as my chief advisor. Her warm support, keen insight, and flexible creativity have been integral parts of making this dissertation happen. Guidance has also come from Dr. Brian Lewis of McGill University and Dr. Till van Rahden of l'Université de Montréal. Both acted as additional advisors of the project. I am grateful for their suggestions on reading material, humour, and encouragement. Dr. Lorenz Lüthi of McGill University has been an unofficial advisor, and I owe him an enormous debt of gratitude for funding
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The Seminar heard part of this dissertation given as a rough paper in February 2009 and
discussed the finer points of British history late into the night on many occasions. The
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McGill University Professor of French Literature) made my time at McGill so much
more productive and pleasurable. Bob Tittler also introduced me to Dr. Allan Sherwin
(Professor Emeritus of Neurology at McGill University), and I am profoundly grateful for
Dr. Sherwin’s explanations of the finer points of Unity Mitford's suicide attempt and its
impact. He also generously provided additional research on medical experts and
treatments during the 1930s.

Research at various archives took me across two continents. This started at
McGill's own library with help from Phyllis Rudin (history liaison librarian) and the
helpful Inter-Library Loan staff. Funding came from my research assistantships with
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(now the McGill Institute for Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies) Margaret Gillett
Award. I am grateful for all of these. Travel began at Ohio State University in Columbus,
Ohio. Rebecca Jewitt and additional staff at the school's archives helped me to navigate
the papers in the Jessica Mitford Collection there. Constancia “Dinky” Romilly and
Benjamin Treuhaft, Jessica's children, were very generous in granting me permission to make photocopies of the family correspondence in the collection. I also want to thank Nicholas Policy and the staff at the United States National Archive and Record Administration in College Park, Maryland, for their help navigating the Captured German War Documents stored there. Jean Cannon at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas in Austin saved me a flight by generously helping me to access the Sybille Bedford Collection held at the center as I chased down information on Brian Howard. Dr. Alexander Geppert at Harvard University's Gunzburg Center for European Studies also kindly shared his ideas on love letters sent to Hitler.

During a memorable trip to Britain for research, the staff at both the National Archives at Kew and the British Library Colindale Branch were incredibly courteous and helpful. Both institutions also arranged to ship copies on more than one occasion after my return to Canada. Ian Killeen and Natalie Milne with the University of Birmingham's Special Collections, and Joanne Shortland and Ruth Cammies of the Open University at Milton Keynes International Centre for Comparative Criminological Research Archives also shipped important information from their archives, which I very much appreciate. Critical interviews took place during this time across the pond. Mrs. Margaret Budd welcomed me into her home for an unforgettable afternoon in Chelsea to share her experiences as a young woman studying in Germany during the 1930s. Invaluable information also came from a close family member of Unity Mitford. I respect this individual's wish to remain anonymous but would like to voice my thanks all the same.

Incredible kindness and generosity came to the rescue of this project on more than
one occasion. I owe a great deal to Charlotte Mosley, Diana's daughter-in-law, for granting me an interview, facilitating access to family papers, and providing irreplaceable advice. She has edited and authored many books on the subject of the Mitford sisters. I am grateful to have had her advice and support with this project. I am also grateful to the Chatsworth House Trust (particularly Helen Marchant) for allowing me access to important family papers such as Lady Redesdale's manuscript. This ability to read so many of Unity Mitford's own letters to her family allowed me to build a immeasurably more accurate picture of her than would have been possible otherwise. Brief but kind and helpful correspondence that helped to build my understanding of Mitford also came from Mary Lovell, Jonathan Guinness, and Michael Burn. Each of them was generous with his/her time and knowledge. Special thanks for generosity are due to the staff and owners of the Shaven Crown in Wychwood for their hospitality one unforgettable evening, my anonymous driver in rural Oxfordshire for rescuing me one evening, Production Manager Susie Gordon at Blakeway Productions for providing me with a copy of Channel Four's Hitler's British Girl, Lorn Macintyre for discussing his novel which featured Unity Mitford, and Sir Ian Kershaw and his personal assistant Beverley Eaton for sharing documents from Kershaw's own archives they felt may be relevant to the project. In Germany, Anton Löffelmeier of the Stadtarchiv der Stadt München and Sabine Frauenreuther of the Bayerische Hauptstaatsarchiv München both had infinite patience with my German-speaking and provided wonderful help in navigating their archives. Kristin Hartisch gave me similar guidance from the Bundesarchiv, Berlin.

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Introduction

In 1977, David Bowie sang, “We can be heroes/ Just for one day.” It is no coincidence that Bowie was also famous for his brief flirtation with fascist politics, aesthetics, and celebrity, telling Cameron Crowe during an interview for Rolling Stone magazine that Hitler was “the first rock star.” The notions of heroism, action, and revolution were at the symbolic heart of fascism in the first half of the twentieth century. Unity Mitford, the fourth daughter of the second Lord and Lady Redesdale (David and Sydney Freeman-Mitford), was an ardent fascist during the 1930s, and her attraction to fascism came from these same ideals that attracted Bowie. Although fascism as heroic seems perverse and even ironic to the modern mind, with all its awareness of the genocide and repression, fascists consistently represented themselves as taking charge of stagnant European politics and overthrowing an archaic system of values. This vision of an alternative fascist modernity inspired Unity Mitford. Class and gender represented limits on most young aristocratic women's freedom of movement in the 1930s. Mitford, however, did not accept these as limitations and carved a unique place for herself as Hitler's personal friend in Nazi Germany, using her gender and her class connections when they could help her forge connections and ignoring them when they hindered her freedom of movement. She used fascism to forge a life both inside and outside of the interwar period's conventions for a young, female aristocrat, but in the process, she adopted some hideous beliefs.

The goal of this project is to be the first to examine Mitford's life for its relevance

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to scholarship. This is a microhistorical study-- not because Unity Mitford was consistently typical of aristocrats, women, British fascists, or Hitler's close circle. (In fact, she was an exception to the rules in many ways, while in other ways, she conformed perfectly.) Instead, the concept of “zooming in” on an individual life to mine it for information that can contribute to wider historical concepts is the foundation for this approach to Mitford. As Carlo Ginzburg points out, microhistory does not always investigate complete microcosms of larger subjects, but it does encourage the scholarly equivalent of a cinematic “close-up” that can show at least one example of the impact those larger subjects had on individual lives.\textsuperscript{2} This study's original contributions to knowledge come from Mitford's experience of gender, class, relations between European countries, and the appeal of fascism in the years before the Second World War. While Unity's complex interactions with gender and class norms and expectations are intriguing, her enthusiastic embrace of fascism in both Britain and Germany provides valuable information about that ideology's power to attract followers during the 1930s. Her own words and others' observations of her make up evidence that the energy and idealism of fascism were some of its most dangerously attractive strengths in the early twentieth century. Unity Mitford is ultimately important to history as privileged witness to a critical moment in culture and politics.

\textbf{Literature Review}

As one of the notorious Mitford sisters, Unity already has a vast and varied
\textsuperscript{2} Carlo Ginzburg, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It," \textit{Critical Inquiry} 20, no. 1 (Autumn 1993).
collection of books that reflect on her life. The six Mitford sisters went from roles as average members of the British aristocracy to icons of eccentricity as they grew to adulthood. In addition to Unity's bizarre friendship with Hitler, Nancy became a successful novelist and biographer, Diana divorced the Guinness heir to live as British Union of Fascists leader Sir Oswald Mosley's second wife, Jessica (Decca) eloped with a cousin to the Spanish Civil War before making her living as a noted Communist muckraker, and Deborah (Debo) became the Duchess of Devonshire and kept the estate at Chatsworth, one of the few great homes still in private hands after the Second World War. Even Pamela, the comparatively dull sister, famously kept an Aga stove the colour of her eyes. They were all famous beauties, relatives of the Churchills, and part of the Aesthetes circle of authors and artists. The interest in the Mitfords has only increased with the passage of time. Nancy Mitford's novels, particularly *In Pursuit of Love* and *Love in a Cold Climate*, contain numerous references to her family. She also wrote vignettes about her life in books like the *Water Beetle*. Decca wrote two memoirs of her life, Diana wrote a memoir and a collection called *Loved Ones*, and Debo recently wrote her memoirs as well. Debo's daughter Sophia and Diana's son Jonathan (with his daughter Catherine) have published accounts of the family that draw heavily on oral histories with their mothers and aunts as well as family papers. The family accounts are all

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fascinating, but inherently shaped by their connections--more memoirs than analyses of
the sisters' significance.

Secondary sources on the Mitford family tend towards another bias, that of
sensationalism. Books like Scandalous Britain and Andrew Barrow's Gossip have their
obligatory Mitford sections.\textsuperscript{6} Studies of interwar fascism such as Richard Griffiths'
Fellow Travellers of the Right or books on Hitler's female acquaintances do the same thing.\textsuperscript{7} Other texts that focus exclusively on the sisters draw too credulously on rumour
and biased published sources. Karlheinz Schülich, Emile Guikovaty, and Annick le
Floch'moan all fall into this trap.\textsuperscript{8} Mary Lovell's chronicle of all six sisters (published in
Britain as The Mitford Girls and in the United States as The Sisters) is epic, accurate, and
admirably objective, a rarity in Mitford works, but it is more biographical than critical of
the sisters' political significance.\textsuperscript{9} The Mitfords appear as three-dimensional figures.
Their importance to scholarship, however, remains unclear. By contrast, David Pryce-
Jones, the only author to focus on just Unity Mitford, goes to the other extreme.\textsuperscript{10} In the
biography subtitled “The Frivolity of Evil,” he builds Unity up in a sort of straw man
argument about the 1930s' willful ignorance. Angry references to her weight, her alleged
sexual activity, and her politics all come from interviews with women and men who once

\textsuperscript{6} Nigel Blundell, Incredible Destiny: Stories of Crime, Scandal and the Bizarre (Leicester: Blitz
Editions, 1992); Andrew Barrow, Gossip: A History of High Society From 1920 to 1970 (London:

\textsuperscript{7} Richard Griffiths, Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany, 1933-1939
(London: Constable, 1980).

\textsuperscript{8} Karlheinz Schädlich, Die Mitford Sisters (Dusseldorf: Claassen Verlag, 1990); Annick LeFloch'moan,
Ces extravagantes soeurs Mitford: Une famille dans la tourmente de l'Histoire (Manchecourt, France:
J'ai lu et Librairie Artheme Fayard, 2002); Emile Guikovaty, Les Extravagantes Soeurs Mitford (Paris:
Bernard Grasset, 1983).

\textsuperscript{9} Mary S. Lovell, The Sisters: The Saga of the Mitford Family, 1st American edition (New York: W.W.

\textsuperscript{10} David Pryce-Jones, Unity Mitford: A Quest (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976; W.H. Allen &
American edition's subtitle is “Frivolity of Evil.”
knew her, but now seem eager to distance themselves from an unsavory past. The Mitfords have continued to exist in the margins of history instead of being its focus. They appear as a topic that is popular but somehow not serious enough for scholarly attention.

get enough of the Mitford sisters.

The six Mitfords must have some resonance with modern audiences, and the wealth of existing memoirs, biographies, and pop references provide more and more material with which to examine their social, cultural, and political relevance. Since the Pryce-Jones biography of Unity Mitford, Charlotte Mosley published extensive letters. More and more letters and memoirs from the 1930s by journalists, diplomats, Nazi adjutants, politicians, and gossipy diarists have seen publication, broadening the picture of the Mitfords' circle.

Almost as important as the new availability of primary sources on Unity Mitford's life has been the wealth of new material published in secondary sources on interwar class, gender, and fascism. Class, gender, and fascism are the three lenses of examination for Mitford's observations of Britain and Germany. Studies of fascism have changed radically since the 1990s. British fascism has attracted new attention from scholars like Kenneth Linehan, Julie Gottlieb, Martin Durham, and Richard Thurlow. Their examinations of Britain's archives, particularly Home Office files, have looked at how fascists were actually much more marginal than previously realized. British fascists like Unity Mitford and her brother-in-law Mosley received press coverage and scholarly


14 For details on archival work, see appropriate section of attached bibliography.

attention disproportionate to the threat they actually posed to government stability. It seems Westminster had the British Union of Fascists and the other fascist fringe groups well in hand and that the groups limited themselves by pushing policies many Britons saw as essentially foreign. In spite of this, Thurlow has been especially critical of earlier historians' depictions of British fascists as fifth column potential for Hitler. He argues persuasively that British fascists were too devoted to a specifically British chauvinistic nationalism to ever truly submit to German invasion. (Although this certainly did not prevent them taking advice and even funds from Hitler and his Italian counterpart, Mussolini.) This latest generation of scholars has looked at the fascist organizations' shifting membership to show how the ideology attracted both those with socialist (and even suffragette, according to Gottlieb) roots and those with a traditional preoccupation with the British empire's maintenance.

This thesis will argue that the new outlook on British fascism explains its initial attraction to Unity Mitford. There were opportunities for female members to have a relatively active role in the British Union of Fascists, in spite of occasional rhetoric about traditional gender roles, and the combination of conservative imperialism was familiar from her childhood just as the socialist elements would have been titillatingly rebellious. The rituals of marching and saluting, the pageantry of blackshirt uniforms, and the threat of active violence only added to this restless young woman's attraction. What makes Unity Mitford most exceptional, however, is that she maintained membership in both British fascist and Nazi (German fascist) circles. She essentially embraced two competing ideologies. The best way to make sense of Unity's attraction to Germany,
Nazism, and Adolf Hitler is to look at the innovations in scholarship of fascism as an ideology. Such work tends to focus primarily on Italy and Germany because of the amount of material that exists on the two.

Pioneer George Mosse was the first to explore the culture around fascism, but historians of the “new consensus“ have been building on his work significantly since the 1990s. Led by theorist Roger Griffin, this latest coterie of scholars has moved away from traditional notions of fascism as holding an extreme right-wing position (or even fascism as a nihilistic worldview instead of an actual ideology) to explore fascism in its various incarnations as an ideology that defies the traditional political spectrum. The heart of their definition of fascism is “palingenetic ultra-nationalism.“ The emphasis on rebirth (palingenesis) has led these scholars through fascinating examinations of fascism’s sense of itself as both modern and revolutionary. The corporatism in economic policies, the obsession with unquestioning faith in a leader and ritualistic displays of devotion (crystallized in Emilio Gentile’s publications on the “sacralisation of politics“), and the alluring aesthetic qualities that hypnotized massive crowds (famously critiqued by Walter Benjamin) all fit in this same category of regenerating the nation with a new form of politics. The recognition of fascism’s chauvinistic nationalism, however, explains its appeal to traditional conservatives. Fascism is notorious for its militarism and its


This attracted many conservatives, some of whom later left when they felt fascism was too innovative to restore the glorious past they imagined for their countries. Unity embraced these seemingly contradictory sides of fascism because her youth and rebellious nature attracted her to the rebirth aspect, while her aristocratic background tied her to a long tradition of military support. Her aristocratic roots may also have helped to explain Unity Mitford’s sense of national boundaries and differences as surmountable. Even in the wake of World War One, many aristocrats felt more affinity with aristocrats of other European countries than some of their own countrymen. They travelled across borders with ease as they roamed empires, sent their daughters to finish in Paris or their sons to study in Vienna, enjoyed lazy vacations on the French Riviera and jaunts to the Alps so they could ski in winter. Money and social connections (even familial connections, in some cases) gave aristocrats greater freedom of movement than any other sector of society. Studies since World War II have noted both the decline of the aristocracy (David Cannadine) and its extraordinary ability to persevere (Arno Mayer) after the bloody conflicts and steeper taxation of hereditary estates that came between the turn of the twentieth century and the present day. Regardless of their stance on aristocracy’s downfall or tenacity, all these authors have noted certain trends in aristocratic behavior that are helpful in understanding Unity Mitford’s worldview. The

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uncertainty about the future, the fear of Marxism, the reckless rebellion, and an antiquated notion of honor are all surprisingly standard. Sir Ian Kershaw’s recent biography of Lord Londonderry and his sympathy for Nazi Germany is equally important because it demonstrates how at least one other aristocrat looked back on a family tradition of diplomacy (in Londonderry’s case, harkening back to Viscount Castlereagh).19 Kershaw argues that Londonderry believed negotiating/ maintaining a peace between Britain and Germany was his destiny because of this heritage. Certainly, Unity Mitford envisioned a similar role for herself, although her grandfather was an ambassador to Japan instead of to the Congress of Vienna.

Unity Mitford’s gender both enhanced and limited her view of herself as a bridge between Germany and Britain in the build up to World War II. Women in the early twentieth century faced severe limitations. Historians like Susan Kingsley Kent describe women of Unity’s time period as products of gradual change in gender roles, but historian Pat Jalland’s images of life for late nineteenth-century women are surprisingly similar to the choices Unity faced as a young woman in the aristocracy of the 1930s.20 Marriage was the primary means of mobility. Freedom of movement for a single woman was almost unimaginable. Aristocratic young women without husbands were to stay safely with their families as “dutiful daughters.” They could care for aging parents, manage brothers’ households, or engage in amateur scholarship or charity work, but negotiating peace between nations did not fall into the category of acceptable activities. Indeed,

Unity would be the only one of her sisters to explore the world without marrying first, and her freedom came in part from finishing school in Munich and then from distracted parents. In spite of this, Unity Mitford’s gender gave her access to men in power that a man would never receive. A man might appear to be a military threat to Hitler. A woman struck him as less threatening. There was also a long tradition of women (particularly aristocratic women) acting as hostesses, informal diplomatic work done behind the scenes of power. Unity cannot have been unaware of how other women of her station influenced politics even when their political work was not as government appointees or elected politicians. When British and German media attacked Unity Mitford’s beliefs, they almost always referred back to her gender and hinted that she overstepped her bounds as a young, unmarried woman. Sonya Rose’s descriptions of “good time girls“ in her book *Which People’s War?* indicate that women stepping outside traditional gender roles (as perceived by the media) attracted harsh criticism during the Second World War.21

Women’s virtue is often associated with national honor in history. While aristocrats may have tacitly acknowledged women’s unspoken role in politics, Unity Mitford’s most vocal critics criticized both her gender and her aristocratic privilege; thus, this tradition of aristocratic women would hardly have appeased the press.

Unity Mitford’s class and gender intersected, but her gender also intersected with fascist politics in a curious manner. German gender historians involved with the *historikerinnenstreit* between Gisela Bock and Claudia Koonz have long debated whether women living in Nazi Germany were oppressors or oppressed.22 Despite their role as

privileged people in the Nazi racial hierarchy, propaganda depicted German women as docile breeding machines, and policy often echoed this view. Few women held political positions of real power in the aggressively chauvinist state. At the same time, historians like Victoria De Grazia have illustrated other occasions when women played roles that were anything but passive and domestic. In practice, fascist women were one of many examples of the contradictions inherent in fascism, exhorted to pursue an active patriotic duty but also encouraged to remain passive stereotypes of traditional gender roles. Irene Günther also analyzes similar contradictions in media and policy in her study of Nazi fashion. Women meant to symbolize Nazi womanhood flouted its condemnation of make-up and high fashion. Even Nazi stylists alternated between feminized military uniforms as modern reflections of Hitler’s regime and traditional dirndls meant to indicate domesticity and rural purity. Unity’s ability to carve her own gender norms into this confused gender policy becomes clearer in light of these debates.

Methodology

Feminist scholarship has played an integral role in shaping both the research and construction of the following study. Recognizing the diversity of feminist theories, I have tried to isolate several other overarching tenets of feminist thought, aside from the

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importance of gender, that are central to the project. One was implementing self critique and awareness of the reflexivity of the researcher in order to avoid moralizing or creating hagiography. The desire to understand Mitford's life and attraction to fascism called for a feminist desire to deconstruct hierarchical binaries as well as an affinity for subverting dominant research and methodological paradigms. Reaching out to political science, cultural studies and other disciplines guided some of my research. One of the most important tenets has been the feminist biographer's emphasis on allowing the subject of a study to speak for herself. Unity Mitford's own words feature as much as possible, particularly because many of the sources quoted are not available in published form. At the same time, the human suffering caused by fascism allowed me to hope the project could have the relevance to modern lives that feminists aim for in their work. This feminist concept of praxis fit the political implications of a project that stresses gender and the appeal of extreme ideologies.

Although feminist theories of biography inform this study of Unity Mitford, it is not a traditional biography. Instead, the project represents a microhistory of one individual's life. Historians such as Carlo Ginzburg and Natalie Zemon Davis have pioneered the microhistory as a way to focus in on a moment, a place, an individual, or an event that illustrate something special in the larger historical context. It can be a microcosm or a unique window into a moment otherwise lost to history.\textsuperscript{25} Not only has the biography long been treated contemptuously by the academy, but it seems critical that

Unity Mitford be understood within the context of her time. Microhistory allows the writer to show an individual or event in detail as a way to understand broader trends. The interplay of class, gender, interwar European politics, and fascism all make Mitford ideal for such methodology. Her rejection of norms exposes the tensions running through the chaotic years before the Second World War.

Archival work and oral histories supplemented published primary sources and the broader knowledge of themes like class, gender, interwar relations, and fascism to inform this study of Mitford's life. This started with Jessica Mitford's letters in the archives at Ohio State University. The Public Records Office, now the National Archives, has declassified Home Office and Foreign Office files relating to Unity and her sister Diana to supplement their vast collection of period newspapers. The Bundesarchiv, the Munich Stadtarchiv, and the Bavarian Hauptstaatsarchiv were also able to release government papers from the Nazi era, only some of which appear in earlier works. Additional texts came from the Open University's International Centre for Comparative Criminological Research Archives, the University of Birmingham Archives, and the Captured German War Records in the United States National Archives and Records Administration. Most importantly, the Chatsworth House Trust generously granted access to Lady Redesdale's memoir of her daughter's life. The memoir includes innumerable replicas of Unity's letters, drawings, and even diary entries. Because friends and acquaintances have been so self-conscious about anything that hints at pre-war collusion and many are no longer alive, oral histories only come from a few select sources. Charlotte Mosley and a close family member (who has chosen to remain anonymous) answered questions to ensure the
accuracy of many details of Unity Mitford's life and her personality traits. Mrs. Margaret Budd, who studied in Germany in the 1930s, spoke about her experiences as a young British woman in the new Nazi Germany, and McGill Professor Emeritus Alan Sherwin spent long hours analyzing the damage a bullet did to Unity's right temple after her suicide attempt in 1939. Their willingness to discuss Unity Mitford at great length provided this dissertation with unique new perspectives on elements of her life.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One examines the expectations for her class and gender that shaped Unity Mitford's childhood. While it deliberately avoids attempts at psychoanalysis, the chapter focuses on how her early attempts at rejecting normative behaviours were part of a lifelong pattern. It also looks at her interest in art and poetry because romanticism was another defining feature of the rest of her life.

Chapter Two describes Unity Mitford's time as a debutante in London as well as her introduction to British fascism. Although warped, the heroic idealism of fascism, its radical aesthetics, and its Romantic language appealed to Mitford. This chapter analyzes her introduction to German fascism (Nazism) at the 1933 Nuremberg rally, a place that deepened her devotion to fascist imagery but also impressed her with the energy and excitement of Hitler's Germany.

Chapter Three explores Unity Mitford's first months in Munich. Her attraction to Nazism deepened in the city's unique atmosphere, and in early 1935, she met Hitler for
the first time. This chapter exposes how the cult of celebrity around Hitler worked, the ideas of Nazism Unity Mitford encountered, and the environment of early Nazi Germany.

Chapter Four investigates Mitford's self-perception as she worked her way into Hitler's social circle. She started to see herself as an ambassador for Britain (and British fascism in particular) as she navigated Nazi society. Press coverage of her activities, public appearances that garnered widespread attention, and a closer relationship with Hitler distinguished Mitford's correspondence from this time period. Her anti-Semitism also emerged in her writing.

Chapter Five differs from Chapter Four in that it shows Mitford's increasing success at carving out a role for herself as a conduit between Britain and Germany. She acted as hostess to many important British visitors to Munich, and she became more and more accepted as a member of Hitler's inner circle. While she never directly impacted politics, her access to important individuals and her confidence in attempting to use her connections to influence politics show how she was both characteristic of her class and unusual for an unmarried young woman.

Chapter Six depicts the adult life Unity Mitford finally established for herself in Germany. Instead of registering immigration paperwork as a student and taking language classes on the side, she focused on an extraordinarily independent life for herself in Munich. Britons and Germans both used her as a potential source of information about the other country (although few accepted her views without taking her obvious political bias into question).

Chapter Seven demonstrates how Unity Mitford felt torn between Britain and
Germany as the two countries drew closer to war with each other. Mitford's loyalty to Britain through her family ties and her ultra-nationalist patriotism (part of her early devotion to British fascism) and her loyalty to Germany through Hitler and the Nazi belief system ultimately led her to attempt suicide in September 1939.
Chapter One

Pursuit of Love:

The Radlett children read enormously by fits and starts in the library at Alconleigh, a good representative nineteenth-century library, which had been made by their grandfather, a most cultivated man. But, while they picked up a great deal of heterogeneous information, and gilded it with their own originality, while they bridged gulfs of ignorance with their charm and high spirits, they never acquired any habit of concentration, they were incapable of solid hard work. One result, in later life, was that they could not stand boredom. Storms and difficulties left them unmoved, but day after day of ordinary existence produced an unbearable torture of ennui, because they completely lacked any form of mental discipline.  

Eerie omens surrounded Unity Mitford’s conception and naming. Family biographies and memoirs tend to make much of these, and Mitford herself celebrated these during her years in Germany. Her conception in Swastika, Ontario, as her parents searched for gold on a forty-acre land claim in Canada, seems uncanny. Her middle name, Valkyrie, came from her paternal grandfather, the first Baron Redesdale. Siegfried Wagner invited Redesdale to Bayreuth in 1912, and the distinguished British diplomat came to be a great admirer of Richard Wagner’s works. Connections to the Bayreuth circle led Redesdale to a central role in translating, introducing, and promoting Houston Stewart Chamberlain’s Foundations of the Nineteenth-Century.

Redesdale’s children

28 Note that Redesdale, as British ambassador to Japan, also had connections to Chamberlain’s brother, a Japanese professor, that helped influence his involvement with the work. (J & C Guinness, 99-100) The best descriptions of Redesdale’s interest in Wagner and Chamberlain are his own memoirs. (Algernon Bertram Freeman-Mitford, Baron Redesdale, Memories (London: Hutchinson, 1915)) Other good indications of Wagner’s impact on British and European thinking and the composer’s complex relationship with politics are: Anne Dzamba Sessa, Richard Wagner and the English (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1979); Anne Dzamba Sessa, David Clay Large, and William Weber, eds., Wagnerism in European Culture and Politics (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Hannu Salmi, Imagined Germany: Richard Wagner’s National Utopia (New York: P. Lang, 1999); J. Roderick Stackelberg, Idealism Debased: From Völkisch Ideology to National Socialism (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1981); Geoffrey C. Field, Evangelist of Race: The Germanic Vision of Houston Stewart Chamberlain (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981). Perhaps the most interesting element of Redesdale’s ties to Chamberlain and Bayreuth is that his only disagreement with the Foundations is its
had little interest in the old man’s project, but Valkyrie was another peculiar coincidence.29 Although Nancy claims Unity’s first name came from admiration for the stage actress Unity Moore, “an early Peter Pan,” other family members maintain that “Unity” came from her mother’s hope that the First World War would come to a speedy end.30 While tempting to conclude this is evidence of proto-fascist sympathy, there is no reliable evidence during these early years that Unity Mitford's parents held views at all outside the norms of the conservative British aristocracy in general.

All these seeming marks of destiny are little more than chilling coincidences on closer inspection, but more than any names, the time and place of Unity Mitford’s birth would determine the rest of her life. She entered the world on August 8, 1914, four days after Britain entered the First World War. In her memoir of her fourth daughter’s life, Unity Mitford’s mother (Sydney Freeman-Mitford, née Bowles, called “Muv” by the children) remembers the atmosphere surrounding this child’s birth: She went into labour just before her husband left for France. Unity’s father (David Freeman-Mitford, later the Second Baron Redesdale, called “Farve” by the children) witnessed the birth only because of chance leave from his regiment and an eight hour extension.31 Sydney recalls:

As soon as I could travel, when Unity Valkyrie was three weeks old, the Nurse and I went to Newcastle to see her father who was still there with his regiment. anti-Semitism. He mentions this in his introduction to the text and elsewhere, and it is perhaps the best indication of how his naming of Unity does not necessarily indicate that he would have approved of her worldview. (Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Foundations of the Nineteenth Century, 2 volumes (London: John Lane,1913)) One should also note that, in The Water Beetle, Nancy Mitford, Unity’s oldest sister, claims that her grandfather “…said these maidens [the Valkyrie] were not German but Scandinavian. He was a great friend of Wagner’s and must have known.” (Nancy Mitford, Water Beetle, 5) Redesdale’s behaviour during the First World War also confirms that he had no great devotion to Germany itself. (J & C Guinness, 99-100) 29 In fact, later conversations about Chamberlain and the Mitford family connection to him surprised Hitler. 30 Harold Acton, Nancy Mitford, Re-typeset for centenary of Mitford's birth edition (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975; Gibson Square Books, 2004), 19 [source of quote]; J & C Guinness, 231. 31 MS of Lady Redesdale's unpublished memoir of Unity Mitford, Chatsworth House Trust, 3.
We stayed in the Station Hotel and our room looked out on one of the big main platforms of the station. It was crowded all day and all night by soldiers on their way to the front... The song they sang was Tipperary and they sang it all night and all day. This surely is the saddest tune ever written. It ought always to be played slowly, like a dirge. To them it was a march, a glorious march away from all responsibility and worry, away to a new country to fight for their own country against a wicked man called the Kaiser.... Unity slept in a drawer in my room, lapped in these strains, while David and I tried to forget what a short time we had together.32

The two World Wars bracketed Unity Mitford’s life, and her restlessness and dislocation were typical for an aristocrat and for a woman during the Interwar years. As her father and other titled families headed into battle, they hastened the disruption of the old order of aristocratic, male power in Britain and the rest of Europe. Unity Mitford’s subsequent fascination with fascism would have less to do with any upper class predisposition towards ideology and more to do with access to people, ideas, travel, and leisure time that allowed for the pursuit of political interests on a grander scale than less elite women or men could achieve.

The Mitford family can almost serve as a textbook case of the declining fortunes of the British aristocracy in the Interwar period. While the title Baron Redesdale was relatively recent (awarded to Unity Mitford’s grandfather for his work as an ambassador to Japan), the family had a distinguished history with Cotswolds estates and plenty of ties to the upper echelons of the titled aristocracy.33 Sinclair notes, “Between 1886 and 1914, some two hundred people entered for the first time the exclusive set of fewer than six hundred peers already entitled by hereditary right to sit in the House of Lords.”34

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32 Redesdale MS, 7-8. Note that Nancy Mitford records her memories of Unity’s birth and the First World War in her text, *The Water Beetle*. Her fervent prayers for an exciting war and memories of knitting countless mittens for the officers she most fancied as a ten-year-old girl provide a more light-hearted view of the Mitford family’s war experiences.


34 Sinclair, 20-1.
Scholars like David Cannadine add that by the nineteenth century the creation of new peerages for distinguished civilian or military, particularly those with pre-existing “landed connections,” had become increasingly commonplace.\textsuperscript{35} Although older peers would have retained a certain cachet, by the time the First Baron Redesdale accepted his coronet, few could have seriously sneered at the title’s newness. At the First Lord Redesdale’s death in 1916, his son David inherited the title along with a rambling property known as Batsford and extensive debts.

Like most aristocratic families between the wars, the Mitfords’ finances were fragile. Britain’s aristocracy had started to shrink its estates and sell its lavish London houses. Lord Montagu of Beaulieu asserts, “In the four immediate post-[World War I] years one quarter of the land in England changed hands, the biggest transfer of land since the Norman Conquest.”\textsuperscript{36} Unity Mitford’s younger sister Jessica similarly remembers, “‘From Batsford Mansion to Asthall Manor to Swinbrook House to Old Mill Cottage’ was our slogan to describe the decline of the family fortunes from Grandfather’s day.”\textsuperscript{37} Besides the burden of Grandfather’s debts and death duties, David had no knack for money management. Investments in Canadian gold mines and “speculative ventures to make papier mâché wireless cabinets and to recover pirates’ treasure” made matters worse.\textsuperscript{38} They spent too much on the houses built or purchased in an effort to downsize, and the properties and heirlooms sold for much needed funds hit the market at the worst possible times.\textsuperscript{39} Sydney was more practical, but David's poor decisions exacerbated a

\textsuperscript{36} Montagu, 174
\textsuperscript{37} Jessica Mitford, \textit{Hons and Rebels}, 57.
\textsuperscript{38} Cannadine, \textit{Decline}, 551.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Ibid.}
problem widespread among the upper classes of the time. The security of privilege did not surround the Mitford children to the extent it surrounded their forebears. Historians of the First World War like Bernard Waites note that not just the trappings of Britain’s class system but the very language and imagery of class had shifted during the war. Changes in the class system had been moving towards greater social equality since the nineteenth-century changes to Britain's voting franchise. The World Wars sped up that change and and acted as catalysts. They required too many sacrifices from Britain's working classes for them to quietly accept the old system of inequality.

All the dramatic changes hastened by the war deserve to be qualified by the very real power British aristocrats maintained between the wars. This power came from a tradition of adaptability. Unlike more rigid counterparts on the European continent doomed to extinction, British nobles were particularly good at selective compromise. Arno Mayer’s *Persistence of the Old Regime* is perhaps the most radical and well-known argument for this, but few British historians dispute the basic narrative of aristocratic accommodation. Wasson specifically contends that the aristocracy continues to influence politics, religion, and arts and literature to this day. The most graphic illustration of this comes in his discussion of salons in interwar Europe:

Aristocratic hostesses in London and Paris during the interwar period were still closely integrated into diplomatic, social, cultural, and political worlds. At a ball commemorating the Congress of Vienna held at the Austrian embassy in 1935 Lady Londonderry wore in her hair the same Order of the Garter that her predecessor had worn at the *bal masque* given by Prince Metternich in 1814.

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42 Wasson, 200-2.
Local remnants of old feudal power systems also continued to exist. Charity and public service traditions lingered in rural areas as well as an ethos of civic responsibility communicated to aristocratic children. The push and pull between tradition, privilege, and power with change, disruption, and insecurity molded the Mitford children.

Strong ties to rural estates had long formed the core of the traditional aristocratic upbringing, and in this respect, the Mitford children had a fairly common childhood for their class background. Like many peers, David took great interest in sporting activities and encouraged the children in outdoors pursuits. He even played “child hunt,” a game in which the children would challenge the family dogs with complicated scent trails and then wait for the dogs and David to find them. Such dogs and other beloved family pets feature in all the family portraits, and additional farm animals provided extra income and entertainment for the girls. Miranda, the pet lamb, features prominently in Decca’s memoir, *Hons and Rebels*. She recalls how she sneaked the sheep into her room to save her from “Bolshies” during the 1926 General Strike and how “every Sunday morning, rain or shine, we stumped off down the hill with Nanny, governess, [Unity’s] goat, her pet snake Enid, Miranda, several dogs, and my pet dove.”

Isolation was a common element of aristocratic childhood. Young girls would have felt this especially. Schooling at home and a sense of difference and separation from other

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44 Mayer, 8; Montagu, 155-6; Sinclair, 10-13. In many aristocratic families, this connected to military service.
45 Murphy, 31, 42. See Cannadine, *Aspects*, 55 for a particularly insightful discussion of the horse’s relevance to the aristocracy.
46 Lovell, 28-9. Nancy made this famous in The *Pursuit of Love* (See page 10).
local children, if not enforced separation by more snobbish parents, left them primarily with siblings, servants, or pets as friends.\textsuperscript{48} Friends and relatives would occasionally come to visit. The Mitfords had fancy dress parties with friends and cousins each Christmas, and one cousin in particular, Randolph Churchill, recalls spending many holidays with the family as a child and having them visit Chartwell in return.\textsuperscript{49} Another acquaintance, Violet Powell, remembers the Mitford brood as scandalously wild compared to her own family. The Mitford sisters had conducted “a murderous pillow fight down the length of the picture gallery” at Cornbury Park.\textsuperscript{50} Few friends came to visit, or even existed outside the family. At age nine, Unity was a bridesmaid for Hilda Fenwick, but this would have been a rare treat.\textsuperscript{51} Decca describes Swinbrook House as a self-contained “fortress or citadel” few entered or left.\textsuperscript{52} By and large, the Mitfords spent most of their time with each other. Secret societies and alliances among groups of siblings sprouted. Pranks were common, inside jokes grew, and a distinct way of speaking that friends noted as uniquely Mitford arose.\textsuperscript{53} Diana remembers, “Miss Mirams thought our way of talking sounded affected. ‘[Tom] mustn’t talk like that when he’s at school,’ she told Muv. ‘What mustn’t he say?’ asked Muv. ‘Well, for instance, “how amusing”. Boys never say “how amusing”,’ said Miss Mirams.”\textsuperscript{54}

The Mitford parents were somewhat distant from an emotional perspective. In

\textsuperscript{48} Sinclair, 191, 198-9. Jessica alludes to some of this in Hons and Rebels, including her own frustrated desire to go to school (See page 5).
\textsuperscript{49} Murphy, 38. Randolph Churchill, Twenty-One Years (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965), 31.
\textsuperscript{51} “Court Circular,” Times (London). 6 April 1923.
\textsuperscript{52} Jessica Mitford, H & R, 2-3.
\textsuperscript{54} Diana Mitford Mosley, 15.
some ways this was typical of aristocratic child-rearing, which clung to antiquated notions of separation between parent and child much longer than other classes. The Mitfords’ beloved Nanny Blor (aka. Laura Dicks) provided the children with the most warmth and guidance. David (“Farve”) kept busy with the estate and had an explosive bluster that intimidated outsiders. Cantankerous and eccentric, Farve inadvertently entertained his offspring who held competitions to see how far they could push his temper before he would roar at them. He would later become famous as a caricature of himself in Nancy's novels. Sydney (“Muv”) was equally busy and eccentric. Her interest in allowing the “Good Body” to heal itself was unusual, as was her insistence that the family keep kosher and the children never be forced to eat. Family members claim she allowed Unity to live two years on mashed potatoes. While Muv was passionately loyal and defensive of her children throughout their lives, Nancy describes her as “[living] in a dream world of her own” and unusually detached even by the standards of the time: “On one occasion Unity rushed into the drawing-room, where [Muv] was at her writing-table, saying: ‘Muv, Muv, Decca is standing on the roof- she says she’s going to commit suicide!’ ‘Oh, poor duck,’ said my mother, ‘I hope she won’t do anything so terrible’ and went on writing.”  

Fierce loyalty between the seven Mitford children probably compensated for this distance. Harold Acton describes Nancy’s devotion to her

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55 Wasson, 64-5.  
56 Nancy Mitford, Water Beetle, 9-11.  
57 Lovell, 28.  
58 Lovell, 31; J & C Guinness, 147; Murphy, 34. Sydney's father was a journalism magnate, and along with many of her siblings, she maintained unusual eating habits for herself and her children. She believed this to promote good health. This is less bizarre than it may sound in light of all the early twentieth century's alternative health trends, such as nudism, vegetarianism, and homeopathic medicine.  
59 Nancy Mitford, Water Beetle, 6-7. Nancy also wonders what her mother did all day with no job or housework and limited social interaction, but this is unfair in light of the work as chatelaine, duties maintaining extensive kinship networks through correspondence, and parental responsibilities split between seven children.
sisters as “nearest to religion, almost confused with it” and the only place she felt comfortable “[sharing] her most intimate feelings.”\textsuperscript{60} Connection and validation from siblings in this manner may have pushed the parents’ quirks (not unusual among the British aristocracy, by any means) to the heights later reached by some of their children.

Just as the Mitford parents typified an aristocracy slow to change attitudes towards childhood affection, they adhered to an aristocratic unwillingness to over-educate young girls destined to become wives, mothers, and estate managers. In his 1969 book *The Last of the Best: Aristocracy in Twentieth-Century Europe*, Sinclair pays special attention to this gender gap in aristocratic education:

Although the boys are gradually escaping from the reign of tutors, the girls of good family in Europe are rarely allowed outside the range of governesses, unless they are locked inside the walls of a convent... [T]he education in all except the speaking of languages that is available to most well-born girls remains inferior. If they are not lucky enough to be accepted to university, or if their parents forbid their higher education, they can have less educational opportunity than many bourgeois girls. As for the more snobbish of the girls’ private schools in England, the failure of their methods of education is notorious.\textsuperscript{61}

Nancy parodies this attitude in *The Pursuit of Love* when Uncle Matthew and Aunt Emily argue over whether or not young Fanny should attend school. Aunt Emily argues school is necessary because “a lot of men would find it... irritating to have a wife who had never heard of George III.”\textsuperscript{62} These are satirical exaggerations as in all of Nancy’s novels, but the sentiment at the heart of the argument holds more than a grain of truth. While the Mitfords’ only son went to preparatory school at Lockers Park followed by Eton and

\textsuperscript{60} Acton, *Nancy Mitford*, 213.
\textsuperscript{61} Sinclair, 205.
Oxford, all six daughters received their education at home.\textsuperscript{63} On their own they raided the remnants of the Batsford library, and its wealth of old nineteenth-century literature probably contributed to their unique use of language and passionate worldviews.\textsuperscript{64} Sydney gave each of the girls lessons until they reached eight years old (the age at which Tom left). Then she promoted them to the school room and governesses trained by PNEU (the Parents National Education Union). Sydney describes the PNEU system as rooted in narrating back material read from books.\textsuperscript{65} While several of the sisters preferred to remain at home, Nancy and Decca ridiculed most of their short-lived governesses in later life, and Decca remembers sessions with Muv as vaguely propagandistic: “‘See, England and all our Empire possessions are a lovely pink on the map,’ she explained. ‘Germany is a hideous mud-colored brown.’”\textsuperscript{66} Sydney reproduces an election speech which Unity wrote at the age of ten, comparing Britain to Gulliver bound by Lilliputians from the left, and this probably echoed sentiments she would have heard from her Conservative parents.\textsuperscript{67} Decca remembers how her mother dragged her children to campaigning events for the local Conservative Party candidate, even when she had no special interest in him (“Such a dull little creature!”).\textsuperscript{68} Farve had even less interest in politics than his wife's vague commitment to the aristocracy's traditional party. In fact, Farve only took the train to London when he felt the peerage's rights were at risk. A newspaper once quoted him as saying that Christianity had its roots in primogeniture and privilege because Christ was

\textsuperscript{63} Murphy, iii, 26; Lovell, 43.
\textsuperscript{64} Murphy, 31; Nancy Mitford, \textit{Pursuit of Love}, 39.
\textsuperscript{65} Redesdale MS, 11-12.
\textsuperscript{66} Murphy, iv; Jessica Mitford, \textit{H & R}, 9; Jonathan and Catherine Guinness defend Sydney’s methods and describe PNEU in some detail in \textit{The House of Mitford}, 257-9. Sydney's own education was similar. In fact, she spent much of her childhood travelling on her father's boat.
\textsuperscript{67} Redesdale MS, 15.
\textsuperscript{68} Jessica Mitford, \textit{H & R}, 13.
God's son.\(^{69}\) Unity Mitford had other interests as a small girl in rural Oxfordshire.

Unity’s personality grew to be a contrast between shy romantic and bold rebel. Of her early years, Muv recalls, “She was such a funny little child. She was shy and easily upset. If anything was said at meals that she did not like or that caused her embarrassment she just slipped quietly off her chair and disappeared under the table until such time as she felt ready to face the world again.”\(^{70}\) At the same time, she had a strong anti-authority streak. One of the childhood anecdotes Diana presents in her memoir has Unity protesting her innocence as Nancy soundly scolds her for drawing on the wall near her bed. Unity argues it was all a mysterious “Madam,” and when their mother’s friend, Mrs. Hammersley, asks after this character, Unity described Mrs. Hammersley herself.\(^{71}\) She would also gain infamy for undisciplined mischief like “climbing out on to the roof at Swinbrook through an attic window, or throwing slates off an outhouse roof, or eating all the ripe strawberries in the greenhouse just before a luncheon party.”\(^{72}\) Family members recall that her humour added a unruly tone to the family that was totally unique. Unity was “the quintessential romper and introduced romping into the family.”\(^{73}\) As an adult, Unity retained the love of rebellion, but it is too simplistic to reduce an adult commitment to politics to the outcome of this single personality trait. There is no Freudian evidence of malicious pranks either. Instead, the thrill of shocking seems to have grown from the way class, gender, and rural restraints chafed the adolescent girl.

\(^{69}\) Ibid., 15-6.
\(^{70}\) Redesdale, 11.
\(^{71}\) Diana Mitford Mosley, 15-6.
\(^{72}\) Lovell, 106. In Hons and Rebels (11), Decca recalls Unity leaving her pet grass snake to terrify a governess, but Diana explained to biographer Mary Lovell that the snake incident was an accident and her responsibility rather than Unity’s (Lovell, 90). Lovell cites a note to the author from Diana Mitford in June 2000.). While some cite this as an early predisposition to petty cruelty, the incident seems to have no basis in fact. (J & C Guinness, 257-9).
\(^{73}\) J & C Guinness, 271.
For Unity and Decca, new and exciting avenues for independent thinking would come as their older sisters broke free of the parental yoke. Around her coming out in 1923, Nancy fell in with the aesthetes in nearby Oxford. She started to smuggle in the “Swinbrook Sewers,” as the family called her coterie of intellectual friends, and the circle expanded as Tom and Diana grew older. David roared his disapproval on many occasions as his oldest daughter cut her hair, adopted the trends of the Roaring Twenties, brought home “dandies” as friends, and started to make bids for independence when women of her stature still could not venture down the block in London without a chaperone. James Lees-Milne recalls how he “nearly died of heart failure” the first time he met David, but Farve’s vocal disapproval of the aesthetes’ set often titillated both the Sewers and his children more than it alarmed them. He became a famous figure of fun for many of those rallying to his children’s defense in their bid for more independence. Nancy’s sophisticated new friends called her father an “ogre” and encouraged her. The aesthetes’ flippant humour and style fascinated the younger sisters. New ideas about literature, gender, art, politics, dress, and dancing seeped into the “citadel” via Nancy:

....I dimly remembered the hushed pall that hung over the house, meals eaten day after day in tearful silence, when Nancy at the age of twenty had her hair shingled. Nancy using lipstick, Nancy playing the newly fashionable ukulele, Nancy wearing trousers, Nancy smoking a cigarette—she had broken ground for all of us, but only at terrific cost in violent scenes followed by silence and tears.

74 Lovell, 67-70.
Tom’s school friends overlapped with some of Nancy’s, and Diana added to the group after her debut and early 1929 marriage to Bryan Guinness. Harold and William Acton, Roy Harrod, James Lees-Milne, John Sutro, Robert Byron, Brian Howard, Mark Ogilvie-Grant, Henry Yorke, Evelyn Waugh, Lytton Strachey, Dora Carrington, Augustus John, John Betjeman, and the Mitford’s young Churchill cousins made a lively crowd of future artists and authors. Instead of striking the younger sisters as wonderfully liberated, Nancy and her humour more often struck them as sharp. She teased her younger siblings mercilessly, and her comparative freedom only made them jealous and eager to age. Nancy was a part of the Roaring Twenties with its parody of Victorian and Edwardian values from their parents' generation. Unity and Decca were part of a later generation more concerned with international politics than jazz records, cigarettes, and short hair.

While Nancy broke first ground with her behavior, Diana’s new household with Bryan Guinness, particularly their home at Biddesden, provided a refuge for her younger sisters to escape watchful parental eyes. Jonathan and Catherine Guinness argue that this environment impacted Unity most of all.

Like Decca, Unity grew particularly restless and cross during her teenage years. A close family member recollects, “. . .the army has a wonderful expression for somebody who won't do something they're meant to do and yet you can't actually catch them for not doing it-- and it's called "dumb insolence", and she was quite an expert at that with

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78 Many associate this set with the Bright Young Things, but in his autobiographical volumes, Bryan Guinness claims that the Bright Young Things were petty party-goers. He associates the group of friends listed above as being of a different mind, much more interested in art and intellectual pursuits. See Bryan Guinness, Dairy [sic] not Kept: Essays in Recollection (Salisbury: Compton Press, 1975), 124-7; Ibid., Potpourri From the Thirties (Burford, Oxfordshire: Cygnet Press, 1982), 18.

79 Lovell, 54.

80 J & C Guinness, 268, 290-1.

81 Ibid., 291.
[Farve]... and [he] brought it up against her for a couple of years as he did with all of [the siblings] from time to time.”

Her ability to make Farve roar more effectively than the rest of her siblings illustrates this:

She had perfected a method of making [him] fly into a rage by the simple expedient of glowering at him in a certain way at mealtimes. She would sit silently stowing away quantities of mashed potatoes, her eyes fixed on Farve with a somber, brooding glare. He would glare back, trying to make [her] drop her gaze, but she invariably won out. Crashing his fists on the table, he would roar: ‘Stop looking at me damn you!’

Decca envied this talent. The two subversive sisters, left behind while their older siblings forged lives away from home, spent much of their time plotting in a private sitting room. The room set aside for their personal use acquired the salubrious title “the Drawing from the Drawing room, or DFD”. Before it was a political battleground, the DFD was a refuge for two sisters eager for something more.

Their shared restlessness gave Unity and Decca a special bond outside of proximity in age. The pair created a language of their own, Boudledidge. Decca writes that the language was “unintelligible to any but ourselves. . . we translated various dirty songs (for safe singing in front of the Grownups) and large chunks of the Oxford Book of English Verse.” She recalls singing “I’m Sex Appeal Sarah” in the language for Diana’s friends at Swinbrook. The translation went something like “Eem dzegs abbidle Dzaeedldra/ Me buddldy grads beedldra/ Idge deelem ee abeedldron ge dzdedge” (“I’m Sex Appeal Sarah/ My body grows barer/ Each time I appear on the stage.”), and as part

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82 Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, interview with author, October 29, 2008.
83 Jessica Mitford, H & R, 65-6. Nancy used her wits to rebel, but Unity's humour seems to have taken a much more physical form.
84 Lovell, 106.
85 Jessica Mitford, H & R, 5. In her book of letters between all six of the Mitford sisters, Charlotte Mosley notes that the girls pronounced “Boud” in such a way that it rhymed with “loud”. (The Mitfords, 15)
of the translation Decca had to roll her eyes and grimace. \[86\] Jonathan and Catherine Guinness explain:

[Boudledidge] had to be uttered while making a miserable, frowning and rather costive-looking grimace with the mouth pulled sharply down to one side. Hopeless yearning was the keynote, together of course with deadly seriousness. The language itself was English with the vowels distorted, the consonants softened and extra syllables inserted, the word ‘boudledidge’ being itself derived on this system from ‘pallish’, the language of the pals or boudles.\[87\]

Decca and Unity called each other “Boud” for the rest of their lives. While their older sisters were witty intellectuals, the younger two were daring and nervy. They craved action more than elegance.\[88\]

Dumb insolence and dirty jokes eventually gained Unity the opportunity to be the first Mitford girl to (briefly) attend a proper school. Unlike Nancy or Decca, Unity had never expressed a particular desire to go to school, and after the freedom of running wild at home, she fought the school's authority. A stint at Queen’s Gate day school in London resulted in expulsion.\[89\] One or two other boarding schools followed, but although she seemed to enjoy the experiences, the schools did not enjoy her. She briefly attended St. Margaret’s, Bushey, with several cousins, but the school expelled Unity around Christmas 1930. Sydney included Unity’s last school progress report in her memoir. It describes

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\[87\] J & C Guinness, 289. Jonathan Guinness includes further details of how the language lingered in the girls’ memories: “Unity never forgot Boudledidge, even after her suicide attempt. In about 1943, at the breakfast table, there was a packet of cereal called Force. ‘What’s Force in Boudledidge?’ asked Jonathan, on a whim. Unity shut her eyes for a second and a look of enormous sadness came over her face as she pushed down her mouth to one side. ‘Vudz!’ she moaned. The sadness was not real, though she was a sad enough person by then; it was ritual.”
\[88\] Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, interview with author, October 29, 2008.
\[89\] Lovell, 116-7. After Unity spent two terms at the day school, Decca and Debo attended for one term before Sydney withdrew them. Unity’s experiences cannot have convinced already skeptical parents of the utility of girls’ education.
general progress as “very fair” but conduct as “very troublesome”. In her memoir *Five Out of Six*, Violet Powell relates her own experiences at the school. The conservative atmosphere Powell depicts must have been only a slight improvement from the monotony Unity faced at home. The school, eager to produce demure young ladies of good breeding, did not appreciate her uniquely outrageous sense of fun. She sketched naked individuals on her notebooks and worked to stand outside the headmistress Miss Boys’ door, something the other girls feared as punishment. Lady Onslow never forgot Unity’s boisterous attitude: “‘Once in a scripture lesson about he who calls his brother a fool is in danger of hellfire, Bobo put her hand up and asked, Supposing your brother *is* a fool?’”

Friends and family cannot agree on the exact reason for Unity’s expulsions. Several claim that at St. Margaret’s it was a matter of refusing to be confirmed, others that it was a naughty rewording of a prayer line. Whatever the reason, Lady Redesdale always insisted, “‘Oh no, darling, not expelled, asked to leave.’”

While early accounts of the Mitfords make much of Unity’s bravado and thirst of attention and adventure, the flip side of her personality, the introverted side, remained like a soft underbelly under this rebellious exterior. Unity was “dreamy” as much as she was “unruly.” A close family member remembers her as a “terrific romantic, but hidden behind this rather sort of almost frosty exterior sometimes and yet she was so funny at the same time. She'd laugh at herself. So hard to explain.” The softer side manifested itself in poetry, paintings, and nineteenth-century literature. While Nancy and Diana read...
widely in the family’s inherited library, Unity stuck to areas that interested her.\textsuperscript{97} Without much outside interference or guidance, she ingested a surfeit of the sort of romanticism and idealism that many scholars consider a form of proto-fascism.\textsuperscript{98} In \textit{A Fine Old Conflict}, Decca notes that while she had a great interest in news and politics before ever committing herself as a communist, pre-fascism Unity seemed oblivious to the wider world outside of books: “Before her sudden conversion to Fascism, Boud’s main preoccupations had been literary and artistic; she was a talented, if eccentric artist; she knew by heart quantities of esoteric poetry. She seemed to live in a sort of dream compounded of Blake, Coleridge, Hieronymus Bosch, Henri Rousseau.”\textsuperscript{99} Poe and the Brontës combined with Keats, Shelley, Byron, and Blake to create this dreamscape.\textsuperscript{100} Mitford’s childhood poems are very formal and earnest. For example, “Love,” written at age nine: “Love is but a strife to those who know it/ ‘Tis but a strife to all except the poet/ A poet to his poems can resort/ Love is but a battle, vainly fought.”\textsuperscript{101} As Unity grew older, she wrote less and less, but her interest in drawing and painting continued. Early works reproduced in Sydney’s memoir show elaborate attention to detail, fascination with religious themes, and a mystical quality and texture best likened to medieval icons and tapestries. The odd combination of serious and surreal is striking. In a letter to her

\textsuperscript{97} J & C Guinness, 255-6.
\textsuperscript{98} George Mosse, Roderick Stackelberg, and Fritz Stern have all addressed links between the Romantic but highly nationalist German völkisch thinkers and the later fascists in their work. Many see such thinkers as proto-fascists, but this seems too deterministic. Instead, it is best to understand them as one of several ingredients which influenced the make up of fascism. They link well to the nineteenth and twentieth-century movements embracing a sort of false nostalgia for the Middle Ages. (Fritz Stern, \textit{The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961).)
\textsuperscript{100} J & C Guinness, 283; Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, interview with author, October 29, 2008; Redesdale MS, 13; Jessica Mitford, \textit{H & R}, xxii.
\textsuperscript{101} Redesdale, 13.
mother, Nancy describes an Italian film called *Dante* and how the psychedelic landscape of prophets and demons reminds her of Unity’s drawings—Unity would have been about eight years old at the time.\textsuperscript{102} Eventually, Unity’s art took the form of a unique blend of painting and collage. Decca describes this “certain baroque style of decorative art” best in *Hons and Rebels*. “. . . [S]he had created huge canvases depicting historical scenes: Hannibal crossing the Alps, with a background of clay mountains, the silver trappings of Hannibal and his army picked out in tinfoil; Noah’s Ark, with bits of real fur pasted on the animals.”\textsuperscript{103} Unity’s unique art mirrored her unique personality, and both would cause problems for her as she moved out of adolescence.

\textsuperscript{102} Acton, *Nancy*, 29.
\textsuperscript{103} Jessica Mitford, *H & R*, 66.
Chapter Two

_Wigs On The Green:_

“[Your grandmother] seems quite enthusiastic about Union Jackshirtism.”

“Yes, she thinks it’s the Women’s Institute and she’s all for it. Keeps on saying how pleased she is that I do something for the village at last. Nanny’s the one who hates it so much. I’m always afraid she’s going to tell on me, the old Pacifist.... She’d better not, unless she wants to be beaten up by the Comrades.”

As historians like Arno Mayer, Ellis Wasson, and Andrew Sinclair have noted, the British aristocracy retained a surprising degree of power during the interwar period. This resilience stemmed from an adaptability their continental counterparts often lacked, but while things changed dramatically for young men, surprisingly little had changed for young women. For an aristocratic young lady in the 1930s, her introduction to court and high society still represented the entrance into adulthood. The Season stood for an opportunity to find a suitable husband much as it had for over a hundred years.

Unity Mitford “came out” in May 1932. She attended the Buckingham Palace ball with her cousin Robin (“Rudbin”) Ferrar, made her curtseys before the King and Queen, and savored the “very beautiful and glittering spectacle” of her first appearance at court. She wrote to Diana to thank her for providing her dress for the event, gushing “...when I came into the PRESENCE my heart failed me and I was almost too nervous to curtsy, though I managed in the end... It was great fun waiting in the Mall, we waited about two hours.” The new glamour of the occasion overpowered any desire to rebel against social norms. The move from Swinbrook to Kensington initially meant all the excitement of a big city and more exotic surroundings. Even the mundane in London

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104 Nancy Mitford, _Wigs on the Green_, 192-3.
105 Mayer, 11-3; Wasson, 3, 162, 200-2; Sinclair, 237-8. Even Montagu echoes this argument of flexibility (150, 175-6). Sinclair specifically contrasts this with continental European practice. (10-13)
106 Redesdale MS, 22; Charlotte Mosley, _The Mitfords_, 207 (regarding Rudbin).
107 Charlotte Mosley, _The Mitfords_, 23.
seemed full of potential excitement. For example, Unity’s younger sisters imagined the stockbroker next door might be a white slaver, kidnapping young girls for South American brothels.\(^{108}\)

Unfortunately, fascination with London life did not last. As in boarding schools, Mitford chafed under rules and restrictions associated with her new role as a debutante. Unlike in rural Oxfordshire, leaving the house in London usually meant leaving under the watchful eye of a chaperone. This was frequently her mother, and interaction with other young people at the appropriate entertainments was rarely very entertaining. There were endless rounds of tea parties, lunches, and at-homes during the day to discuss which young men were eligible. In his social history of Britain’s interwar years, Martin Pugh commiserates, “…there were never enough available men. Some were reluctant to attend so many glittering but deadly occasions. Hostilities commenced with a dinner, followed by a dance and supper, and would end around 3.00 a.m. with bacon and eggs. Meanwhile, the girls’ chaperones often grew tired and left early.”\(^{109}\) He adds:

Although large sums were spent on these events, many girls underwent three or four seasons without finding husbands. There is impressionistic evidence that between the wars some girls became increasingly disenchanted with the immaturity of upper-class youths and their inability to handle women… A recurrent problem was engaging in conversation with the bachelors for any length of time. The girls were under instructions that they must talk at all costs—but in doing so they had to avoid acquiring a reputation for being intelligent or clever for fear of putting off the superficial, brainless young men.\(^{110}\)

During her own season five years later, Debo, a noted beauty who went on to marry the second in line to a dukedom, graphically describes trying to navigate conversation with


\(^{109}\) Pugh, *Danced All Night*, 129-130.

one of the “chinless horrors” that attended such events:

The chinless horror: ‘I think this is our dance.’
Me (knowing all the time that it is & only too thankful to see him, thinking I’d been cut again) ‘Oh, yes, I think it is.’
The C.H. ‘What a crowd in the doorway.’
Me ‘Yes isn’t it awful.’
The C.H. then clutches me around the waist & I almost fall over as I try & put my feet where his aren’t.
Me ‘Sorry.’
The C.H. ‘No, my fault.’
Me ‘Oh, I think it must have been me.’
The C.H. ‘Oh no, that wouldn’t be possible.’ (Supposed to be a compliment.)
Then follows a long & dreary silence sometimes one of us saying ‘sorry’ & the other ‘my fault.’ After a bit we both feel we can’t bear it any longer so we decide to go & sit down.111

Boredom chafed Unity Mitford. While the more free-spirited atmosphere of the Jazz Age had infected the social whirl of her older sisters, the Bright Young Things around Nancy, Pam, and Diana were too old for debutante circles by Unity’s time.112 The Roaring Twenties had become the more austere Thirties, and as Susan Kingsley Kent notes, “conservative, reactionary images of masculinity and femininity emerged” as Britain tried to reestablish the social order that had seemed to break down during and just after the First World War.113 Strict rules confined Unity Mitford as they had at boarding school, and once again they felt purposeless. Even after her debut year, her social engagements noted in the Times during 1933 mention notable weddings, dances, dinner parties, at-homes, and benefits for the Hampstead League of Mercy and the Personal Service League.114

112 Jessica Mitford, H and R, 66.
113 Susan Kingsley Kent, 140-2.
114 “Court Circular,” Times (London). 10 November, 4 July, 10 June, 22 December, 10 December, 4 May, 1 March, and 24 February 1933. February 23rd is the Times announcement of Unity Mitford’s return to London with her parents (at 2 Grosvenor Crescent instead of Rutland Gate).
Unity Mitford’s appearance enhanced her sense of disappointment. While she had the same stunning blue eyes and blonde hair as most of her sisters, she was very shy and self-conscious of her size. Unity Mitford was nearly six feet tall. Her build was heavier than any of the other sisters and led to some insecurities about her weight, which was not heavy by today’s standards but agonized her in the context of the time.115 Cousin Anita Leslie describes her as “the least handsome of an outstandingly beautiful tribe” while her sister Decca describes her as a “huge and rather alarming debutante… [who] towered over her fellows at the various debutante functions rather like a big Santa Claus among the Christmas dolls.”116 Lady Glenconnor, née Elizabeth Powell, debuted the same year and felt a similar awkwardness: “We were both nearly six feet tall, bringing up the back of that procession [Queen Charlotte’s Ball] with the cake, rebellious girls in white, it was ghastly…”117 Unity also had the misfortune of poor teeth at a time when little was done to correct them.118 In spite of how Unity Mitford felt and appeared to English youths, others commented on her beauty. For example, artist and Bright Young Thing Dora Carrington described Unity at age seventeen as “very marvellous, and grecian” in a letter to her lover, Lytton Strachey.119

Plagued by boredom, insecurities, and restrictions, Unity Mitford rebelled much as she had at boarding school. Rather than a quick wit, her humour had always taken the form of daring, and she used this to counter the separateness she felt from her peers.120

115 Pryce-Jones, 116; J & C Guinness, 284; Jessica Mitford suggest her enormous size was something of a family tease. (Hons and Rebels, 10-11)
117 Elizabeth Powell (now Lady Glenconnor) interview, Pryce-Jones, 69.
118 Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, interview with author, October 29, 2008.
120 Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, interview with author, October 29, 2008.
Unity applied her collage-style art work to her style of dress. Decca recalls, “She shone like an enormous peacock in flashing sham jewels, bought at a theatrical costumer’s, and immense brocade evening dresses. To my mother’s consternation she bought a sham tiara, resplendent with rubies, emeralds and pearls and insisted on wearing it to dances.”

Furthermore, Unity Mitford would occasionally attend dances with her small pet snake (“Enid”) as living jewelry, steal Buckingham Palace’s stationary for letters to friends, and let her tame pet rat loose in aristocrats’ ballrooms to liven up an evening. “At deb balls, Bobo amused herself with a yo-yo, she was expert at it, and played it with the hand which was supposed to be at the back of the young man.” Drawing the attention and disapproval of the older generations delighted her, and for the disapproval, she received no serious censure from her parents or other social leaders. Other restless young women like her sister Decca and cousin Anita Leslie remember cheering her “obstinate refusal to flirt with eligible gentlemen” and “her way of doing kind things unobserved.”

It became increasingly clear to everyone that Unity Mitford was not going to end her period as a debutante with a traditional marriage. Her “one off” style attracted few suitors in England, and Unity Mitford did not seem to long for a traditional marriage. Rural life married to a country squire did not much appeal to her. Although she loved children, she was never a “by-the-fireside sort of domestic.” She did not look forward

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122 *Ibid.*, 66; Barrow, 61; Murphy, 72. Some debate exists over whether or not the snake at debutante balls is more gossip than fact, but the rat would be a confirmed presence at debutante balls and in Mitford’s life for some time. It followed the snake as a pet, and during our interview, a family member recollected the rat resting in its cage at Swinbrook. She also remembered Unity telling her the rat died of consumption when it finally met its end (Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, interview with author, October 29, 2008.).
123 Rosemary Peto interview, Pryce- Jones, 76-7.
125 Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, interview with author, October 29, 2008.
to the local hunt and raising farm animals as her sisters Debo and Pam did. Hosting parties and gatherings of influential intellectuals and politicians as Diana did with her husband Bryan Guinness was unappealing to someone who did not enjoy the London social whirl. While Unity Mitford’s parents were not as insistent on marriage as some, marriage, as Decca remembers, seemed to be “the only escape route from Swinbrook—and at that, marriage to some hearty country squire, the only type of suitor likely to win parental approval.”

Unity Mitford needed to find something to do with her life. While rural life had fewer societal restraints in many ways, the parental home at Swinbrook was isolated from any excitement. Biking or hiking to the nearest town took some time, and at home, there was little to do with “nine indoor people” to assist Muv in managing the house.

Unity Mitford attended some art classes at Queens College, London, in 1933, but her art never provided her with an income as Nancy’s witty novels did.

At a time when even male aristocrats faced social constraints that made many professions unacceptable, social norms for women in the upper classes were even more restrictive. Patricia Jalland’s research on these unmarried women between 1860 and 1914 identifies three categories: dutiful daughters (who tended to the family and frequently “saw themselves in terms of the stereotype, as passive, acquiescent, and unhappy”), desperate rebels (who protested their situation and attempted to escape through “invalidism, hysteria, religious fanaticism and other types of self-destruction”), and transitions to the New Woman (who started to issue a serious challenge to the traditional

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127 Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, interview with author, October 29, 2008. Even today, the author had quite an adventure trying to walk from Wychwood to Swinbrook and back because of a dearth of public transportation in the area.
128 Redesdale MS, 22; Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 11.
roles but usually had intellectual talent that made them exceptions to the rules).\textsuperscript{129} Just as their educational opportunities often had strict limitations, parents of aristocratic women interested in something more than social networking, charity work, or managing an estate rarely encouraged their daughters to pursue professional careers. Changes to these roles for unmarried women came very slowly, even after the First World War had shown women’s capabilities and helped secure their enfranchisement:

[Unity] didn’t have a job because none of [the sisters] were trained to do anything. And in those days if you took a job doing something frightfully boring like working in a hat shop or something—which was practically the only thing which was looked on as being okay—then [her mother] and everybody else’s mother would have said she really ought not to do that because she’s taking bread out of the mouth of somebody who really needs a job. I can’t tell you how different the world was… For a young girl to go off on her own… wasn’t terribly ordinary.\textsuperscript{130}

With no need for her at home, no passion for philanthropy or religion, and no prospect of intellectual achievement, Unity Mitford was at risk of attracting pity and/or disapproval as the “Unmarried Daughter, who as time went on sank into the twilight state of aunthood.”\textsuperscript{131}

Unity Mitford’s quest for purpose coincided neatly with a similar longing in her older sister Diana. Often considered the most striking of all the exceptionally beautiful Mitford sisters because of her classical features, Diana had led the Biddesden social circle with her husband since their marriage in 1929. The pair had two young sons and seemed to lead a charmed existence as one of high society’s golden couples. Diana, however, was starting to question her life. She started to feel that she had married too young in order to escape the boredom of rural family life. Her adult experiences (“with the exception of the

\textsuperscript{129} Pat Jalland, 260, 272-3, 279-80, 257. (Note Sinclair discusses male aristocrats’ career options, 23.)
\textsuperscript{130} Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, interview with author, October 29, 2008.
\textsuperscript{131} Jessica Mitford, \textit{H & R}, 22-3.
birth of her babies”) seemed “trivial” and “cosseted” compared to the wider world she encountered in the news.\textsuperscript{132} Shortly after this political awakening started, Diana met Sir Oswald Mosley.

When Beatrice Webb first met Sir Oswald Mosley in June 1923, she admired his good looks, work ethic, manner, and conversation, but she also mused, “So much perfection argues rottenness somewhere.”\textsuperscript{133} Historians still argue about how rotten Mosley was and why—economic foresight versus authoritarianism, deeply racist versus surrounded by unsavory characters, and other debates.\textsuperscript{134} After returning from fighting in the First World War, Mosley initially entered politics with the laudable goal of helping impoverished fellow veterans. He moved from the Conservative Party to Labour after flirting with the Fabian crowd for much of the 1920s, and he held a post outside the Cabinet under Ramsay MacDonald until May 1930. The rejection of the Mosley Memorandum and general impatience with the slow pace of economic reform soon led Mosley to form the New Party. During 1931, his Keynesian economic policies attracted followers like Robert Boothby to the party.\textsuperscript{135} As a veteran of the First World War, he articulated fierce determination to create the “homes for heroes” promised to veterans by the British government. Mosley’s increasing radicalization, however, ultimately alienated some of these early followers. His arguments for change started to embrace more than economics.\textsuperscript{136} In January 1932, he travelled to Italy where he met Mussolini.

\textsuperscript{132} Lovell, 132.
\textsuperscript{134} See literature review in introduction as well as Robert Skidelsky’s controversial biography (*Oswald Mosley* (London: Macmillan London Ltd., 1975)).
\textsuperscript{135} Boothby details these early experiences with Mosley in his memoirs *Recollections of a Rebel* (3rd edition (London: Hutchinson, 1979)) and *I Fight to Live* (2nd (December) edition (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1947)).
\textsuperscript{136} Philip Coupland, “Great Britain: The Black-shirted Utopians,” in volume 4 of *Fascism: Critical
and studied Fascism in practice. Mussolini was experimenting with corporatism, a form of government regulation of the economy. Mosley embraced not just the economic ideas in Italy, but the ultra-nationalist sentiment as well. By October 1932, Mosley had formed the British Union of Fascists.

Not only did Mosley’s impatience with the slow pace of reform within the political establishment echo Diana’s frustration with the social confinements of Britain’s elites, but the two had a romantic chemistry that lasted until Mosley’s death. In 1932, both were married to other people so they began an affair, not an unusual situation for aristocrats of the period, but at a party Diana and her husband Bryan Guinness hosted for her twenty-second birthday, Diana and Mosley decided to commit to a more serious relationship. Mosley did not want to leave his wife, Cynthia Curzon. He claimed to love both his wife and Diana. This is a situation few women might have tolerated, but the pledge of love was enough for Diana who said “she wanted to be committed to him because he had convinced her about the importance of his ideas for altering the world.”

The pair had come to fascism independently, but their mutual enthusiasm encouraged them to take risks in support of the ideology. As they grew closer, Diana started to assume the more permanent role of Mosley’s mistress. Anything more than a casual affair was scandalous, and Diana did not have an easy time of things. In April 1933, she sued for divorce. As she explained to Mary Lovell in later years, “The fact that Mosley was

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137 Note photograph of the two in Lovell and body language: Image from the early 1960s of the couple (Illustration #59).
139 Ibid., 215. Note some blame Diana for Mosley’s interest in fascism, but Nicholas Mosley, Mosley’s son from his marriage to Cynthia, notes in his memoirs that this is not the case.
140 Barrow, 67.
so busy in a variety of ways was one of his great attractions for me. I wanted more freedom than Bryan was prepared to give me.”"  

Her parents had banned Unity Mitford and her two younger sisters from seeing Diana after she announced her intention to leave Bryan in early 1933. Decca recalls how the parental disapproval “needless to say… only made Diana more glamorous in our eyes.” Unity’s great passion for thumbing her nose at authority made this especially exciting during her dull Seasons in London. She was unique among the younger set of sisters in that she could act on this fascination with Diana’s scandal. She snuck out to Diana’s Eaton Square home between the social rounds. Nancy even wrote Hamish Erskine that Unity teased her mother that Diana was “laying in a store of furs and diamonds against the time when she is divorced.” The Mitford parents took this joke seriously, and the rumour got back to Diana’s father-in-law, causing headaches for everyone. Beyond flirting with scandal and sensation, Unity Mitford met Sir Oswald Mosley during one of her secret visits to Diana. After discussing politics with him, she joined the British Union of Fascists in June 1933. Mosley and the British Union of Fascists represented many things to Unity Mitford during 1933. Perhaps most importantly, the movement represented a chance to

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141 Lovell, 143.
143 Jessica Mitford, H & R, 67.
144 Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 11.
145 Nancy Mitford, Love From Nancy, 54.
146 Jessica Mitford, H & R, 67; Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, interview with author, October 29, 2008. The interview confirmed that Diana led the way with fascism. Unity followed with her own devotion to fascism and then Decca with communism.
rebel without going completely beyond the pale. Mosley’s economic policies still attracted attention from many upset with the slow pace of reform in Britain, and several of his New Party compatriots like John Beckett had followed Mosley into the B.U.F.  

Hitler had just come to power in Germany in 1933. He was a relatively unknown figure, and Mussolini’s Fascism in Italy interested many conservatives envious of the Duce’s success in reinvigorating the Italian economy without catering to Communists. These are many of the “fellow-travellers of the right” Richard Griffiths first examined in 1980. 

While scholars like Martin Blinkhorn have chronicled how traditional conservatives eventually became disillusioned with fascism and its revolutionary character, fascism in 1933 did not yet carry the same stigma of scandal it acquired later in the 1930s. Little of the racism that characterized the B.U.F. in later years had emerged. Unity had to sneak out to B.U.F. meetings with Diana primarily because her parents disapproved of young ladies at sensational political rallies and her sister’s divorce.

Beyond meeting theorist Roger Griffin’s “fascist minimum” of ultra-nationalism and focus on national renewal, British fascism appealed to youth in much the same way as Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany. The appeal to action and emotion before reason and moderation, the desire to sweep away existing power structures, could strike a powerful chord with men and women of Unity Mitford’s generation. Mosley argued that the governing elites of Britain were too old and out of touch with the current situation on the ground to realize that capitalism had failed, the parliamentary system was too slow to

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149 Griffiths, Fellow-Travellers.
151 Griffin, Nature of Fascism, 38-9, 137-8.
help care for its citizens, the nation’s imperial power was waning, and “spiritual and cultural anarchy” threatened society in the wake of the First World War. In contrast to his picture of Parliament’s members as doddering grandfathers, Mosley offered himself: a tall, virile specimen of masculinity who had served in the trenches, won fencing competitions, spoke eloquently and energetically, and brought his message to everyone on street corners. Martin Burgess Green has argued that the Sonnenkinder, aesthetes among Britain’s intellectual circles and Bright Young Things, had a particular bond with Mosley. The “dandy” of the 1930s was “preoccupied with style,… rebellious against both their fathers’ and their mothers’ modes of seriousness, were in love with ornament, splendor, high manners, and so on…” Combined with the rogue and the naïf, the dandies of the Sonnenkinder liked Mosley’s aesthetics, “worship of young male heroes and nostalgia for a primitive past.” Better still for the dandies and Unity Mitford, all of this would come about through eliminating the slow and stodgy old institutions of government. This echoed Unity’s distaste for the tired rituals of high society. By contrast, “the fascist’s obsession with the nation’s current decadence and imminent rebirth (palingenesis) in a nebulously conceived post-liberal new order” held real appeal. Her sister recollected: “‘Don’t you long to join too, Decca, it’s such fun,’ she begged, waving

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153 Chesterton’s portrayal of Mosley in his biography is perhaps the best at showing how B.U.F. propaganda depicted the leader. This description is loosely based on that image. A.K. Chesterton, Oswald Mosley: Portrait of A Leader (London: Action Press, 1936), 164.
155 Ibid., 252.
her brand-new black shirt at me.” Like many fascists in Britain and elsewhere, Unity Mitford felt an attraction to fascist aesthetics which overwhelmed any concern for economic, military, or political strategies. Those things could change as needed. The language of a dream mattered more than its real content (which often changed according to the moment’s convenience, particularly in countries other than Germany).

Criticism of the old order fed the desire of many British fascists to revolt against existing power structures, but more than that, Mosley advertised a utopia that appealed to his followers. The British Union of Fascists seemed to offer a solution to social and economic problems by returning Britain to a time of past glories. Part of the false nostalgia of fascism involved a warrior culture that appealed to men and women feeling displaced by modern society. Dan Stone has found evidence of romantic and reactionary “proto-fascism” like the völkisch thinkers of Germany, theorists whose ideas of cultural degeneration fascists selectively adopted. Mosley and other fascists also used the old language of World War One trench camaraderie. These elements of youth and idealism, the desire to be heroic, motivated his followers. Mosley’s aristocratic background gave him additional experience with the British upper class’s traditional language of honour, sacrifice for the nation, courage, public service, and loyalty. All this language fit nicely with the fascist hero-image. For example, B.U.F. propaganda director A.K.

162 Montagu, 159, 164, 173; Moncreiffe, Forward to Montagu text, 13-4; Mayer, 8; Sinclair, 110, 112.
Chesterton described the need to sacrifice certain liberties so that “in public life… every action… be framed in accordance with a sense of responsibility to the nation.” This language of duty would be familiar to someone like Mitford who had grown up with vague rhetoric about aristocrats as a type of public servant. Nobles across Europe learned as children of the ways their hallowed ancestors had earned their titles, and their subsequent adult interest in government and military careers came not just from a sense of entitlement to power but a sense that such careers were part of an inherited responsibility to the nation.

The idea of self-sacrifice as a foundation for political action that would make the individual a hero appealed to Mitford’s romanticism, her idealism, and her desire for purpose. The vibrant pageantry of fascist meetings and marches with banners, uniforms (as of October 1933), salutes, rituals, and an insistence on blind faith in the leader gave a still more seductive, mystical quality to the entire “struggle” Mosley advocated. The emotional appeal of crowds of hundreds chanting together with arms thrown up fascinated contemporaries. Nancy Mitford recalled attending one of Mosley’s rallies in November 1933 with Unity. Although she thought Mosley was a “wonderful speaker,” she spent more time in her letter detailing the “several fascinating fights” that broke out at the rally. She notes Mosley “brought a few Neanderthal men along with him and they fell tooth and (literally) nail on anyone who shifted or coughed. One man complained

163 Chesterton, Mosley, 160.
afterward that the fascists’ nails had pierced his head to the skull. [Unity] was wonderful, cheering on we happy few.”165 Street brawls with communists (started by both sides) reinforced the sense of urgency and crisis. Fascists idealized violence and purification of the nation through it.166 Mosley believed this would reconcile the Christian notion of service with the level of “virility… the absolute abnegation of the doctrine of surrender” that he found in Nietzsche and Shaw’s ideas of a superman who would lead humankind.167 While few letters from Unity Mitford survive from this time period (because she and her sisters still lived close together), it is clear from her later correspondence and press interviews that the idealistic image of warrior hero formed the basis for her obsession with Hitler and her own self-image. This probably connected back to her childhood passion for dark Romantic poetry that had celebrated the individual’s longing for ancient glory, heroic quests, medieval mysticism, and linking the beautiful with the terrible as part of the sublime.

While British fascism led men to believe they could be heroes in the battle against decadence, it empowered many women as well. Historian Julie Gottlieb has detailed how despite rhetoric in the B.U.F. that argued for a return to traditional gender roles, several prominent suffragettes were involved in the movement.168 Victoria De Grazia goes further when she sees the contradictions between theory and action in Italian fascism’s gender politics as a microcosm of the contradictions between modernity and

168 Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism*. 
traditionalism at the very heart of fascism itself.\textsuperscript{169} Books like \textit{Women Must Choose} (1937) suggest women at all ends of the political spectrum were aware that different ideologies offered them different options during the 1930s.\textsuperscript{170} Some women seemed to feel freed by participation in the political theatre. At age eighteen, Yolande McShane joined the B.U.F. with her mother. They marched with Mosley, wore the blackshirt uniforms, gave the fascist salute in public, and even attended a rally broken up by a fight between fascists and communists. While her father and sister disapproved, the two felt they were fighting for economic reform.\textsuperscript{171} In a collection of memories from B.U.F. members, Ann Page, a “suburban housewife,” recalled that she had joined because of support for women’s rights within the movement as well as economic policies and anti-communism. The Women’s Section, the women’s drum corps, and Mosley’s willingness to back Nancy Astor’s campaign to be a Member of Parliament attracted her attention much as it had the suffragettes Julie Gottlieb studies. She recalls, “It was considered rather unnatural for women to take an active interest in politics” at that time, despite the enfranchisement of women over twenty-one.\textsuperscript{172} The B.U.F. allowed its female members to “[take] part in the same political activities as the men: sales drives, leaflet distribution, whitewashing our slogans on walls, door-to-door canvassing, meetings and marches…”\textsuperscript{173} Few other parties allowed such active work. Unity Mitford took part in these same activities and enjoyed a similar sense of satisfaction at being given duties in the movement. She proudly wore her blackshirt uniform to deliver copies of the party
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{169} De Grazia, \textit{How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945}.
\item \textsuperscript{170} Hilary Newitt, \textit{Women Must Choose: The Position of Women in Europe To-Day} (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1937).
\item \textsuperscript{173} \textit{Ibid.}, 16.
\end{itemize}
newsletter in London’s East End. She had finally found a mission.

In late spring of 1933, Unity Mitford once again rode her sister Diana’s coat tails to further freedom from parental supervision. Mosley’s wife died of cancer in May of that year. Mosley had been oddly devoted to her in spite of his devotion to Diana, and he had never considered divorce. His guilt at his wife’s death, the machinations of his in-laws to keep him from continuing his affair, and a fling with his sister-in-law all made Diana miserable. The divorce was in its final stages and the timing with Cynthia Mosley’s death created further scandal. She decided to go abroad for the summer, and Unity was eager to be her companion. Italy or France attracted Unity at the time, but Diana decided she would like to see Bavaria. Diana wrote that she chose the location “…partly because I had never been there and partly because I wanted to ‘see for myself’ [what Hitler’s rise to power meant].” The dramatic rise of the Nazi Party in Germany had attracted press attention in Britain, and there was also a strange stigma around the country that many had labeled the wicked aggressor after the end of World War I. Most influential in Diana’s decision had been a chance meeting with Ernst “Putzi” Hanfstaengl earlier that year in Mrs. Richard Guinness’ drawing room. He was a large charismatic man with an aristocratic German background, a Harvard education, and an entertaining streak that often led him to the piano. He was fluent in English and travelled frequently as head of the Foreign Press Bureau in Nazi Germany. Diana listened as he “boomed on all evening”

174 Pryce-Jones, 57.
175 Nicholas Mosley, Rules of the Game, 252-260. Cynthia Mosley’s death is also noted in Barrows (67).
176 Diana Mitford Mosley, 107. Some would later blame Diana for Mosley’s move to fascism, a view reinforced in the BBC film starring Jonathan Cake (Robert Knights, Mosley). Sir Oswald’s son Nicholas notes in his memoir, Rules of the Game, that Diana did not cause the fascism, and his father’s first wife (his mother) was not anti-fascist as sometimes portrayed (213, 245).
177 Mrs. Margaret Budd, interview with author, November 6, 2008.
178 Diana Mitford Mosley, 106-7.
about Hitler and how press focus on Nazi anti-Semitism underplayed the economic miracles Hitler had worked in Germany.\footnote{Ibid., 106.} He promised the guests that evening that a visit to Germany would show “the real truth.” He even offered an introduction to Hitler.

Diana and Unity left for Munich in late August 1933. Initially they met up with friends of their brother Tom. Victor Montagu (Viscount Hinchingbrooke or “Hinch”) and Nigel Birch (later Lord Rhyl) joined the pair for tours of Neuschwanstein and the Starnberger See. Churches, castles, operas, and picture galleries preoccupied the group, but Tom’s friends returned to England after a few days.\footnote{Davenport-Hines; Redesdale MS, 23.} Eventually, the pair decided they would like to meet Hitler as Putzi Hanfstaengl had vowed.

The German chancellor had attracted some controversy and attention among political observers in the British press, but after seven odd months in power in Germany, Nazi kitsch already struck visitors. David Bowie famously called Adolf Hitler “one of the first rock stars.”\footnote{S. Fitts, "Standing by the Wall: The Quotable David Bowie," Fortune City, accessed 16 September 2007, \url{http://www.fortunecity.com/victorian/bejamin/594/bowie/quotes.html}.} Part of Hitler’s “rock star” status came from deliberate exploitation and careful control of his image within a totalitarian system. A “publicity team” offered staged photos of Hitler doing “ordinary guy” activities like walking his dog or hiking to counterpoint pictures of a fiery, powerful leader or a pensive mind bearing the nation’s burdens. These photos reinforced the idea that Hitler “[embodied] the values he preached.”\footnote{Koonz, 77-9.} Albums of collectible portraits, authorized biographies and histories, and cheap copies of speeches all found a ready market. Nazi kitsch became more and more controlled as the new regime’s power grew. The publicity and propaganda minds became
masters of a strange kitsch glorifying death, struggle, and destruction chronicled by Saul Friedländer in his *Reflections on Nazism*.\(^{183}\) In 1933, however, the party regulated this “commercial culture” less stringently than it did in the years that followed. There were swastikas emblazoned on “banners, lapel pins, watch-chains, boots, charms, plaques and bookends.”\(^{184}\) Cigarettes came with Nazi party trading cards, and store windows had small shrines with “portraits of the Führer surrounded by flowers in altar-like compositions.”\(^{185}\) Newsstands sold postcards or wallet-sized portraits of Hitler as well as cheap copies of *Mein Kampf* along streets renamed for the chancellor. It was impossible to be unaware that Hitler had come to power in Germany, and surrounded by this celebrity cult, Diana and Unity wanted to meet the man at its heart. (Unity Mitford even sent a Hitler postcard home to her unhappy parents.\(^{186}\)) They had met many politicians and famous figures as members of the British aristocracy. Power and celebrity had little power to intimidate them, but the pair needed a connection. They left a message for the foreign press chief at the Brown House, Nazi Party headquarters in Munich. Putzi Hanfstaengl replied the next day with an invitation to the upcoming *Parteitag* (Party Day) in Nuremberg.\(^{187}\)

Hanfstaengl arranged tickets to the *Parteitag* rally and lodging in Nuremberg.

According to Diana, “[Putzi Hanfstaengl] met us at the station. The Parteitag turned out


\(^{184}\) Koonz, 69-70.

\(^{185}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{186}\) Redesdale MS, 23.

to last four days, not one as we had imagined. The old town was fantastic sight. Hundreds of thousands of men in party uniforms thronged the streets and there were flags in all the windows.” The foreign press chief was a charming host. He provided constant chatter and good humor as he toured the site with the two women, his adjutant, and an American visitor more familiar with Germany than the two Mitfords. Unity wrote home to her parents about plans to attend “a special performance of the Meistersinger” and a “huge firework display.” The city of Nuremberg had a romantic charm with its medieval houses. It had an aura of history, and its location in central Germany made for easy access across the Reich. Streicher, the local Gauleiter (regional leader), helped maneuver the rally’s location in the city, but it also had special significance for the Nazi Party as it had been one of the few places to permit Hitler's controversial public speeches early in his career. The organization involved in arranging the parades, feeding the guests, and managing vast tent cities full of troops impressed Diana. The pair even met up with an official British Union of Fascists delegation including William Joyce, Alexander Raven Thomson, and a Captain Vincent. Photographs show the Mitfords seated with the B.U.F. attendees and two French fascists, whom Diana maintained they met through happy coincidence rather than deliberate planning. Biographer Jan Dalley and historian Richard Griffiths are skeptical of this claim, but Mosley’s reluctance to acknowledge Diana openly at the time suggests Diana told the truth.

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188 Diana Mitford Mosley, 108.
189 Ibid., 109; J & C Guinness, 361.
190 Redesdale MS, 23.
The Parteitag was Nazi Germany’s ultimate propaganda showpiece. Bowie’s description of Hitler as a rock star is particularly fitting in the context of the Nuremberg Rally’s electric atmosphere and stage-managed theatre. In the *Journal of Popular Culture*, James Ward has analyzed the links between Nazism and the New York punk scene of the 1980s. He notes that the “love of spectacle and… cult of the charismatic (super) star” affected both, but more than that the revolutionary impact of fascist symbols and sense of urgency surrounding them attracted some punks to Nazi swastikas and others opposed to fascism to comparisons between their surroundings and Nazi dystopias. While these movements of the 1980s used the memory of Nazism and genocide to play off popular fears, even in 1933 the senses of urgency, the idea that Nazism was radically different from anything that came before it in a shocking way (and therefore, somehow rebellious and young), was part of the heart of the Nuremberg Rally. A punk band called Missing Foundation’s song from 1988 rages, “This is Germany/ It’s 1933/ This is Germany/ Do you wanna live?” This was anti-fascist propaganda urging the need for immediate reforms, but the phrase “Do you wanna live?” could have come straight from the Nazi propaganda posters. Fascists claimed to be “…fighting a battle no less desperate [than the deadly disease of typhus] against all the nameless armies of decadence and ruin that threaten the spirit…” The economic fears, the fear about the decline of civilization after World War I, the fears of rapidly changing class and gender roles all found a voice in Nuremberg’s ceremonies. Nazis played up the fear and presented themselves as the cure. “In phrases his opponents ridiculed as empty and

193 Ward, 156-7, 159-60.  
followers heard as inspirational… Hitler transformed his followers’ anger at cultural and political disorder into moral outrage…. Where once religion had provided a steady moral purpose, Nazi culture offered an absolutist secular faith.”

While it looks chilling but stale to modern viewers of films like *Triumph of the Will*, Nuremberg was like a religious revival of this “Nazi faith.” Thousands of the party faithful gathered, and the uninitiated or curious often found themselves swept away by the mass emotion. Hundreds and thousands of singing, chanting, vowing, saluting followers created a sort of “holy madness” based more on emotion than intellect.

Rituals and “an elaborate civic liturgy” took place:

Mass rallies and hours of commemoration, appeals, and parades, military show-maneuvers and public entertainment alternated with each other in the Nuremberg festival which at first lasted four… days. The magic of the flags, banners and torches, of the mass rituals, and the Führer-cult, the transfiguration of death and the oath of allegiance numbed the senses and satisfied ‘the age-old lust for horror’ as much as the desire for sensation and the need for community. The monumental size of the surrounding architecture heightened these emotions… All forms of communication and propagandist elements were summoned up to create a *Gesamtkunstwerk* (Total Work of Art) under the guidance of a political aesthetic that replaced rational forms of discourse with vague and emotional appeals to the audience’s fears and aspirations.

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196 Koonz, 2. Roger Griffin has even mentioned the decline in Christianity probably contributed to the “birth of despair” that fed a need for new myths that would give humans a sense of belonging again. *(Nature of Fascism, 191, 195.)*


Günther Berghaus has described the rallies as “pseudo-religious,” and Hans-Ulrich Thamer has described the rally events as an echo of Christian liturgy. Participants would “march in and call up, address and pronouncement, confession and closing communal song and march out.”

“Martyrs” from the Nazi party’s early violent street fights received reverential devotion at Nuremberg, and the very language of national rebirth formed an eerie echo of Christian ideas of resurrection. All of Europe looked for new hope after the devastation of World War One, but Germany in particular dreamed of a time when the perceived humiliations of defeat and the Treaty of Versailles’ terms would no longer haunt them. While Roger Griffin and other scholars of fascism often reject the theory proposed by historians like Michael Burleigh that Nazism was a political religion, Emilio Gentile offers a persuasive theory somewhere between these two opposing camps. He argues that Nazism, like other forms of fascism, represents a “sacralisation of politics.”

His four requirements for a political movement to engage in this sacralisation include 1) putting a “collective secular entity… at the centre of a system of beliefs and myths that define the meaning and ultimate goals of social existence, and proscribe the principles that define good and evil,” 2) requiring “loyalty and dedication”

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to this entity and its “commandments,” 3) viewing its followers as “an elect community and [interpreting] political actions as a messianic function aiming toward the fulfillment of a mission,” and 4) adopting a “political liturgy” and a “sacred history.”201 The Nuremberg rally shows in stark relief how well Nazism meets these requirements.

While later the annual rallies at Nuremberg in the years that followed featured more elaborate stage productions and catered more to impressing foreign guests and diplomats with Germany’s “renewal” under Hitler, the rally in 1933 focused on celebrating the Nazis coming to power.202 “A feeling of excited triumph was in the air, and when Hitler appeared an almost electric shock passed through the multitude… it was a thanksgiving by revolutionaries for the success of their revolution.”203 The sensation of inclusion in the national community, or Volk, was heady empowerment, and although this inclusion meant exclusion for many others, few gave that much concern. “A ‘larger,’ ‘strengthening, encouraging’ community” took the place of fear and isolation as the individual started to believe he/she was part of something greater.204 As Linda Schulte-Sasse theorizes, “In ‘aestheticizing’ politics, National Socialism went a step further than the early modernity that allowed the aesthetic to compensate for a rationalized world; it attempted to let the aesthetic become ‘reality’ by breaking down traditional boundaries and turning the political experience into an aesthetic experience of community…”205

Nuremberg, in a sense, created the national community of Nazi Germany by creating an

202 Diana Mitford Mosley, 108.
203 Ibid.
205 Ibid., 311.
aesthetic of it, and orchestrating this creation from the center of it all was the “high-priest” of Nazism, Adolf Hitler.

It is difficult for a modern reader to understand the power of Adolf Hitler’s speeches in the context of the 1930s. His rages and wild hand gestures seem affected. His ravings seem to reinforce the insanity of his plans for mass murder and military conquest with the benefit of hindsight. In the 1930s, it was clear to his opponents that Hitler and the Nazi Party posed a threat, but more viewed him as oddly electrifying. This impact is almost impossible to capture. Claudia Koonz suggests that these gestures and facial expressions “resembled the body language of silent film stars.”

Maybe this likening to silent film is part of why they seem outdated in the modern era. Clear evidence exists that Hitler rehearsed his movements and expressions so that they were certainly deliberate as well as effective. Koonz also reminds her readers:

> Although it may strain credulity to conceive of Adolf Hitler as a prophet of virtue, therein lay the secret to his immense popularity. Modern readers are likely to dismiss Hitler’s interminable speeches as vapid, overwrought, and deceitful. But his followers, bitterly disillusioned by the bankrupt promises of liberal democracy, heard them as inspirational.

Just as his publicity team carefully selected and posed photographs showing certain sides of Hitler’s personality to the public, Hitler molded his own life story to echo Germany’s history. His previous failures and violent street fighting with Stormtroopers became an honorable history of struggle to succeed against overwhelming odds in his speeches. Hitler cast himself as a microcosm of the nation and a role model for the faithful. This propaganda was surprisingly successful, probably because so many people could identify

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206 Koonz, 18-22.
207 Ibid., 17.
208 Ibid., 86-7, 28-9, 23.
with it. Although Diana spoke little German and what she did translate for Unity of the speeches was often wrong, Unity Mitford described that 1933 Nuremberg Parteitag years later as “the most fascinating thing I have ever been to in my life.”\footnote{Redesdale MS, 24; Diana Mitford Mosley, 107.} She felt Hitler’s charisma even through the language barrier. “The most exciting thing was that I saw the Führer for the first time. We were in a hall and in he came. He looked so touching.”\footnote{Redesdale MS, 24.} Her term “touching” shows that even without words she understood the Nazi propaganda’s narrative of sympathy for this prophet who was supposed to have struggled so long and sacrificed so much for the nation he embodied.

Unity Mitford and her sister did not meet Hitler that summer. Jonathan Guinness suggests Hanfstaengl was not as popular and well-connected within the Nazi Party as he claimed.\footnote{J & C Guinness, , 361.} His connections to Hitler had more to do with the past than the present. In contrast, Hanfstaengl claims he was outmaneuvered by jealous rivals for Hitler’s attention. While the chancellor might have enjoyed the chance to meet rare English visitors, Hess, Goering, and Goebbels allegedly used the women’s make-up as an excuse to keep them from Hitler.\footnote{Hanfstaengl, Missing Years, 214.} Hanfstaengl relates how Hitler’s close aides walked past the table where he sat with the two sisters awaiting an audience with the chancellor, who remained closed in a private room. He had already told the women to wipe off their make-up before coming to see Hitler, and he explains that the way they were “made up to the eyebrows” had already attracted “many frank comments from passers-by.”\footnote{Ibid., 214.} In her book Nazi Chic, Irene Guenther explores the Nazi debates about women’s fashion as a
way of understanding how the German fascists tried to regulate “individual and collective identity” and image. She argues that the official propaganda against cosmetics labeled such products “un-German.” These “American” vices replaced the glow of health and natural beauty the women of the Third Reich ought to have. Exercise and sunshine were the only acceptable appearance enhancements many Nazis allowed future mothers of the Aryan people. Propaganda posters found resonance for many in the streets of Germany because at least one visitor to the Reich remembers hearing “Eine deutsche Frau schmückt sich nicht” (A German woman does not decorate herself!) when she left the house wearing lipstick. Hanfstanegl’s biographer, Peter Conradi, argues Putzi supported these attitudes and policies. Unity, however, had long experience with disapproving glares at her make-up. Both Diana and Decca write that the Mitfords’ father had forbidden lipstick and shaved legs, but his daughters ignored this decree. Unity applied the same nonchalance to Putzi: “…in those days it was the fashion and Unity was firm. ‘I couldn’t possibly do without it,’ she said.” This may or may not have cost her the chance to meet Hitler, but Unity Mitford’s fascination with the dictator did not require a face-to-face meeting to grow. Her love of grandiose ideals and theatrics had met its match at Nuremberg.

When Diana and Unity returned home, the Mitford parents were not pleased by their younger daughter’s new-found interest in Hitler. Unity recalled, “…my mother was so furious that I had gone to the Reichsparteitag that she said she would never let me go

214 Günther, 10-11.
215 Ibid., 99-104.
216 Mrs. Margaret Budd, interview with author, November 6, 2008.
218 Lovell, 162 (asterisk footnote); Diana Mitford Mosley, 109.
abroad again.” Her father wrote Diana that he felt “horrified” that the sisters had accepted “any form of hospitality from people we regard as a murderous gang of pests.” He went on to argue that Diana’s involvement was bad enough. He wished to keep his younger daughter Unity far away from the Nazis while he still had control of her. The Mitford parents had not been aware of Unity’s involvement in the British Union of Fascists, but her previous “mild interest” in fascism had blossomed after Nuremberg. She began a relentless campaign to get her parents to allow her to spend a finishing year abroad in Germany. After all, many young ladies at the time went to Munich to acquire a less expensive European sophistication than Paris offered. Unity’s mother felt taken back by this sudden desire to visit the continent: “‘But, darling, I always thought you didn’t like Abroad…” While this campaign continued, Unity and Decca spent most of their time in a small sitting room at the top of Swinbrook House. The D.F.D., or Drawing Room from Drawing Room, had been Unity’s former art studio. Now it turned into a playful combat zone because Decca had declared herself a communist in opposition to her sister’s fascism. Decca reminisces in her memoirs:

We divided it down the middle, and Boud [Unity] decorated her side with fascist insignia of all kinds—the Italian fasces, a bundle of sticks bound with rope; photographs of Mosley [B.U.F. leader] trying to look like Mussolini; the new German swastika; a record collection of Nazi and Italian youth songs. My side was fixed up with my Communist library, a small bust of Lenin purchased for a shilling in a second hand shop, a file of Daily Workers. Sometimes we would barricade with chairs and stage pitched battles, throwing books and records until

219 Redesdale MS, 24. Lack of italics is in the original.
222 Jessica Mitford, H & R, 69. Note that Sinclair discusses some of the history of British nobles sending daughters to be finished in Germany and similarities in hunting and other habits between the German and British aristocracy (5).
223 Lovell, 122; Jessica Mitford, Conflict, 15.
Nanny came to tell us to stop the noise.\textsuperscript{224}

The pair also stole equal amounts of money from their mother’s booth at the annual Oxfordshire Conservative fundraiser. Decca sent her five pounds to the \textit{Daily Worker}, and Unity sent hers to the British Union of Fascists.\textsuperscript{225} Decca vehemently opposed later comparisons of her communism to Unity’s fascism that called the ideologies “two sides of the same coin,” but the sisters did share a passionate devotion to rebelling from the expected paths for young women of their station and to whole-heartedly pursuing political ideals instead.\textsuperscript{226}

\textsuperscript{225} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{226} Jessica Mitford, \textit{Conflict}, 16.
Chapter Three

*The Uniform:*

“Lazlo, you’re not to call [the Führer] such names! He’s really rather sweet!” Miss McLean turned to the others. “Terribly bashful, you know, and quite, quite retiring.”

“Quite retiring! I should think he is!” said Lazlo. “He’s just retired three thousand political opponents. They won’t be heard of again.”

Miss Sykes-McLean looked at him reproachfully. “After all,” she said, “he is the leader of your nation.”

Unity longed to return to the drama of Nazi Germany. After nine months of Unity Mitford “(thinking) of nothing but of when she could return to Germany,” her parents agreed that she could go to Munich. As Decca muses in her memoir, “Perhaps the thought of another London season of sham tiaras and tame rats let loose in ballrooms was a bit more than my mother could contemplate with any pleasure.” Britain’s social elites believed time in Germany or France added extra polish to a young lady. She would learn about European language and culture. The new Nazi regime had not stopped British elites from sending their daughters to Munich. Unity went to stay at the home of Baroness Laroche in May 1934.

Baroness Laroche hosted many young ladies of good breeding and foreign birth in Munich. She was one of several German and Austrian aristocrats to fall on hard times in the wake of the First World War. “Her happiest memories were of being presented at the Imperial Palace in Vienna, and of speaking to the Emperor Franz Josef himself at the house of one of the princesses.”

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228 Redesdale MS, 24.
229 Jessica Mitford, *H & R*, 70. Note that Germany was less popular than France as a destination for young women of good breeding, but it did have the benefit of being less expensive!
Germany helped her boarding business to thrive, and many women of her class ran similar establishments. Diana recalls Laroche as “a dear old lady” familiar with young women’s difficulties away from home. She held their hands through heartbreak over local opera singers or officers, and she also gave them freedom to explore the city by bike, attend operas, and visit cultural sites like museums. Unity felt her house was “fascinating” with its many residents, frequent visitors, excellent food, and drawing room walls “entirely covered with pictures.” Her initial loneliness passed as a “German friend” called and took her for a walk in the nearby Englischer Garten. (This friend is almost certainly Putzi Hanfstaengl, a crush Decca teasingly called Unity’s “semi-romance.”) The big house at 121 Königinstrasse made a happy home away from home.

While other girls took finishing lessons to prepare for their debut into society, Unity Mitford had already done this. She had done her curtsy before the King and Queen. Unity stood apart from the other students living with the Baroness. They were all slightly younger. She did not attend the same lessons as these girls. Schoolmate Armida Macindoe recollected: “I looked on her with awe, but not because I knew anything of her ideas. . . . I don’t remember her having lessons like we did, she wasn’t in the schoolroom. She was free-lance, she floated around. If she wanted something from the schoolroom she’d just come in and fetch it.” Unity Mitford described how she tried to structure her

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231 Diana Mitford Mosley, 116.
232 Redesdale MS, 25.
233 Ibid.
234 Letter from Jessica to Diana from September 1933, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 43. Unity Mitford’s unnamed “German friend” has the power to introduce her to Hitler, knows her from her previous trip with Diana, and visits in between work in Berlin and trips to Rome—This strongly suggest Putzi Hanfstaengl. The well-known womanizer may have felt flattered by Mitford’s admiration or simply enjoyed her company.
235 Lovell, 171.
236 Armida Macindoe (now Mrs. Reid) interview, Pryce-Jones, 112.
free time to her mother. Every morning Nazis, singing as they marched past her window, woke her—“which is lovely of course, because I wake thinking immediately that I am in Germany and then of course I am immediately quite happy.”237 She spent several hours reading or studying German before bathing and starting her day at eleven. Unity would walk in to town to browse stores, bring German homework to the Englischer Garten, or perhaps hire a small boat on the garden’s lake until lunch time. German classes and work took up most of the afternoon until tea, then more reading or drawing. Occasionally, lectures or the opera provided after dinner entertainment. For example, one night Baron Franckenstein allowed the Baroness and her charges to borrow his opera box for *Die Fledermaus*.238 Another young lady who had stayed with the Baroness remembered: “Munich was a new kind of life… It was such a leisurely pace, with no pressures, no social whirl. People there went to the opera not because they wanted to be seen in a new evening gown, but because they loved the music. I was enchanted by the school and the parks and the modest, but dignified baroness.”239 German classes with Fräulein Baum were Unity Mitford’s only work, but she was eager to attain fluency as soon as possible. Diana noted, “Never before… had [Baroness Laroche] known a girl like Unity, who set herself with passionate single-mindedness to learn German so that when she met the Führer, as she felt convinced she would one day, she would be able to understand what he said.”240 Hanfstaengl promised “on his hand of honour, no kidding, that if I can speak German fairly well by the end of my stay here, he will introduce me to the Führer.”241

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237 Redesdale MS, 27.
240 Diana Mitford Mosley, 116.
241 Redesdale MS, 28.
This inspired Unity to apply herself with extra effort.

Unity Mitford quickly made friends other than Putzi Hanfstaengl. She met Hanfstaengl’s sister Erna at the family’s art shop, and the two became fast friends. Putzi’s early description of her as “a good girl” stuck when Unity Mitford made “The Good Girl” into Erna’s new nickname.242 She was “terribly sweet” and “enormously fat” with less elegance than her brother, according to a letter Unity sent Diana shortly after meeting Erna for the first time, but the two young women quickly made plans to visit a Hanfstaengl property near a lake just outside of Munich.243 Unity still mooned over Putzi, but she had a great distraction during her early days in the form of her British friend, artist Derek Hill. Hill explored the area around Munich with Unity on weekends when they both took a break from their studies.244 Sight-seeing trips were expensive, and Unity lamented a lack of companions for them until Hill (occasionally with visitors such as his mother and his aunt) made a perfect partner. They walked the mountains, and Unity Mitford describes renting a car with the Hill family “to see a church on the Danube”: “I have got to drive as I’m the only one that can, and as I have no international license I’m rather alarmed. Probably next time you hear of me I shall be wasting away in prison.”245

While she loved her new life in Germany, Unity Mitford carefully followed developments in Mosley’s B.U.F. back in Britain. From her first Parteitag experience.

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243 Letter from Unity to Diana from 4 May 1934, Select correspondence between Diana Mosley and Unity Mitford, Chatsworth House Trust Papers. Unity also describes the gifts she bought Diana’s boys, including “a big gold trumpet for Jonathanny, with a big Swastika flag hanging from it.” She goes on to tell how she’s shown pictures of the two to all her friends in Munich. This love of children stayed with Unity all her life.
244 J & C Guinness, 364.
245 Redesdale MS, 29. This same letter to her mother includes worries over the family finances that reinforce the assertions in chapter one that the family experienced budgetary difficulties similar to those experienced by many families in the British aristocracy between the wars.
with other B.U.F. delegates, Unity Mitford saw British and German fascism as natural allies. Fascist movements in different nations often formed strategic alliances or took inspiration from each other, but because of their intense ultra-nationalism, fascist movements never aimed to form one large international movement like their communist rivals did. Each movement had one nation’s interests at its core and would gladly sacrifice another fascist country to those interests, but Unity Mitford did not seem to see this. She wore her blackshirt uniform and B.U.F. insignia around Munich to show her fascist credentials. She also carefully followed news of Mosley’s movement back in Britain. Diana kept her informed of its successes and failures. Perhaps the largest of these failures was the rally at Olympia in June 1934.

The violence of the B.U.F. rally held at Olympia in Kensington shocked many in Britain and led to a drop in party membership. A program of songs, chants, and a Mosley speech drew in almost 10,000, but it also attracted about five hundred counter-protesters and hecklers. The British Union of Fascists had used squads of burly men in blackshirts as crowd control on previous occasions, but at Olympia the size of the event and the number of counter-protesters injured by these men received considerable press attention. The violent methods Mosley’s men used to evict disruptors horrified many. The blackshirt uniform, designed to reinforce dedication and pride in the movement, took on new notoriety as a symbol to inspire fear. Shortly after this, Mosley lost one of his greatest supporters, the press baron Lord Rothermere. Rothermere had consistently

\[246\] Lovell, 171.

\[247\] Chesterton, Mosley, 119-re: development of the uniform. In an interview with William Buckley, many years after Olympia, Mosley said that he felt the uniform’s institution was partly responsible for the B.U.F.’s failure because it felt foreign and did not attract admiration in a society with Britain’s values. "Interview with Sir Oswald Mosley." In Firing Line, edited by William F. Buckley, Jr., 25 March 1972, accessed 4 July 2007, http://www.oswaldmosley.com/archives/firingline.html
published leading articles sympathetic to Mosley and the B.U.F. in his papers such as the *Daily Mail*. There were also editorials, competitions for rally tickets, and other means of showing support for the movement. Although his own attempt at a right-wing party had failed around 1931, the media mogul adopted fascist ideas after visits to Italy and Germany that linked him to Mosley, but the Olympia rally violence and scandal, increasing anti-Semitism in the party propaganda, and a dispute around a cigarette manufacturing scheme led him to drop Mosley in 1934. Unity Mitford saw the critical coverage in the British papers and nervously wrote Diana, “I suppose all these absurd attacks in the papers are bound to do the Party a certain amount of harm. The accounts in the German papers were marvellous.” She wrote at greater length to her mother, linking the British fascists with the Nazis and showing how much she had already started to adopt anti-Semitic ideas:

Aren’t the English newspapers absolutely nauseating. All this absurd and lying outcry about ‘brutality’ at Olympia only goes to show the urgent necessity for getting rid of disgusting Jewish influence in all walks of English life. If the Jews imagine that they can, with the help of a few insignificant Tory M.P.’s, manufacture lies which will kill our movement, I’m afraid they’re quite wrong. Of course exactly the same thing happened in Germany in the early days of the N.S.D.A.P.

At this point, Unity Mitford’s anti-Semitism took the form of common propaganda phrases about “dishonest Jewish influence” in media and politics. She was just

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250 Redesdale MS, 30. A later letter from 19 February 1935 (Ibid., 58) shows further concern about press clippings her brother Tom sent about Olympia. She writes, “Nothing in my life will ever make up to me for not having been at the Olympia fight. It sounds such heaven…I should think what will help the Movement most will be its denunciation by dreary conservative objects…”
developing the thinking that would continue to evolve as she became more immersed in Nazi Germany.

The energy of Munich under Nazi rule fascinated Unity Mitford. She wrote letters home lamenting having to return to Britain for vacation, and she described the very air as “like a tonic” that invigorated her until everyone commented on how lively she seemed.\textsuperscript{251} She writes of dramatic torchlit rallies and ceremonies, including one to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the Treaty of Versailles with black crepe, a “mournful” orchestra, and speeches that made her “cry buckets.”\textsuperscript{252} It was more than being surrounding by the kitsch, the marching, and the singing. Part of the appeal to both foreign visitors and Germans in the early years of Nazi power came from the “socialism” in National Socialism. Robert O. Paxton has charted “five stages of fascism” to distinguish between the party’s creation, development, initial “acquisition of power,” “exercise of power,” and “radicalization or entropy.”\textsuperscript{253} In 1934, Germany was still in the early stages of the exercise of power, and Nazi party leaders carefully cultivated public opinion in a different way than they did as their power grew more entrenched with the passage of time. There was much greater sensitivity because the Nazi grip on Germany was not yet as secure as it would be in the later 1930s.

Part of winning over the public and enacting the promised national renewal meant elaborate social welfare programs. Nazi use of “the premises of modern social planning,” “modern designs and industrialism” resulted in projects like the famous Autobahn roadways, monumental public architecture, price controls, the end of entailments,

\textsuperscript{251} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{252} Ibid., 31.
\textsuperscript{253} Griffin one-311. Robert o. Paxton “the five stages of fascism” pages 305-326.
vacation programs for workers, family tax breaks, “graduated income tax,” and
government aid programs for the needy. A totalitarian government could cut through
the old bureaucratic webs in a single blow. As scholar Götz Aly demonstrates in his
groundbreaking book *Hitler’s Willing Beneficiaries*, ordinary Germans enjoyed little
luxuries under Hitler that they had never before experienced. The Nazis had luck on their
side. By 1933, the Great Depression “had already bottomed out.” Financial wizards
like Schacht could “increase the state’s short-term debt in order to combat unemployment
and to boost domestic spending.” By the late 1930s and 1940s, state preparation for
war and looting the possessions and assets of Jews, dissidents, and occupied countries
got towards sustaining the higher standard of living for so-called Aryan Germans in the
Fatherland. This high price of these economic advances seemed far away in 1934. Unity
Mitford saw a bustling new society and approved. The construction and employment
seemed to justify condemnation of Britain’s older and slower parliamentary system and
praise of the Nazi’s rhetoric of youth and action. She wrote home to her mother how

young the party officials she met in Munich were. Ominously, the warped pseudo-

See Peter Fritzsche (“Nazi Modern,” in volume 2 of *Fascism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*,
eds. Roger Griffin with Matthew Feldman (London: Routledge, 2004), 316) and Jeffrey Hart’s
approach to this is in Mark Antliff’s “Fascism, Modernism, and Modernity, (in volume 3 of *Fascism:
Critical Concepts in Political Science*, eds. Roger Griffin with Matthew Feldman (London: Routledge,
2004), 122).”

See also Götz Aly, *Hitler’s Beneficiaries: Plunder, Racial War, and the Nazi Welfare State*, translated by
Jefferson Chase, (New York: first published in 2005 with S. Fischer Verlage; Metropolitain Books,
2007), 30-1, 20. During an interview, Margaret Budd noted that growing up during the Great
Depression in Lancashire “when everything was stark and pretty awful” made the activity in Germany
seem as though the fascists in Nazi Germany had given the Germans “back their soul.” The “incredible
industry” around the youth organizations and public works projects “gave them back their purpose in
life.” Mrs. Margaret Budd, interview with author, November 6, 2008.

By the late 1930s and 1940s, state preparation for

Redesdale MS, 28. Construction projects Unity witnessed (specifically in the Munich area) included
Troost's Brown House, the House of German Art, the Putsch Honor Temple, the House of German
Medicine, the House of German Law, the Fuehrerbau, the new paving of the Koenigsplatz to make it a
better parade ground, a new surface trolley system, an early subway system, the new Autobahn, and
street widening projects. (David Clay Large, *Where Ghosts Walked: Munich's Road to the Third Reich,*
scientific mind set of Nazi eugenics, the racial hierarchy and mass murder technology, came from the same place as the modern thinking that promoted social welfare for the chosen few. All of the loudly trumpeted social and economic changes struck Unity Mitford as modern, thrilling, and much more exciting than anything she had encountered in Britain.

Munich was a particularly good place for Unity Mitford to observe Hitler in all his glamour. Hitler’s carefully crafted image of himself as an ideal and an embodiment of Germany involved different roles just as it involved different poses in the propaganda fan photographs sold in shops across the country. Hitler’s favorite role was as the lone hero, an ideal he drew from Karl May’s Wild West novels, Wagnerian operas, and World War I propaganda posters that had appealed to him during his time in the trenches. This hero sacrificed everything for his nation. The noble knight was a lone wolf. (Hitler’s preferred nickname was, in fact, “Wolf.”) Just as the German Volk were victims in the “national morality play,” so was this hero who would forsake any chance at personal happiness in the name of duty and civic virtue. The image was often very effective. A strong cult of celebrity existed around Hitler. For example, women reportedly swooned at his public appearances. They sent hand-made gifts, and at least several hundred love letters arrived every day in Berlin for Hitler. As Alexander Geppert articulates in his examination of

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258 Peter Fritzsche, “Nazi Modern,” in volume 2 of Fascism: Critical Concepts in Political Science, eds. Roger Griffin with Matthew Feldman (London: Routledge, 2004), 324-5; Zygmunt Bauman, “The Uniqueness and Normality of the Holocaust,” in volume 2 of Fascism: Critical Concepts in Political Science, eds. Roger Griffin with Matthew Feldman (London: Routledge, 2004), 330, 333-4. This is similar to American historian Edmund Morgan’s notion the slavery made the American Revolution possible by giving whites at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy someone to see as their inferiors, thus reducing the gulf between themselves and wealthier whites.

259 Koonz, 23.

260 Alexander Geppert, "Dear Adolf!: Locating Love in Nazi Germany," In New Dangerous Liaisons: Discourses on Europe and Love in the Twentieth Century, edited by Liliana Ellena Luisa Passerini, and
some of these love letters, personal attachment to Hitler both stabilized and destabilized the Nazi state.261 Hitler had to work hard at staying in tune with public opinion in order to prevent destabilization. He spent lunches talking to specialists and directly to “the man in the street.” 262 As his former home and the official birthplace of the Nazi movement, Munich visits every two or three weeks were less formal than Hitler’s time in Berlin. Bavaria was less formal than the seat of German government, and Hitler felt particularly attached to the artists around the university. He walked the streets more often and with a smaller entourage. Local men and women greeted him as a “hometown hero.”263 Hitler in Munich was more approachable for a follower like Unity Mitford who was eager to meet him. In mid-June 1934, Unity’s sightseeing partner Derek Hill telephoned her from the Carlton Teeraum where he was taking tea with his aunt and mother. They were sitting opposite Hitler’s table. Unity rushed off in a taxi to join them. She describes to Diana how her hands shook as she stared at the dictator and tried to drink hot chocolate. After an hour and a half, he left. She treasured the salute he gave her party on his way out.264 Hitler could hardly have designed a propaganda persona more likely to have attracted Unity’s Romantic ideals.

Although Unity saw what she wanted to see—Hitler’s exciting veneer—there were many clear signs from the very beginning of Hitler’s reign that the man beneath the surface was disturbingly ruthless and violent. For many outside Germany, one of the first

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262 Ibid., 208-9.
263 Koonz, 73-4.
264 Letter from Unity to Diana dated 12 June 1934, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 46; Redesdale MS, 25.
indications of the violence that would characterize Hitler’s leadership and Nazism came with the Röhm purge, later called the “Night of the Long Knives,” and largely based in Munich. By June 1934, the Nazi Party’s brown-shirted Stormtroopers in the S.A. (Sturmabteilung) were no longer needed to push the movement into power. Hitler hoped to stabilize his rule, but the S.A. under Röhm continued the rowdy street-fighting that had helped bring the Nazis to power. Their unwillingness to harness the revolutionary violence and desire to target the old system’s elite aristocrats, wealthy industrialists, and other conservatives worried many party leaders. Röhm also had a history of sexual encounters with men. Rumors that Hitler was homosexual already existed, and some speculated Röhm either knew too much about his leader’s past or just seemed like a scandal waiting to happen.²⁶⁵ On many levels, the S.A. brownshirts and some of the Nazi “Old Fighters” from the Kampfzeit or “Time of Struggle” (the early days of the failed Putsch in 1923) had become an embarrassment.²⁶⁶ The Schutzstaffel, or S.S., that had once been a unit within the S.A. had transformed into an elite unit under Himmler, and it did not relish its former parent being competition for prestige. Perhaps the signal of the Stormtroopers’ impending doom was when Hitler’s speeches no longer described valiant street fights in the early days of the NSDAP that “kept the rebellious spirit of the front soldier alive.”²⁶⁷ Instead of emphasizing violence and physical courage, Hitler’s speeches came to stress “disciplined, idealistic, and dedicated men who endured privation for the sake of a loftier goal.”²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ Mrs. Margaret Budd, interview with author, November 6, 2008. (Regarding Hitler as gay rumours.)
²⁶⁶ Large, Munich, 273.
²⁶⁷ Koonz, 86.
²⁶⁸ Ibid.
Munich was the centre of the purge. Many Old Fighters lived in the area that had been their home since the early days. As David Clay Large writes in his history of Munich, “It is appropriate that the Night of the Long Knives was centered in Munich and its environs because this grisly spectacle was a kind of Nazi morality play, a tour de force of Grand Guignol. It harmonized with the region’s rich tradition of political theater and religious drama…” The city’s citizens were well aware of the bloodshed. Unity Mitford described the scene in a letter to her mother sent 1 July and captured the emotions seething in the city:

For the last two days storm clouds have been gathering over Munich—- that sounds dramatic but it really was like that—and last night they broke. I had heard that all S.S. men were confined to their homes in case they were required, and last night after dinner the servants were full of strange rumours, so I immediately walked into the Town to see what could be seen. A huge crowd was gathered round a printed sheet on the wall of a house in one of the chief squares in Munich and a man was reading it aloud, so I went and listened, and I just managed to hear that Röhm had been expelled from the Party and arrested. I then went straight to the Brown House [Nazi Party headquarters] as I knew any excitement would be there. The streets were lined with S.A. men S.S. men and Stahlhelm and the street in which the Brown House is was guarded by S.S. So went and stood in the huge crowd that had collected in a square near, they were all waiting to see Hitler and Goebbels come away from the Brown House. I waited two hours but in the end word went round that they had left by another entrance and were already flying to Berlin, so I came home. To-day no one is talking of anything else, it seems so unbelievable. And now it is said Röhm, Schleicher and Schleicher’s wife and Heines have all shot themselves. I wonder if that is true. I must go into Town and see.270

Unity Mitford’s lack of fear in the face of S.S. patrols and rumour of political upheaval seems striking. The speed and openness of rumours also gives a feeling of widespread awareness of Nazi political activity and even atrocities taking place. Edmund Heines, one of the men mentioned by Unity, was an S.A. commander whose death Nazis would

269 Large, Munich, 256.
270 Letter to Muv from Unity dated 1 July 1934, Redesdale MS, 32. Dashes are in original.
justify as they did Röhm’s. Hitler was one of the first politicians to realize the power radio gave him to reach a wide audience. He used this medium to communicate with the masses while campaigning and while justifying his actions. Hitler gave a radio broadcast to explain the “Röhm putsch” deaths roughly ten days after they took place. He argued that the S.A. had planned a revolt and mutiny, that the murders and forced suicides had protected the German state.  

Of course, there was no revolt planned. Instead, many of the purged who faced death at S.S. hands were so loyal that they yelled “Heil Hitler!” as the bullets fired. Reactions in Munich and the rest of Germany crossed the spectrum. Some felt appalled at the brutality. The accidental death of Willi Schmidt, for example, and the death of Kurt von Schleicher (last chancellor of Weimar Germany but someone who had compromised with Hitler) and his wife did not fit neatly into the S.A. mutiny excuse. Others felt glad to be rid of the S.A. “roughnecks” with their rowdy ways and too much local power or blamed the entire purge on the influence of “Prussians in Berlin.” Munich and Bavaria had long been rivals of Berlin and Prussia. The militaristic stereotype of Prussia held considerable sway in a German province that clung to regional autonomy and traditions. The actions that caused the most criticism in Munich involved Nazi officials replacing the Bavarian flags with Party flags or renaming historical streets. David Clay Large documents Munich residents’ eagerness to forgive their hometown hero and blame others: “As a Munich hairdresser put it in 1934, ‘Yes, yes, our Adolf is all right, but that lot around him, they’re nothing but rogues.'”

271 Large, Munich, 254. 
273 Large, Munich, 254-5, 249. 
274 Large, Munich, 249. 
275 Ibid.
Notable among reactions to the Röhm purge were the men and women willing to look the other way or even express sympathy for Hitler. His contrived image of the lonely, suffering hero encouraged this, and Hitler’s more dedicated followers responded. Unity Mitford wrote her mother, “I am so terribly sorry for Hitler, it must be the greatest blow of his life. Röhm was his oldest comrade and friend.... It is quite inconceivable that a man who had been Hitler’s friend and comrade through all the hard early fights of the party could now stoop so low as to plot against him.”

She continued, “And what must the Führer have undergone when he himself arrested him and tore the things off his uniform.” In a letter four days later, she noted that she read the banned edition of the Sunday Times at the Brown House. Unity Mitford felt outraged that the British paper condemned Hitler and the murders. The criticism convinced her that the media outside Germany had an unfair prejudice against the country because of the First World War. Unity complained, “Surely the Führer’s conduct over the whole affair was quite beyond reproach and wonderfully courageous.”

Others felt the same way. Winifred Wagner exclaimed to her daughter, “Poor Führer… What a terrible shock it must have been to find himself betrayed by his best friend.” This sympathy did not stop crowds from gossiping about the scandal. When Unity Mitford wrote Diana about the purge, she added that the S.S. found Heines “in bed with a boy” when they arrested him. The rumours at Bayreuth described a similar scene at Röhm’s arrest.

Munich provided Unity with more than political drama, however. The city’s

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276 Redesdale, 32.
277 Ibid.
278 Ibid., 33.
280 Letter from Unity to Diana dated 1 July 1934, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 48.
281 Friedelind Wagner, 97-8.
artistic heritage attracted her too. For example, when Muv, Unity Mitford’s mother, came with Decca and Ann Farrer (a Mitford cousin known as “Idden”) to see for herself what her daughter’s life in Germany was like in July 1934, the lovely gilded baroque churches, opera houses, and palaces amazed her. Lady Redesdale had expected Munich to be very backwards compared to the great European capitals of Paris or Rome, but the city’s architecture impressed her.\textsuperscript{282} Postcards of the ornate Asamkirche, the stunning Amalienburg lodge at Nymphenberg Palace, and the opera house at Bayreuth litter her descriptions of the visit. Munich’s political importance was waning with the decline of the Old Fighters’ importance after the Röhm purge. It did, however, remain a city designed to show foreign tourists the “glamour, culture, and fun” that could be had in Nazi Germany.\textsuperscript{283} Nazi Party leaders came south from Berlin to relax in a more bohemian atmosphere in Munich. The German city so fond of carnivals retained its love of public theatre. While the “museums, opera, orchestras, theaters, universities, and scientific associations” that made the city a cultural Mecca found their leaders replaced by Nazis or rapidly converting to fascism after the Professional Civil Service law in April 1933, they tried to preserve the city’s character or co-opt it in order to meet the Party’s desire for public spectacle. Oktoberfest added swastikas and torches to the traditional costumes, new pageants and parades expanded the Lenten Carnival around \textit{Fasching}, a “Brown Ribbon” horse race took place, and a racy, pseudo-historical “Night of the Amazons” pageant with lots of skimpy armor graced Nymphenburg Palace’s park.\textsuperscript{284} Unity Mitford’s visitors in July missed the most elaborate parades. They attended

\textsuperscript{282} Redesdale MS, 39-40.
\textsuperscript{283} Large, \textit{Munich}, 254-5, 268-270.
\textsuperscript{284} \textit{Ibid.}, 244, 274-5. Note that firing became easier with the Professional Civil Service law if a government employee did not espouse the right politics or if he or she was Jewish.
the Oberammergau passion play’s 300th anniversary. The reenactment of Christ’s passion done every ten years from May to October by the townsfolk in thanksgiving for being spared the worst effects of the bubonic plague was (and still is) famous throughout Europe. It had a history of anti-Semitic representations of Jewish elders as “Christ-killers,” but in 1934, Nazi influence emphasized this along with the play’s folk history to meet their own propaganda aims.\textsuperscript{285} Hitler attended a performance. Unity Mitford, however, remained unimpressed. As she wrote her sister Nancy, “The Passion Play was very long.”\textsuperscript{286} In preparation for her mother’s trip, Unity had lamented, “I fear there may be no Nazi meetings to take you to, as all the party officials and S.A. and S.S. men are having holidays during July. It is a great pity as I would have liked you to have seen one of the big meetings, they are thrilling.”\textsuperscript{287} The meetings and parades were a performance of the link between the action Unity found exciting and the rhetoric of heroism that attracted her Romantic ideals. This made them essential to building her faith in fascism.

In spite of the relative quiet that summer, Unity and her visitors found plenty of signs of the regime’s reach and power even without one of the meetings or parades. The singing, uniforms, routines marches, and almost hysterical political passion all convinced Muv that Germany would make war over the Treaty of Versailles soon. As a patriotic Brit, she refused to salute at the Feldherrnhalle as Unity did. The plaque at this site marked where Hitler’s followers died during his unsuccessful “Putsch” in 1923. Uniformed S.S. guards stood there and observed the city’s citizens raising their arms in the Nazi salute. Unity Mitford took every opportunity to do this like a local and a committed fascist, but her

\textsuperscript{285} Ibid., 256.
\textsuperscript{286} Letter from Unity to Nancy daed July 1934, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, pg 49-50.
\textsuperscript{287} Redesdale MS, 30-1.
mother crossed the street rather than cooperate.\textsuperscript{288} Unity took her revenge by rushing away from her mother to a tram one morning. This left Muv alone, lost, and looking for anyone who spoke English. She did not find her way back until dinner time while Unity, Decca, and Idden laughed over the parent they saw as priggish and the unkind joke.\textsuperscript{289} Muv shook her head and imagined her daughter’s infatuation with Nazism would pass.

Unity’s experiences at the 1934 \textit{Parteitag} illustrate how her interest in Nazism only grew more obsessive during these first months living in Germany. Her sister Diana came to Munich from Italy that August, and the two sisters were eager to attend the annual rally. In spite of their enthusiasm, Putzi Hanfstaengl would not provide the sisters with tickets and lodging for another \textit{Parteitag}. He claimed that “he had been criticized the year before for being surrounded by foreigners who all wore lipstick.”\textsuperscript{290} This left Unity and Diana without any powerful Nazi connection to help them procure tickets. Unity talked her reluctant sister into heading to Nuremberg anyhow. She suggested they sleep in the train station or positions on the street where they would have a good view of the next day’s parade. Although Diana worried as she saw “a vast mass of people crammed into the town. Every café and restaurant was packed, the streets were jammed with humanity. It was like a dozen Cup Final crowds concentrated in a town the size of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Ibid.}, 40.
\item Letter from Unity to Nancy, Charlotte Mosley, \textit{The Mitfords},49.
\item Diana Mitford Mosley, 116. Interestingly, in Lady Redesdale’s memoir, Unity mentions discussing a blanked out name (probably Putzi) with Hitler after she met him: “He discovered that I knew—and we laughed a great deal over him. He said ‘Why on earth didn’t he ever bring you to see me? He brings such a lot of dreadful people to me but evidently not the nice ones.’” (pg. 59) letter to farve, 19 feb 1935. Unity was already cross with Putzi Hanfstaengl because rumours of an affair with an American night club hostess had reached her through the British tabloids in June of that year (Letter from Unity to Diana dated 1 July 1934, Charlotte Mosley, \textit{The Mitfords}. 47-8). Jonathan and Catherine Guinness speculate in \textit{House of Mitford} that Putzi was actually unable to provide such tickets in 1934 because of his own further decline in influence with Hitler. (367)
\end{enumerate}
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Oxford, ” she could not deter Unity from pressing on or persuade her to return to Munich. The Parteitag was too important to her. Jonathan Guinness later recounted to a reporter from The Scotsman, “‘The key to understanding Unity is to realize that she was a very visual person. She went there and was amazed by all the parades and uniforms. And the music played a big part too. It all captivated her.’” Unity was desperate to reencounter the concept of the “total work of art” (Gesamtkunstwerk) that had fascinated her at the previous year’s celebrations. Where the previous year Unity had seen Nuremberg’s rally as a curiosity, she now felt a deeper emotional connection to German fascism, and she knew the elaborate Parteitag rituals existed in order to build such feelings.

Chance and bravado helped Unity Mitford attain her goal in Nuremberg. At a beer garden, she fell into conversation with an older man when she noticed his gold party badge. Only the first 100,000 members of the Nazi Party wore such badges, and when Unity learned he had been member 100, she listened to his stories of the early days in the NSDAP with rapt attention. Diana followed as best she could after her time “struggling with Hugo’s German Self Taught.” Unity hoped the man might introduce her to Hitler. He did not, but upon hearing their situation, he did give them a note for the accommodation office that granted them a room and tickets. (Diana recalled that he later gave them his book about the White Russian campaigns in Siberia when the sisters tracked the man down to thank him.) Unity and Diana happily viewed the elaborate

291 Diana Mitford Mosley, 116-7.
292 Maclean, Scotsman.
293 Diana Mitford Mosley, 117.
294 Ibid., 117-8.
parades from the section reserved for key Party members and officials.\textsuperscript{295} Many speeches stressed industry and economic improvement, but the dominant theme was a subtle “justification and minimizing of the Röhm Purge.”\textsuperscript{296} Victor Lutze stood with Himmler to show that the S.A. still existed and held Hitler’s trust. This was supposed to show that the purge had been a just cleansing rather than the naked power politics it actually was. Leni Riefenstahl’s famous film of the 1934 Parteitag, The Triumph of the Will, shows how much more elaborate the staging had become. Hitler had declared himself head of state and Führer after Hindenberg’s death, and more foreign visitors sat in the stands to listen to the speeches this time. One German attendee, however, held the two Mitford sisters’ attention. Unity Mitford had seen Eva Braun working in Heinrich Hoffmann’s shop and noted how pretty she was. When she saw the same woman dressed up and climbing into a large Mercedes, she assumed the shop assistant was a powerful Party member’s mistress. Seeing Eva Braun seated next to them in the most prestigious part of the stands, Diana (who recalled the mysterious mistress from a letter Unity sent) and Unity asked “a few friendly questions and the sisters knew the truth.”\textsuperscript{297} Hitler kept Eva Braun’s very existence a secret from all but a few of the highest Nazi officials at this time.\textsuperscript{298} A key part of his image was his devotion to Germany. Like Queen Elizabeth I, he claimed that

\textsuperscript{295} Anne de Courcy, Diana Mosley: Mitford Beauty, British Fascist, Hitler’s Angel, 1st American edition (New York: William Morrow, 2003), 143. On 8 June 1935, Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart noted in his diaries that a dinner companion (possibly Tom Mitford) related Unity and Diana’s experiences at Nuremberg in 1934. His version of the story ran that the two women saw a stranger following them and felt scared until he explained that he wanted to help them attend the rally. It also relates how the women told Hitler they’d already been his guest when he asked them to attend as his guest in 1935. (Lockhart, The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, edited by Kenneth Young, 2 volumes (London: Macmillan, 1973), 322)

\textsuperscript{296} Gannon, 102-3. Diana herself notes that the Arbeitdienst workers with shovels were a new addition. (Diana Mitford Mosley, 118).

\textsuperscript{297} De Courcy, Diana, 143.

\textsuperscript{298} Ibid., 141.
the nation he ruled took the place of a spouse. Knowing that the image of self-denial had limits did not disillusion Unity Mitford, but it put her and her sister among the rare few who saw into the dictator’s personal life.

Unity Mitford returned to England for a time in late summer 1934. The *Times* noted her attendance at the marriages of Peter George Evelyn to Patricia McCalmont and Nigel Hinchingbrooke (a travel companion in Germany back in 1933) to Rosemary Peto.\(^{299}\) Unity Mitford’s fervent Nazi beliefs often seemed out of place in Britain, but in 1934, they bemused more than they offended most of Unity’s circle. Author John Betjeman, a friend since he had sung hymns with Unity at Diana’s Biddesden dining room piano, allowed his teddy bear to adopt Unity’s political views. The bear, named “Archibald,” was a frequent feature in Betjeman’s correspondence with friends. His alleged extreme Congregationalist faith and fascist politics led him on unusual adventures to entertain the poet’s friends.\(^{300}\) Others felt a little more alarmed. Unity saluted everyone back in England according to the Nazi style, barking “Heil Hitler!” This was particularly difficult for the “astonished postmistress in Swinbrook village” to accept.\(^{301}\) It also irritated the socialists at Speaker’s Corner in Hyde Park.\(^{302}\) A family portrait of all six Mitford ladies, their brother, and their parents at Swinbrook shows Unity sitting calmly in her blackshirt with fascist badges on her lapel. What looks like a sibling’s hand on her shoulder in some versions of the photo is in fact her pet, Ratular.\(^{303}\) That same summer, her brother, Tom, sent a postcard from Bayreuth that claimed he had enjoyed an evening

\(^{301}\) Jessica Mitford, *H & R*, 70.
\(^{302}\) Lovell, 190-1.
\(^{303}\) The best version of this photo is on pages 71-2 in Sophia Murphy’s *Mitford Family Album*. 
with Hitler and Goering. It was a typical Mitford tease, but Unity was heinously jealous until she realized the joke.  

After her trip home in September, Unity Mitford returned to a new home in Munich. A long letter dated 7 October 1934 details taking Ratular past amused German border guards and allowing the rat to run free in the trains. It also described her new living situation. During her mother’s visit, she had gained approval to move to a sort of women’s dormitory for students, the Studentinnenheim, at 49 Kaulbachstrasse. It was close to the Englischer Garten, the university, and her former finishing school, but there was greater freedom without Baroness Laroche to oversee her. No one kept very strict watch over Unity Mitford’s comings and goings now. With increased independence came new concerns. Unity had about a hundred pound sterling from her parents, and the letters home start to worry over funding at this point. Letters from “the ‘Heim” are the first to include much about the cost of clothing, rent, meals, and tickets for trips home. Unity Mitford also had fairly cramped quarters, which she details for her parent: “My room here is divine, there is just room for my clothes if I keep a trunk full on top of the wardrobe… I have hung up some of my many pictures of Hitler. I didn’t sleep much last night as my bedclothes are the sort that don’t tuck in, so every five minutes they were on the floor. My bed is a sofa in the day-time.”  

Away at finishing school in Paris, Decca sent a letter to her mother later that month that mocked Unity’s tiny space: “I did adore

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304 J & C Guinness, 367. In a letter to her mother on 16 February 1935, after she had met Hitler herself, Unity teased Tom back, writing: “Tell him also that the Fuhrer [sic] said to me ‘Der Abend, an dem ich Abendessen mit ihren reizenden und schönen Bruder in Bayreuth gehabt habe, wird immer eine von meinen wundervollen Erinnerunzen bleiben.’” (roughly translated: The dinner in Bayreuth I had with your attractive and excellent brother will always remain one of my best memories!! 57)  
305 Redesdale, 42.  
306 Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, interview with author, October 29, 2008; Redesdale MS, 42-3.  
307 Redesdale MS, 43.
the photos and wanted to draw a huge Boud [aka. Unity] overpowering her room in the one of the Student’s-heim, only Idden restrained me.”

Decca could not restrain her pencil when she heard the family’s local Conservative Member of Parliament, Sir James Edmondson (called “Choiney”), would visit Germany. She wrote her mother, “I do think it’s unkind of you to arrange for Bobo [Unity] to welcome Choiney when you know what sort of a welcome she’ll give him. I have never heard of an unfairer arrangement.”

The small sketch nearby shows a giant Unity in her B.U.F. blackshirt wielding a large swastika in one hand and a knife in the other. She aims them at the small man in a suit. She towers over him, but he has one fist extended to strike back at her.

Around this time Unity Mitford learned a bit of gossip from the German teacher at Baroness Laroche’s, a woman named Fräulein Baum. (Unity called her “Bäumchen.”)

Baum was another of Hitler’s devoted admirers, and she knew that when he came to Munich the dictator often lunched at the Osteria Bavaria on the Schellingstrasse. The small Italian restaurant had a tiny courtyard, an owner Hitler had known for some time, and a location near the university in the slightly Bohemian Schwabing district of the city. This put it in the artistic area Hitler admired as failed artist himself. It also put the restaurant conveniently near Unity Mitford’s place of residence. The first time she went to lunch with Baum at the Osteria Bavaria, Unity saw Hitler arrive at the end of her meal:

“...suddenly everyone jumped to their feet and saluted and there he was in his sweet mackintosh. It was one of the most thrilling moments of my life.”

She describes spying...
on his small corner of the restaurant, noting what he ate and when he left. She determined that he had “vegetable cutlets” based on information from “the waitress who knows him very well.” This amateur detective work became Unity Mitford’s peculiar specialty. Hitler’s adjutants knew that he kept a more relaxed profile in Munich, but memoirs by men like Otto Dietrich, a Reichsleiter involved in the state and party press and propaganda bureaucracies, voice awe and frustration that Unity Mitford could guess the dictator’s “secret itineraries” with such accuracy. When Diana came to Munich that fall 1934 to study German, Unity persuaded her to come along on these hunts for Hitler:

Unity knew as if by instinct when he was likely to be there. She followed his doings in the newspapers, chatted to the doorman at the Brown House, looked to see if there was a policeman in the Prinzregentenplatz where he had his flat. If she considered it possible that he would turn up at the Osteria we lunched there… Nothing would induce Unity to leave until he did. She willingly waited an hour and a half if necessary for the pleasure of seeing him go by her table on his way out.

Unity became close friends with two waitresses, Ella and Rosa. One told her that Hitler had asked after the tall blonde that kept appearing at the Osteria for lunch, and Unity was ecstatic.

Diana and Unity took a German class for foreigners together at the university. Over a period of about five weeks, they spent a little time on the course and a lot of time becoming better acquainted with Munich. Unity often stayed at Diana’s flat on Ludwigstrasse. The class took at least eight hours a week, but it also offered

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312 Redesdale MS, 43. Unity also wrote her mother that she would only consume a cheap glass of milk at other meals so she could spend every lunch at the Osteria Bavaria within her budget.
314 Diana Mitford Mosley, 119.
315 Life of contrasts, 119.
inexpensive outings to nearby cities as well as experiences to encourage visitors’ admiration for Hitler’s new Germany: “Labour camps, concentration camps, factories, social centres etc…”317 The sisters savored the Munich winter in particular with its skiing opportunities, cheap opera tickets, and superb art galleries. Guests visited from Baroness Laroche’s home and Unity’s growing group of friends.318 She also made friends with other visitors to Munich through her German classes and locals through her obvious admiration for Hitler. One bookseller even secretly loaned her a copy of Röhm’s banned autobiography auspiciously titled The Story of a High Traitor.319

As one of Germany’s most Catholic areas, Munich and its surrounds were famous for extravagant rituals, festival, and sacred theatre. Munich also happened to have been an important site during Hitler's early adulthood and the Nazi Party’s youth. The city, therefore, hosted elaborate “theatrical observances of Hitler’s birthday, the date of his army enlistment, the foundation of the Nazi Party, the Battle of the Hofbräuhaus, National Youth Day, and Reich Labor Day.”320 The most important of these was the commemoration of the failed 1923 Putsch each November. It displayed the “sacralisation of politics” even more strongly than Nuremberg. This annual celebration took place every 8-9 November from 1933-1939, and it held an integral part in the Nazi calendar of festivals. In Fascism and Theatre: Comparative Studies on the Aesthetics and Politics of Performance in Europe, 1925-1945, theatre historian Hans-Ulrich Thamer chronicles the Nazi “festival year” which “began on 30 January, the day of the seizure of power, and

317 Redesdale MS, 44.
318 Diana Mitford Mosley, 118-9.
319 Ibid.; Redesdale MS, 44-5.
320 Large, Munich, 256. DCL also notes here that the Putsch reenactment took place every November from 1933 to 1939. The war and security concerns stemming from it ended the commemorations after that time.
ended on 9 November, commemorating the martyrs of the movement.” He compares this to the Catholic liturgical calendar. This was probably a deliberate aping of Christian ritual designed to give Nazism the centrality to daily life that the Church enjoyed. Several important Nazis had Catholic childhoods, and they knew the power of ritual in the faith. Nazis also used the language and notion of time in Christianity to ply on the “mystical and millenarian” notion of a Third Force or Third Reich that had emerged in Germany’s völkisch movements during the late nineteenth century. While not inevitably leading to fascism, these German thinkers prepared the masses for the mythic notion of a sort of “Second Coming” for the sacred national community. The notion of impending redemption through Hitler as savior/ redeemer loomed large with this background.

The strange Putsch ceremonies contain almost all the key elements of Nazi ideology, particularly as they were coming to appeal to Unity in 1934. While Diana had felt drawn to fascism through Mosley because of feeling too sheltered and privileged,


Unity enjoyed the sensationalism of fascism. Its romantic pageantry and language attracted the woman who loved poetry and art and adventure. The “holy madness” of the Nazi brand of fascism drew her even more than British fascism had. The religious character struck a chord. For the Putsch commemoration ritual Unity first saw in 1934, the Nazi party and the “Old Fighters” so especially abundant in Munich listened to a speech by Hitler at the Bürgerbräukeller about the “early days of struggle.” This was a critical theme in Hitler’s repertoire. In the “sacred scripture” of the Nazi faith, the “early struggles” were an important reminder of how much Hitler had allegedly sacrificed for the Volk, a source of the movement’s “martyrs,” a link between Nazi victimhood lore and Germany’s own perception of itself as a victim after World War I, and a call to arms around Nazism’s “heroic ethic.” Hitler, the most important party members such as Goering and Himmler, and many remaining “Old Fighters” then processed past crowds along the route taken from the Bürgerbräukeller to the Feldherrnhalle during the 1923 Putsch attempt. They carried the “Blood Flag” with them. This was Nazism’s “most precious relic,” a flag stained by the blood of the Putsch martyrs. Black crepe, honor guards firing, solemn music, wreaths, and other memorial gestures were along the procession’s path. The Feldherrnhalle, where in 1935 the Nazis reinterred the sixteen men who died in the Putsch, became an “altar.” (This is where the plaque Unity saluted gave her mother so much grief a few months earlier.) The failed attempt to take power in 1923 was no longer an embarrassment, it was an “act of redemption.”


325 Roger Griffin, “Staging the Nation’s Rebirth: The Politics and Aesthetics of Performance in the Context of Fascist Studies,” in *Fascism and Theatre: Comparative Studies of the Aesthetics and Politics of*
veneration of the movement’s bizarre warrior-martyrs was typical of the propaganda urging self-sacrifice. Saul Friedländer has gone so far as to call it a sort of Nazi kitsch around death.\footnote{Friedländer, \textit{Nazi Kitsch}.} It implicitly instructed the audience how to be good Nazis, and it offered a strange utopian vision at the same time it offered something morbid. The Feldherrnhalle sat in the “Square of Resurrection.”\footnote{Large, \textit{Munich}, 256-7.} The “years of struggle” were over. The promised Third Reich was supposed to be taking shape. Emilio Gentile associates this millenarian utopia with the “palingenetic myth” Roger Griffin describes as the heart of fascism, and Roger Griffin himself has articulated how fascism “does not try to regiment the masses simply in order to control them. Rather it does so as part of an elaborate attempt to bring about what is conceived as a \textit{positive}, life-asserting, transformation of how they experience reality and their place in history by enabling them to feel spontaneously an integral part of the nation and its ‘higher’ destiny…”\footnote{Emilio Gentile, “The Sacralisation of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religion and Totalitarianism,” in volume 3 of \textit{Fascism: Critical Concepts in Political Science}, eds. Roger Griffin with Matthew Feldman (London: Routledge, 2004), 44-5; Roger Griffin, “Staging the Nation's Rebirth: The Politics and Aesthetics of Performance in the Context of Fascist Studies,” in \textit{Fascism and Theatre: Comparative Studies of the Aesthetics and Politics of Performance in Europe, 1925-1945}, ed. Günter Berghaus (Providence, RI: Berhahn Books, 1996), 16-7. Emphasis= sic} The utopia was here if Germans could just “‘overcome.’”\footnote{George Mosse, “Toward a General Theory of Fascism,” in volume 1 of \textit{Fascism: Critical Concepts in Political Science}, eds. Roger Griffin with Matthew Feldman (London: Routledge, 2004), 162.} To return to pop star David Bowie’s links to fascism, the Nazis seemed to say, “We can be heroes.”

Unity Mitford thrilled at this message of epic struggle, virtue vs. vice, and self-sacrifice for grandiose ideals. As she stood with Diana and Diana’s English maid near the Theatinerkirche watching the ceremony, however, not everyone felt so profoundly
inspired. Diana’s maid startled the two Mitford sisters when she told them Hitler was
“‘quite different from what I thought he would be’”—because “‘he’s got such beautiful
hair.’” Diana (and her maid) returned to Britain not long after the Putsch rally, but
Unity soon had additional visitors. Her father came in late November/ early December
and sat through lunch with a rapt Unity staring at Hitler across the Osteria Bavaria.
While Farve remained skeptical of her fascination, Hitler was an object of intense
political interest across Europe. He tolerated his daughter’s obsession, shrugging it off as
less threatening than the communism that presented a more vocal challenge to the old
order cherished by European aristocrats. Unity Mitford witnessed the Winterhilfswerk
drive for 1934 shortly before she returned to Britain for the holidays. The Nazi party
leaders and citizens of Germany donated food and fuel to the needy in their community at
this time. Pins and other small collectibles rewarded the generous, but Unity saw this as
more of the action for change she admired in fascism.

Unity Mitford spent the 1934 Christmas holidays in Britain, but she was back in
Munich by late January 1935. Tourists were fewer in the Bavarian winter, but with the
small wave that came around Carnival in Munich, Unity Mitford started to take on the
role of hostess and guide for British acquaintances. Her father returned with her in

330 Diana Mitford Mosley, 119.
331 Redesdale MS, 45.
332 For a description of Munich in winter, see Patrick Leigh Fermor's *Time of Gifts*: “I soon found myself
battling down an avenue of enormous width that seemed to stretch to infinity across the draughtiest city
in the world. A triumphal arch loomed mistily through the flakes, drew slowly alongside and faded
away again behind me while the cold bit to the bone…” He reminisces about stumbling blindly through
snow, past monuments to Bavarian kings and large gates and arches, towards the Hofbräuhaus. “I had
expected a different kind of town, more like Nuremberg, perhaps, or Rothenburg. The neo-classical
architecture in this boreal and boisterous weather, the giant boulevards, the unleavened pomp—
everything struck a chill to the heart.” (89-90) S.A. and S.S. troops intimidate this weary and
increasingly drunken traveler, but he finally finds warmth in the beer hall. The Hofbräuhaus provided
warm-hearted drinking companions that remind Patrick Leigh Fermor of ancient taverns of peasants. He
gets quite lost and in some trouble when his identity papers disappear, the British consul in Munich sets
him right, and he flees this surreal combination of past traditions, present cold weather, and futuristic
January for a brief visit. His daughter dragged him to the Osteria Bavaria once again to stare at Hitler. He also met Putzi Hanfstaengl, whom he seems to have liked. Unity sent him home with bags of dirt from the Saar region, an area controlled by France after the Treaty of Versailles ended World War One, but originally part of Germany. At this time, the Saarlanders voted to reunite with Germany in a plebiscite. Street kiosks sold bags of “Saar earth” to bring home a little piece of Germany. The next visitor to interrupt her German studies was a Bright Young Thing and aesthete from Diana’s old Biddesden crowd, author Brian Howard.

Brian Howard was a strange sort of friend for Unity Mitford to have in 1935. He had been one of the most promising minds to graduate Eton, but by the time he reached Oxford, drug and alcohol abuse, internal struggles over his homosexuality, and the weight of expectations started to hinder his efforts at writing. His output as an author was meager. Howard self-destructed by 1958, but in 1935, he was a close friend of the Mitford sisters, Harold Acton, Evelyn Waugh, Sybille Bedford, and Robert Byron. He roamed Europe that winter with a German lover named Toni. (Howard’s romantic affairs with Toni and other lovers were almost certainly no secret to Unity Mitford. Many in her social circle made homosexuality an open secret in those years, and her jokes about Röhm further indicate that she was not totally naïve about homosexuality.) In addition to his homosexuality, Howard always described himself as part Jewish. It was never quite clear where in his family tree this came from, and while his biographer Marie-Jacqueline Lancaster believes this to be truth, Martin Green, in his book *Children of the Sun*, argues

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that this was not the case. Howard self-identified as part Jewish; thus, Unity Mitford would have seen him as such. He was never a likely candidate for Nazi Party membership. Interestingly, there is no indication that this bothered Unity Mitford. It is possible the part of Unity that chafed at social strictures, that loved fascism because of its revolutionary nature, might have found a kindred spirit in a man who specialized in inverting social values. As a close family member put it bluntly, “Well, she loved her oddities. I think we all do, and he was an oddity with knobs on, wasn’t he?”

Unity Mitford made the rounds at Carnival in February with Brian Howard at her side. As a largely Catholic city, Munich held legendary Carnival parties (known as *Fasching*) in the build up to Lenten austerity. The streets had markets, people went about in costume, and countless parties took place in a blend of pagan and Christian tradition. Unity’s letters from 28 January and 7 February 1935 are full of anticipation. She gushed to her mother:

> Fasching will soon start to be really gay. I haven’t been to any actual Fasching balls yet but shall soon start. It gets better and better as time goes on, until on the last night (night before Ash Wednesday) everyone goes quite dotty and bands play in the streets and you dance about in the streets, restaurants etc. in fancy dress and everyone says “Du” to everyone even if they’ve never seen each other before. It is one of the rules. [Note: Ordinarily, Germans would not use the informal address “du” to a stranger unless he or she was a child, as it would be disrespectful.] All the restaurants and night clubs are tremendously and wonderfully decorated, they all spend an enormous amount of money on their decorations. The Regina Hotel for instance, has spent about £300, the Manager told me so. I don’t understand why everyone in the world doesn’t come to Munich for Fasching.

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335 Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, interview with author, October 29, 2008. Note that many argue Howard was the inspiration for Anthony Blanche in Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited*.

336 Letter from 28 Jan 1935, Redesdale MS, 49. grammar= sic. The following letter describes a break in lessons while her German tutor (Fräulein Baum) travels to Berlin, but she details her costume plans: “The shops are full of the most beautiful Fasching stuffs—gold and silver and coloured lames, striped satins and velvets and everything imaginable—all at about 1/- a yard. I am having a lovely Faschings
Charlotte Mosley’s volume of letters between the Mitford sisters reproduces a photo of Unity in the short black velvet dress at the *Ball der Ausländischen Studenten Cherubin* on 8 February. She represents the “Young King,” a familiar figure at Carnival where crowds appoint faux royalty over the madness. She has an ornate gold costume crown on her head and Brian Howard on her arm. He is very dapper in his suit, nonchalantly holding a lit cigarette before several tilted wine bottles. During *Fasching*, there were “…five or six balls each night in the big theatres, hotels, and beer-houses, and they vary from rather expensive stiff, tail-coated functions, on the line of one of our duller charity balls, to cheaper ones of a degree of hilarity which would be quite unknown in the West End. There seems to be only one rule—not to go to bed before it is daylight.” Brian Howard enjoyed the madness, but he continued to wrestle with writing. Self-discipline eluded him. Guilt took its place. That February in Munich, he wrote his mother that as the age of thirty approached he was fearful of reaching that age without having accomplished his goals. He lamented to her, “I stay in three evenings, and then suddenly rush out with Unity (Mitford) to a ball, spend too much, and go through agony the next day. My conscience grows, if anything but my will is so weak. I’m nearly thirty… if I can’t succeed in getting a little Order into my life at such a time as this, it has its dangerous side.”

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Lancaster, 362. Unity had no such qualms. She described going out Saturday, Sunday, and Tuesday
Brian Howard was a witty and fun companion in February 1935, but he had more to worry about than his own conscience. He had visited Munich before and become close friends with the family of Thomas Mann in 1931. Erika Mann especially passionately opposed the Nazis before they even came to power. She acted as “master of ceremonies of the Peppermill satirical cabaret in Munich” at the time.\textsuperscript{340} Brian Howard adopted her views. He subsequently wrote several anti-Hitler articles published in British journals and newspapers such as the \textit{News Chronicle} and the \textit{New Statesman}. He interviewed Putzi Hanfstaengl for the \textit{New Statesman} in 1933. Their candid conversation about art and literature made the foreign press chief look rather ridiculous.\textsuperscript{341} He spoke out in Germany as well. For example, Brian chatted loudly to a German Communist friend in Munich about how he would probably be “‘beaten in to a jelly yet’” for things he wrote about Nazi Germany. The friend had to translate and warn him when nearby stormtroopers suddenly started to pound their table with fists and chant, “‘\textit{Schlagt Sie zu Brei.}’”\textsuperscript{342} (“Beat them to a pulp!”) Eventually, Brian Howard heard from the German embassy in Britain that he should not visit again.\textsuperscript{343} Unity’s German tutor, Fräulein Baum, spread rumours about her pupil’s friend, calling him a Communist and a Jew. Unity never forgave Baum for this and other spiteful gossip, calling her “‘a little worm’” in letters to Diana.\textsuperscript{344} It is not clear how much damage this might have added to Howard’s reputation in Munich. Sybille Bedford claims that Unity Mitford helped to smuggle Brian Howard

\textsuperscript{340} \textit{Green}, 265-7.
\textsuperscript{341} \textit{Lancaster}, 342-6. (\textit{New Statesman} interview reprinted).
\textsuperscript{342} \textit{Lancaster}, 360-1.
\textsuperscript{343} \textit{Green}, 267.
\textsuperscript{344} \textit{J & C Guinness}, 369.
out of Germany dressed as a woman when the Gestapo tried to arrest him, but she gives no date for this.\textsuperscript{345} While Bedford knew Howard well and examined his papers on his death, no other account mentions this. Howard’s own unpublished story of his life describes trying unsuccessfully to persuade Unity to introduce him to Hitler. He wanted to interview the dictator and to ““[try] to convert him to a more reasonable point of view.”“\textsuperscript{346} It is also unclear when this incident took place.

Unity Mitford might actually have been able to introduce Brian Howard to Hitler in February 1935 because that was the month she achieved her great goal. She met Hitler. Unity had continued her daily vigils at the Osteria Bavaria. Eventually, he started to wonder about the six foot tall blonde who regularly sat facing him at his lunches. Unity Mitford later recounted this first meeting on 9 February to her mother. She described his khaki uniform with his party badge and Iron Cross, his swastika arm band, black pants, “hat which he never puts on,” and “a mackintosh, very old and rather grubby.”\textsuperscript{347} Ten minutes after his arrival, he sent the Osteria’s owner, Herr Deutelmöser, to invite Unity to join his party. Julius Schaub, one of Hitler’s adjutants, recollected for a reporter at \textit{Die Revue} in 1950 that Unity Mitford must have attracted the dictator’s attention because her height, hair, and eyes were so close to his ideal of German womanhood, but no one knows for sure why he invited her over to his table.\textsuperscript{348} Unity Mitford’s nationality came

\textsuperscript{346} Lancaster, 4.
\textsuperscript{347} Redesdale MS, 51. (Unity found his insistence on wearing this ratty old coat endearing and mentions it in several other letters home.)
\textsuperscript{348} Lady Redesdale reprints this interview in her memoir- see pages 52-5. Julius Schaub was an early member of the Nazi Party and the S.S., imprisoned after the Putsch of 1923, and acting as Hitler’s second adjutant until ultimately replacing Brückner as first adjutant. He was devoted to Hitler and even destroyed his personal papers before the dictator’s suicide in 1945 (Charles Hamilton, \textit{Leaders and Personalities of the Third Reich: Their Biographies, Portraits, and Autographs}, 1st ed. (San Jose, CA: R.J. Bender Pub., 1984),168).
as a surprise, according to Schaub, and she worked hard to express her admiration for
Hitler and Nazism in German. In his own memoirs, Schaub mentions that Unity often
carried a small German dictionary with her at this time.\textsuperscript{349} She sat with Hitler’s party for
about thirty minutes. He looked at her copy of British \textit{Vogue} magazine, spoke to her of
how England ought never to be at war with Germany again because of “the international
Jews,” and mentioned how much braver English men had been than French men during
the First World War.\textsuperscript{350} He mentioned London’s architecture, films, Wagner’s opera
house, and recent construction outside Nuremberg. Unity told her mother that he gave off
an air of humility that made him easy to talk to and like. Unity Mitford also met the other
guests at his table:

[Hitler] sat at one end, at the other sat Brückner, his adjutant. He had three
adjutants, the second one was Schaub, who belonged to the working class and
whom I liked very much. Dietrich, the Press chief, also sat at this table. He was
very small and he told wonderful jokes in a very silent voice. Bormann was there
too and he was an awful man, I did not like him.\textsuperscript{351}

Her efforts in a foreign language with shaking hands and her passionate “idealism”
intrigued the party as much as her strange nationality.\textsuperscript{352} Hitler autographed a photo and
asked for Unity to write her name down for him on a scrap of paper. This was the first of
many occasions when Unity Mitford would sit with Hitler’s party at the Osteria Bavaria.
After lunch, they would chat over coffee for as long as several hours. Hitler’s other
regular guests at the Osteria Bavaria, photographer Heinrich Hoffmann, Bavarian

\textsuperscript{349} Julius Schaub and Olaf Rose, \textit{Julius Schaub, in Hitlers Schatten: Erinnerungen und Aufzeichnungen des
Chefadjutanten 1925-1945} (Stegen- Ammersee: Druffel & Vowinckel-Verlag, 2005), 204.
\textsuperscript{350} J & C Guinness, 370-1; Redesdale MS, 52, 55.
\textsuperscript{351} Redesdale MS, 51. Her dislike of Bormann is interesting. He was a man few of those around Hitler
liked, and he was one of the most dangerous men in a dangerous crowd. By the end of the war,
Bormann controlled access to Hitler and wielded incredible power.
\textsuperscript{352} \textit{Ibid.}, Schaub interview, 54; J & C Guinness, 370.
Gauleiter Adolf Wagner, Gerdy Troost (widow of Hitler’s favorite architect Paul Troost), and Mercedes company director Jakob Werlin, often joined them. Architect Albert Speer and Propaganda Chief Joseph Goebbels also came some days.

This was Unity’s first introduction to the world of adjutants, assistants, secretaries, party leaders, government officials, and other individuals vying for Hitler’s favor. Because of this one man’s extraordinary power within the Nazi Party and Germany, the social circle described around him in Unity’s letters is like an echo of the court culture around Europe’s old absolute monarchs. Like Louis XIV, Hitler claimed to be the state. Factions schemed to impress him and outmaneuver their rivals. The dictator actively encouraged competition between his underlings, handing out the same assignment to several offices in the government. This “divide and conquer” approach helped solidify his own power, but Hitler remained vulnerable to assistants like Bormann seeking to limit or promote access to him. Unity Mitford navigated these treacherous waters fairly well. Perhaps her own experiences with high society in Britain gave her some knowledge and experience—just as she had realized the powerful man had a mistress by drawing on her aristocratic background. Charismatic politicians were no novelty to the young lady related to Winston Churchill and familiar with Mosley (although Hitler did not learn these things until later). She also used her wits to find Hitler himself rather than relying on the usual conduits to reach him. Unity managed to

353 Schaub reprinted interview, Redesdale MS, 53-4.
354 Note that this does not, in any way, clear Hitler of responsibility for his government’s actions. Some apologists have attempted to argue that Hitler did not even know about the genocide of the Jewish people and others taking place by using this idea of over-active assistants. That was emphatically not the case!! In fact, as Claudia Koonz notes in *Nazi Culture*, Hitler carefully kept public statements on the more violent and “unpopular aspects of his rule” fairly cryptic or spin-doctored. This allowed him to satisfy both radicals and moderates. It intentionally maintained a distance between the constructed image of the dictator and the unsavory reality of Nazism (102, 75).
stay fresh and intriguing to the dictator surrounded by supplicants, and that ability to hold
Hitler’s interest probably kept her in his sights. From the first meeting, her confidence in
approaching Hitler struck Schaub as unusual for a young woman: “With all her
admiration for Hitler the young Lady Mitford is quite clearly of the opinion that she is
more or less his equal, although like everyone else she addresses him as ‘Mein
Führer.’”

Unity Mitford’s relationship with Hitler remained unique. Mary Lovell best
articulates how exceptional it really was: “Can one even imagine Churchill or Roosevelt
behaving like this with a foreign student?” Hitler had a very different background than
the aristocratic Churchill or the wealthy and well-connected Roosevelt, and this probably
contributed to his fascination with Unity Mitford. The Nazi dictator lacked the social and
cultural sophistication of other world leaders. He had seldom left Germany and Austria.
He spoke no languages other than German. Gerwin Strobl’s study, The Germanic Isle:
Nazi Perceptions of Britain, cites the language barrier and “no personal knowledge of
Britain” as “the root of the misconceptions that underlay Nazi policy towards Britain in
all its phases.” Hitler often complained about how untrustworthy he found the
diplomats and intelligence agents, but he had to rely on them to help shape foreign policy
towards countries he barely knew. In the early 1930s, the Nazi party and its leader were
still new to international diplomacy. The völkisch wing of the party advocated close ties
with Britain on racial grounds. For example, party ideologue Rosenberg’s

355 Redesdale MS, Schaub reprinted interview, 55.
356 Lovell, 184.
357 Strobl, 98-9. Strobl analyzes an extensive collection of primary resources for depictions of Britain in
Nazi Germany, including press coverage, literature, theatre, foreign language courses in schools, diaries,
and speeches. (1-2).
358 Gerwin Strobl, The Germanic Isle: Nazi Perceptions of Britain (New York: Cambridge University
Rassenkunde emphasized “the close historical ties between Anglo-Saxon England and northern Germany.” Hitler himself argued that national interest would trump “blood ties” between Germany and Britain, but he wanted to cultivate an alliance based on self-interest. Part of this was because of an admiration for the British he developed during the First World War. Early hatred of the former enemy evolved into praise for their courage. This was not uncommon among Germans more willing to accept defeat (or stalemate, as many clung to the “stab in the back” theory that they had not truly lost the war) at the hands of the valiant, Teutonic British than at the hands of their age-old enemy, the French. Unity Mitford’s discussions with Hitler about British behavior in the trenches echo this. The second part of Hitler’s desire for an alliance with Britain in the early 1930s came from the British Empire. There was a Nazi fascination with the past. Hitler superimposed his visions of race on historical events, and the British Empire suddenly became an example of an Anglo-Saxon hereditary “ambition for territorial expansion” that the Germans shared. Hitler particularly admired a British trait he called “ruthlessness” in pursuing national self-interest. Hitler wanted to emulate this and considered it a good trait in an ally. In pursuit of this goal, he actively relied on British visitors and acquaintances to help develop an impression of British politics and public opinion. This curiosity about Britain and surprise over finding a British citizen so ardently fascist probably encouraged Hitler’s interest in Unity Mitford early in their relationship. While there is no evidence Unity Mitford ever directly impacted Nazi
foreign policy towards Britain, she hoped for an alliance between her own country and Germany, so she was just as interested as Hitler in discussing Britain and Germany’s similarities and differences.

Unity Mitford’s social status must have initially reinforced Hitler’s attention. Early in the Nazi Party’s development, party leaders learned that, beyond the funds they provided, aristocrats and other social elites had extensive international kinship networks.\footnote{Jonathan Petropoulos, \textit{Royals and the Reich: The Princes von Hessen in Nazi Germany} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 123.} Family ties that crossed borders could mean valuable sources of information or political contacts for their participants. German royals had an especially strong tradition of intermarrying with their British counterparts, and the two nations’ elites had a history of British nannies training German children, British girls finishing their education in Germany, and outdoor sports at country estates as a key component of aristocratic socializing.\footnote{Sinclair, 36.} Besides, these links to the British aristocracy remained an object of fascination on the continent because it retained more political power than the aristocracy in Germany, Austria, or France. No revolutions rocked the British peerage as they did the continent’s old titled families.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 116-7, 89-90, 101; Montagu, 25-7, 169-172. Note that the First World War had been especially damaging for the German aristocracy (Sinclair, 45).} Part of this is arguably because the British nobles proved more willing to make small compromises. Many Nazis believed the British men in the House of Lords held more political power than they did, and some might have seen Unity Mitford as a way to influence her father and other peers of the realm. In Nazi memoirs and documents, Unity often appears as “Lady Mitford.” She was not “Lady Mitford” but “the Honorable Unity Mitford.” This exaggeration of her title stresses the importance
some of her German acquaintances placed on her status. Unity Mitford had no direct
access to political power. Her father was only a minor peer, and while he came to express
sympathy for the movement’s authoritarian style and signs of economic recovery, he
remained more committed to British interests than those of another country. Unity
Mitford relied instead on traditions of informal social networking by aristocratic women
to further her political cause. As their relationship progressed, the limits to Unity
Mitford’s utility would emerge, but her bond with Hitler would continue to grow.

Unity’s letters home in these early days of getting to know Hitler ooze enthusiasm
and excitement. Other guests at the Osteria Bavaria and waitresses congratulated her on
her good fortune.368 She became something of a local celebrity, “quite well known in
Munich as ‘the only person Hitler ever invited to his table without knowing them.’”369
Unity told all her acquaintances about how “lucky” she had been. She raved to her
parents, “I am the luckiest and happiest person in the world,” “I am so lucky to live in the
same century as he. To have seen him is the height of happiness— but to have sat by him
at his own request is so wonderful that there aren’t any words for it,” and “I am trying to
find some sort of job out here, so I can stay here for ever [sic], because I couldn’t live
anywhere else now, I should wither like a fish out of water. Here I swim in happiness.”370
While they were only impressed that Hitler had been entertained by her German middle
name given on the outbreak of war and the family connection to Houston Stewart
Chamberlain through Unity’s grandfather, Unity’s parents saw this as girlish enthusiasm
for a sort of celebrity. This enthusiasm was less rare for a German than it was for an

368  Redesdale MS, 56; J & C Guinness, 371.
369  Redesdale MS, 56.
English individual. There are examples of German adults of both genders gushing about Hitler in ways that would have done Unity Mitford proud. A public language of adulation like the one Unity adopted seemed to be in vogue among Nazi admirers.\textsuperscript{371} Public declarations of love and esteem referring to Hitler as somehow heaven-sent took place at party rallies. Adult men made these statements so it was not just Unity Mitford’s age or gender that provoked her response, although these may have been contributing factors.

Unity Mitford’s meeting with Hitler seems to have quickly bolstered her nerve and commitment to Nazism. She wrote of small ways she wished to become a more devoted follower: “I am going to start going to all the Wagner operas which come here, it will be the first thing I have ever really suffered for the sake of the Führer. But I hope that when I get to know them I will like them.”\textsuperscript{372} Unity is teasing a little, but the very phrase “suffering for the sake of the Führer” is telling. This was personalizing the message of self-sacrifice and the myth of Hitler as a suffering savior of the German Volk, if not very seriously at this point. In the same letter, Unity described running to jump on the train to Salzburg as it left the station in Munich. The speed of the train, her heavy bag, and a near hit with a lamp post made most passengers on the train yell out in concern, but the daredevil style characteristic of her debutante pranks shrugs this off as she related it to her mother.\textsuperscript{373} The same rebellious streak surfaces when she talked about writing “Heil Hitler” on the anti-Hitler posters put up by the Dollfus regime in Salzburg and being

\textsuperscript{371} Jonathan Petropoulos, \textit{The Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 223. One of the most interesting examples is in a letter by sculptor Arno Breker. This artist was not particularly political and only grew to endorse Nazism four years or so after the regime came to power. Commissions, propaganda, and personal meetings with party members changed his tune until in 1938 he wrote an architect correspondent, “‘Thank God I had the luck again recently to see and to speak with the Führer.’”

\textsuperscript{372} Letter from 16 Feb 1935, Redesdale MS, 57.

\textsuperscript{373} \textit{Ibid.}
forced to remove her swastika pin at the Austrian border. Her tone subtly changed, however, when she discussed bribing her tour guide to take her to see Austrian Nazis imprisoned in the city’s castle: “We managed, by heavily tipping our guide, to get a glimpse of the poor National Socialist heroes languishing there for their Cause. When the soldiers weren’t looking I turned up the lapel of my coat and showed them my badge underneath and they gave the Hitler salute but of course they couldn’t say anything. I longed to give them my lunch, they looked so hungry.”

Unity is still rebellious, but she clearly sees her rebellion as more than tweaking noses. This idea of rebelling for a cause becomes more and more prevalent in her descriptions of her actions. She is starting to look for ways of acting more directly to support the Nazi movement. As a close family member described Unity:

She might just as well have gone into the Girl Guides and made a huge success of that and been the head of it in the end. She was that sort of person. She was completely taken up with what she was doing.... But she didn't. She did this other thing instead… She was so loyal and honest…She wouldn't budge if she thought something was right. Nothing in the world would have moved her… Where you and I might have stopped, she'd have gone on. As Charlotte [Mosley] said, she was fearless and would get one thing in her sight, and she'd have just gone on.

In March, Unity Mitford was able to share her fascist fascination with her sister Diana once again. In letters home to her sister and parents, she had tried to describe Hitler’s impact, but she seemed unable to settle on a description. “When one sits beside him it’s like sitting beside the sun, he gives out rays or something,” she enthused.

Unity tried again later, “If only you and Muv could have heard him talk of world politics, of the League of Nations, of his own experiences. It was like a most beautiful speech, and yet he always wanted to hear what I had to say. He explains everything so clearly, and he

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Ibid.

Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, interview with author, October 29, 2008.

speaks a lot in analogies." She glowed over his praise of her German and Werlin’s compliment that Hitler seemed particularly inspired by her presence. When Diana drove over from Paris, Unity could finally share these experiences with another family member instead of worrying how the letters paled in comparison to the reality. On 11 March, she introduced her to Hitler at the Osteria Bavaria. They talked for some time and received an invitation to come to the Wagner festival at Bayreuth the following year. Diana recalled in her memoirs how Hitler only came to the luncheons at the restaurant when he felt relaxed (otherwise preferring to eat at home). She also describes being bored by his talk of car engines, interested in the news tidbits he expounded upon after press sheets came from Dietrich, and intrigued by his knowledge of architecture in cities he had not visited. As Germany rearmed, prepared an air force, and started to set up conscription in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles, Diana took Unity back with her to Paris, where they played with Diana’s two young sons and visited Brancusi’s studio. Unity loved the sculptures. She and the artist agreed on the representations exactly, according to Diana. Unity’s willingness to accept modern art like Brancusi’s egg-like sculptures demonstrates her abiding interest in art. (Several Third Reich memoirs by adjutants that mention Unity mistakenly recall her as an art history student.) Art and architecture were the subject of many conversations she shared with Hitler, although the dictator famously loathed abstract modern art. Walter Benjamin famously labeled fascism an “aestheticization of politics.” This fixation with aesthetics certainly marked Hitler’s German fascism, and mutual interest in art strengthened the bond between Unity Mitford and Hitler even as it

377 Ibid.
378 J & C Guinness, 376.
379 Diana Mitford Mosley, 122-4.
380 Ibid., 125.
had helped forge it at the very first Nuremberg Parteitag which captivated Unity’s attention.

April brought additional visitors to Munich. One afternoon Hitler invited Unity Mitford to a luncheon at his Munich flat. He thought she might find the conversation interesting. This turned out to be the first of two occasions Hitler met Sir Oswald Mosley. Mosley wrote in his memoirs, “Hitler had solemnly introduced me to Unity Mitford at the luncheon he gave me in April 1935, as he was unaware that we knew each other…” Mosley came to Germany at a time when two factions were starting to emerge in the B.U.F. One faction interested in more paramilitary drills and discipline competed with another that emphasized the need for propaganda. The latter included men like A.K. Chesterton (a virulent anti-Semite), John Beckett (a lingerer from the New Party days), and William Joyce (the future “Lord Haw-Haw” who would broadcast pro-German propaganda into England from Germany during the Second World War). Despite these powerful personalities, the more paramilitary faction won,
according to Beckett’s biography. Increasing pressure from a British government and dramatic international events probably had more to do with the radicalization of the B.U.F. in this direction, but the movement’s membership was in flux. Shifts in membership defined B.U.F. membership in some ways, according to historian Richard Thurlow.\textsuperscript{384} The movement was always both bigger and smaller than it seemed in that its members often came and went. This transient membership and the continued power of the “traditional, conservative right” in Britain made finding political space for fascism to flourish in the country difficult.\textsuperscript{385} Mosley probably looked to outside examples for a certain amount of guidance in building his movement. He already received funding from Mussolini.\textsuperscript{386} Perhaps Mosley was eager for such support from Hitler.

The two men shared a private discussion before the lunch. During this time, they agreed that Britain and Germany should never go to war again. They were both veterans of World War One, and Hitler seemed “exhausted” until this topic of avoiding war with Britain arose.\textsuperscript{387} Both wanted their respective nations to have strong empires, but in 1935, they saw no reason these wishes might be incompatible. Both admired the other nation’s strength too much to want to risk conflict with it. Mosley used the metaphor of two boxers too equally matched to quit fighting to describe any conflict between Germany and Britain.\textsuperscript{388} Interestingly, Mosley described Hitler as much less pompous than Mussolini had been during the B.U.F. leader’s visit to Italy: “He was simple, and treated me throughout the occasion with a gentle, almost feminine charm….He seemed to me a

\textsuperscript{384} Thurlow, Fascism in Britain.
\textsuperscript{387} Sir Oswald Mosley, My Life, 365.
\textsuperscript{388} Ibid.
calm, cool customer, certainly ruthless, but in no way neurotic.” Hitler used an interpreter with Mosley. Neither man spoke the other’s language, but the lunch seemed to go smoothly. Most of the other guests were fluent in German and English so that conversation could keep moving. Unity was there with Winifred Wagner, Richard Wagner’s British daughter-in-law who ran the opera house at Bayreuth after Siegfried Wagner’s death. Hitler encouraged the two women to meet again at the next Bayreuth festival. Winifred, however, “took a critical view of this over-excited girl, but had a high regard for her grandfather… who had translated Chamberlain’s works into English, and had known Siegfried well.” Part of this criticism might have been because Unity Mitford discussed politics without hesitation in Hitler’s presence. This was fairly taboo for most of the others in his social circle. Hitler himself generally refused to discuss such matters with women, and Winifred Wagner considered herself a personal friend and distanced herself from direct mention of political issues. Other guests for light-hearted bilingual conversation included Ribbentrop (the event’s organizer), Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, and “the Kaiser’s daughter Duchess Viktoria Luise of Brunswick with her daughter Friederike (later to become Queen of Greece).” Unfortunately, no record exists of Unity Mitford’s impression of her luncheon companions on this date.

Unity Mitford did, however, leave a slightly disgruntled record of a meeting with Hitler that took place soon after the luncheon with Mosley. Muv and her friend, Cecily Fenwick, visited Munich in late April 1935. Unity took them to a beer hall with

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389 Ibid., 365-6; Nicholas Mosley, Beyond the Pale, 334-5.
392 Hamann, 240. Parentheses=sic.
traditional Bavarian dances and snuck out to the Osteria one afternoon. Unity sat with
Hitler, his chief personal adjutant Wilhelm Brückner, and Gauleiter Albert Forster. At
this time, Danzig was in the corridor under Polish control, but Nazi plans to seize this
port and the corridor were already under way. Forster was the prematurely appointed
Gauleiter, or regional leader, of this area not yet incorporated into the Third Reich. He
was instrumental in the planning of the invasion of this area and responsible for heinous
atrocities against Polish citizens. Brückner had become a familiar personality for Unity
Mitford, but Forster was a new acquaintance that 23 April. Unity wrote to Diana that he
was “very nice” and issued an invitation for her to visit Danzig. Interestingly, she does
not mention anything about the controversy around any visit to Danzig, of which she
would have been well aware. (This is unusual because often topics like this elicit strong
statements of support for Nazi Germany’s belligerent position.) Instead, Unity is too cross
and eager to relate her next meeting with Hitler.

Two days after she met Forster, Unity Mitford accepted an invitation to tea at the
Carlton with Hitler. She brought her mother to meet the dictator for the first time. Unity
despaired to Diana over her mother’s attitude: “I fear the whole thing was wasted on
Muv… She still says things like ‘Well I’m sure he is very good for Germany, but’ and
then she enumerates the things she disapproves of. The most she will admit is that he has
a very nice face.” This was not the reaction Unity wanted for her idol. She also moaned

394 Hamilton (Regarding personalities of third reich), 140-1. Brückner had been an adjutant from 1930
and chief personal adjutant since early 1934. Hitler dismissed him in 1940 over a disagreement about
the behavior of several young SS officers including Max Wüsche during the Italian Crown Prince’s visit
to Obersalzburg.
395 Hamilton, 272. Note that Danzig is today called Gdansk.
397 Ibid., 54-6. Italics= sic.
about her need to play translator between Hitler and her mother, “[A]s you can imagine it was very embarrassing as no-one could think of anything to say… Of course it was bound to be embarrassing with Muv, as she can’t speak German, that is always rather a wet blanket. Whenever I translated anything for either of them it always sounded stupid translated.”

Unity felt relieved that her mother excused herself after an hour and left. One positive aspect of the meeting, however, was introducing her parent to Mercedes director Jakob Werlin. When he visited London later, Unity’s father and mother took him to tea at the House of Lords. The grandeur there very much impressed him so that he kept repeating, “England ist ewig” (England is everlasting).
Chapter Four

*Breakfast at Tiffany's*:

After that, marriage and divorce sustained [Rusty Trawler’s] place in the tabloid-sun. His first wife had taken herself, and her alimony, to a rival of Father Divine’s. The second wife seems unaccounted for, but the third had sued him in New York State with a full satchel of the kind of testimony that entails. He himself divorced the last Mrs. Trawler, his principal complaint stating that she’d started a mutiny aboard his yacht, said mutiny resulting in his being deposited on the Dry Tortugas. Though he’d been a bachelor since, apparently before the war he’d proposed to Unity Mitford, at least he was supposed to have sent her a cable offering to marry her if Hitler didn’t. This was said to be the reason Winchell always referred to him as a Nazi; that, and the fact that he attended rallies in Yorkville.  

After meeting Hitler in early 1935, Unity Mitford's self-perception shifted. She began to see herself as someone with real potential to have a political impact. She appointed herself a sort of informal ambassadress for Britain in Germany and for Germany in Britain. As her relationship with Hitler grew, so did the amount of press coverage she gathered. While this made her uncomfortable at first, she eventually seemed eager to use it to achieve her political goal of an alliance between Germany and Britain.

Throughout the spring of 1935, Unity would go out in the evenings with young men or groups of friends. Such behavior was fairly common among English girls visiting Munich. They frequently fell for the S.S. men in their black uniforms and shiny boots.  

In an interview, Mrs. Margaret Budd remembered how one evening out with such an officer led to a visit from the Gestapo. She had been overheard bragging about British

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401 Interview with Sir Eric Phipps' widow, Pryce-Jones, 128. Phipps was the British ambassador for a time. His wife recalled to Pryce-Jones: “‘[T]hese sloppy English girls were always having affairs with dreadful SS types, and Eric had the trouble of clearing it up. If you were at all snobbish you asked the ambassador for help.’” She differentiates Unity from the norm, however: “‘Anyhow Unity came [to the embassy for lunch] as a Deutsches Mädchen battleship of a woman, walking upstairs into the drawing room, and gave a Nazi salute.’”
airplanes while slightly tipsy, and when they searched her room, a list of S.S. men with symbols next to some of the names turned up. With great reluctance, Mrs. Budd finally explained to the two men in trench coats: “I’d written down the names of the various young men I liked. And by the ones I liked—there were only about six there—by the ones I really liked, I’d put a tic.”\footnote{Mrs. Margaret Budd, interview with author, November 6, 2008.} The officers left soon after, rolling their eyes at the antics of a seventeen-year-old girl. Similarly, Unity Mitford went out occasionally with Julius Stadelmann, Hitler’s junior adjutant.\footnote{Charlotte Mosley, \textit{The Mitfords}, 56.} There is no indication that relationship was ever romantic, but she did acquire a steady boyfriend as the year progressed. This was Erik Widemann, a young man who split his time between working in a photography shop and in the S.S. The relationship between Erik and Unity had started to develop during the Carnival parties. Part of Fräulein Baum’s gossip which had so infuriated Unity that past February had been that Unity was having “a ‘real affair’” with Erik.\footnote{Sophia Murphy, 83; J & C Guinness, 369. Note that Erik’s name is sometimes spelled “Erich.” According to Jonathan and Catherine Guinness, this is because the latter is a more common German spelling of the name.} Erik was less a terribly romantic encounter than a close friend by all accounts. He cared for Unity during an illness in October 1935, and he politely met her sisters Pam and Decca in June.\footnote{J & C Guinness, 380, 347.}

Michael (“Mickey”) Burn’s recollections of Erik in his memoirs make him seem almost placid. After Burn lost his temper at Erik over some comments about Britain and “overturned the coffee-tray into his lap,” Erik only shrugged it off saying, “‘Bei Engländern ist alles möglich.’ (Anything’s possible with the English).”\footnote{Michael Burn, \textit{Turned Toward the Sun: An Autobiography} (Norwich: Michael Russell Publishing, 2003), 78-9.} The German ex-husband of Unity’s close friend Mary Woodisse, a man identified only by his

\textit{Note:}
nickname “Das Kind” in Pryce-Jones’ book, described Erik as “motionless and silent, an outline of a man, most probably with a watching brief.” While there were individuals keeping an eye and ear on Unity Mitford, it is unlikely Erik was one of them. An “Erich Widmann” matching the description of a young man working in photography and the S.S. appears in the RSHA (Reichssicherheitshauptamt or Reich Main Security Office) files held at the National Records and Archive Administration in Washington, D.C. He was three years older than Unity Mitford, an S.S. member since October 1933, and indistinguishable in the grainy microfilm pictures from the man in photos with Unity in Sophia Murphy’s Mitford Family Album. Instead of eventually ending his relationship with Unity because of any spy brief ending, it seems he and Unity just found other people. The file describes a move to Nuremberg and his relationship since 1937 or 1938 with a young woman named Emmy Anders, whom Widmann was applying to marry. (S.S. members had to apply to marry through RSHA with family trees of both parties and elaborate paperwork so that their families might be kept “racially pure.”) Erik’s role in Unity Mitford’s life seems to have been that of a regular escort not easily intimidated by her growing notoriety.

Unity left her hectic social life in Munich so that she could return to Britain for King George V’s Silver Jubilee. The festivities took place across the country. Black and white photographs show parties in the streets across Britain with the flag draped across narrow streets. Unity enjoyed the pomp and pageantry of the main events. London was covered in decorations as the King, the Queen, troops, and representatives of the Empire

407 Pryce-Jones, 297.
408 Erik Widmann (Frame 0116), Captured German War Documents: RuSHA (Rasse- und Sidelunshauptamt) Erbgesundheitsgogen Rolls 65 001-G5542, 038-0062-0099, National Records and Archive Administration, College Park, Maryland.
made up an elaborate procession on 6 May 1935. The Archbishop of Canterbury gave a long sermon about the King’s steadfast presence in the midst of the twenty-five turbulent years that had thus far made up his reign, and a grand State Ball saw Unity Mitford in attendance. Unity may have been back in Munich as early as 9 May for a lunch in Hitler’s flat with B.U.F. member Captain Robert Gordon-Canning. Gordon-Canning was there to act as a representative for Mosley with a request for funds that eventually came through Albert Rosenberg (the viciously racist chief Nazi ideologue) and “officials of the Nazi Party Foreign Department.” It is unclear how much of a role Unity had in petitioning Hitler for B.U.F. funding, but considering she usually hesitated to ask favors for fear of displeasing him, money matters probably did not come up over lunch.

While she avoided asking for favors, Unity Mitford did use her connection to Hitler when she had an encounter with the German police that spring. The German government had granted Unity Mitford status similar to an exchange student on a foreign study permit in October 1934. She received this because she was taking the German for Foreigners course at the university at the time, but in April and May 1935, Unity Mitford lost her passport in England with her student information. It became clear as letters flew between the university and the Bayerische Politische Polizei (Bavarian Political Police) in Munich that Unity Mitford had not attended classes at the school for some time.

Officials considered removing her student status. A document in the Hauptstaatsarchiv

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409 Redesdale MS, 63. Additional information verified by Burke’s Peerage entry for George V online and the Canadian Heritage Trust’s website.
411 Mediekarte von Unity Mitford: EWK 65/M 457, Stadtarchiv der Stadt München. Also, note that in June of the same year Unity Mitford lost her passport. Her 2 July 1935 application for a new one exists in her Home Office security file at the National Archives in Kew (KV2/882/211314). She requested a new passport for the purpose of “touring” in “all the countries of Europe,” but few other details of note appear in the application. (Security Service Personal Files Series, KV2/882/211314).
shows that Unity Mitford required five summons to finally arrive at the police station to explain herself. She argued that did not attend the courses because they were useless. She explained that she was an ardent fascist, socialized with S.S. troopers and Hitler, and hoped to find work soon in Germany. The initial police documents sound disapproving. One suggests this is a deliberate scam to maintain cheap student housing at the dormitory where Unity lived (the ‘Heim). A letter from the Akademie zur Wissenschaftlichen Erforschung und zur Pflege des Deutschtums within the Deutsche Akademie at the university admits that Unity Mitford pays the fees not to study, but it crossly refutes her charge that the courses are “badly led.” It also confirms statements Unity made to police about her political sympathies. In mid-summer, the police decided Unity Mitford could remain as a resident in part because of these views and her illustrious connections. Police notes explaining her resident permit provide an interesting assessment of Unity at this time. They conclude that no evidence exists suggesting she is a spy and agree she is a dedicated fascist who has met with Hitler (using a signed photograph her dorm-mates had seen as proof). Interestingly, the same explanation briefly mentions that nothing suspicious took place despite her association with Brian Howard, an interesting confirmation that Nazi authorities were indeed interested in him. It also lauds her collecting for charity during the past Winterhilfswerk. An interview with the Münchner Zeitung that June completes the case file. These twelve pages from the Bavarian police indicate Unity Mitford’s reputation as a fascist, as someone rules could bend for, had grown significantly since her first meeting with Hitler in February. They also demonstrate the power political action and even rumor had on even bureaucratic regulations.

412 Newspaper clipping reproduced in Vertrauliche Anfrage der Polizeidirektion München vom 2 Mai 1935 (Pol.-Dir. München 10 117), Bayerische Hauptstaatsarchiv, München.
If bureaucrats, university administrators, and police personnel had heard of Unity Mitford’s association with Hitler in spring of 1935, they were not the only ones. Eva Braun, Hitler’s mistress had also heard of her. Unity often used her middle name (“Valkyrie”, occasionally the German spelling--Walküre) with her first name because it amused her Nazi friends to associate it with a British woman. Wagner’s operas were popular with Hitler and thus with most of his followers. Unity is almost certainly the “Walküre” upsetting Eva Braun in her 10 May 1935 diary entry reproduced in Nerin Gun’s biography:

Mr. Hoffmann lovingly and as tactlessly informs me that he has found a replacement for me. She is known as the Walküre and looks the part. Including her legs. But these are the dimensions he prefers. If this is true, though, he will soon make her lose thirty pounds, through worry, unless she has gift for growing fat in adversity like Charly.\footnote{Nerin Gun, \textit{Hitler’s Mistress: Eva Braun} (New York: Meredith Press, 1968; Bantam Books, 1969), 73-4. Gun acquired special access from the Braun family to journals and interviews that gave her a unique perspective on Eva.}

This was still early in Eva Braun’s relationship with Hitler. His level of commitment to the relationship was yet not as apparent as it became within a few months of this entry. Eva Braun had met Hitler around 1929 through his photographer, the Heinrich Hoffmann mentioned above, and the secrecy around her relationship with Hitler probably contributed to the sense of insecurity evident in the diary entry.\footnote{De Courcy, \textit{Diana Mosley}, 141.} As previously mentioned, Unity Mitford knew of her existence almost by chance after Nuremberg 1934, but Eva Braun was probably unaware of that. As time passed, Hitler would spend more and more time at his alpine retreat, expanding it and simultaneously creating a small realm where Braun could act with more freedom as a sort of chatelaine.\footnote{Petropoulos, \textit{Royals and the Reich}, 101.}
spent little time in Braun’s mountain domain, but in 1935, Eva Braun still lived primarily in Munich, where she had greater access to the rumors that plagued her. Nerin Gun stresses her jealousy. Hitler Youth (Hitler Jugend) leader Baldur von Schirach states the same thing in his memoir. Hitler’s close friendship with Winifred Wagner led to rumors that pair might marry. Similar rumors surrounded Unity Mitford from time to time. A match between the matriarch of Bayreuth with her associations with the völkisch culture of Wagner fans and Hitler was as unlikely as a marriage with the young daughter of a British peer. Wagner was originally British like Unity, and no ultra-nationalist politician would risk a foreign bride for diplomacy or affection. Hitler’s carefully constructed image of the lone knight would not have easily accommodated any public relationship, but one with a non-German was unthinkable.

The fears surrounding her own appearance might have been especially difficult for Eva Braun when she thought of Unity Mitford as a rival for Hitler’s affection. English descriptions of Unity in the 1930s make digs at her weight and height. Even family sources tease or hint that Unity was larger than her sisters, but the Germans, particularly in the Nazi hierarchy, describe her instead as the embodiment of German womanhood. Her height and figure suggested health; her blonde hair and blue eyes suggested Nordic racial purity. Unity was the Nazi physical ideal. After an interview with the Osteria Bavaria owner’s daughter and a former waitress there who later worked at the Berchtesgaden, Nerin Gun alleges Hitler raved about Unity’s skin, “‘Only English girls

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416 Baldur von Schirach, J’ai cru en Hitler, translated by Richard Denturck, French ed. (Paris: Druck- und Verlagshaus gruner & Jahr GmbH, 1967; Librairie Plon, 1968), 197. Note that von Schirach became Heinrich Hoffmann’s son-in-law so while memoirs always require the reader to remember they are essentially subjective memories designed to convince their audience of the author’s point of view about his or her life and actions, von Schirach may have known more about Braun than he would have otherwise.
have such complexions; it must be the English rain, the walks in the English rain that produce this skin.”

Eva Braun attempted suicide in late May 1935. Her diary from 10 May had stated she would confront Hitler about rumors of the Walküre in June. Another from 28 May mentioned sending a “decisive letter” about Hitler’s neglect of her: “I’m afraid there’s something else behind it all. I’ve done nothing wrong. Absolutely nothing. Perhaps another woman, not the Walküre girl, that would be really rather unlikely, but there are so many others.”

The letter had included a deadline for Hitler to contact Braun. The deadline passed without word. Eva Braun responded by taking twenty-four Phanodorm sleeping pills. Hitler had been so traumatized after the 1931 suicide of his niece Geli Raubel, that he had given up meat. He was so profoundly affected that many biographers speculate this niece was the love of his life. Whether or not she was aware of this, Eva Braun’s suicide threat shook the dictator as few other things could. Hitler provided Braun with her own apartment, where she lived with her sister and a maid in August 1935. This is just at the time Hitler’s friendship with Unity was growing, but the two women filled very different roles in his life. The most recent biography of Eva Braun has challenged more traditional depictions of Hitler’s mistress like the one detailed in Nerin Gun’s book. Heike Görtemaker represents Braun as much less naïve and much more interested in Nazi ideology than previous accounts ever had. Her diary shows her insecurities, but a diary is often a sort of confidante designed for recording such things.

There are so few contemporary press reports and few impressions of Braun from people...
other than family and the small handful of Nazi leaders to survive the fall of the Third Reich. Eva Braun remains an elusive figure that could correspond to Gun’s image, Görtemaker’s image, or both. Most personal details of her relationship with Hitler will remain unknown, but evidence suggests that she certainly had little to fear from Unity Mitford as any potential rival.

Unity Mitford’s relationship with Hitler was very different from his relationship with Eva Braun. The sheer number of meetings they had suggests they were close. Unity Mitford’s diary recorded 140 meetings between them during 1935-1939, “an average of about once every ten days, remarkable when one considers what Hitler’s schedule must have been in the four years leading up to the war.” The early interest in Britain and British aristocrats that drew the dictator to Unity may have endured, but a strange friendship developed as well. Unity had met many prominent politicians and social elites back in Britain. Her social class ensured she was comfortable with important figures, and her personality meant she was never stiffly awkward or stuffy. She had a confidence others in Hitler’s circle lacked that stemmed from this. Unity simply enjoyed close interaction with her hero, acting as she would have with her sisters or good friends, and Hitler probably enjoyed her irreverence. Constant deferential behavior and an absence of warmth in other relationships probably made Unity’s friendship special. Diana noted:

...most of the women he met were desperately shy and over-awed in his company. There were exceptions like Frau Wagner and Magda Goebbels, but anyone meeting him for the first time after he became the Führer of Germany hardly spoke in his presence except to say ‘Ja, mein Führer’ or ‘Eben, mein Führer’ or ‘Selbstverständlich, mein Führer’, as the case might be. Unity was never awed in her entire life. She said what came into her head.

422 Lovell, 183-4.
423 Diana Mitford Mosley, 153. Italics mine
Hitler’s mistress was shy and seldom overtly political because Hitler disapproved of highly political women, but Unity Mitford brought up even the taboo topics again and again. Speer’s memoirs note that Unity was the only one to discuss politics so persistently.\textsuperscript{424} She also made jokes others would not dare. Diana recalled:

> Once there was some talk about clerics and [Unity] asked [Hitler]: ‘Have you been excommunicated?’ The Umgebung [translates as “people around them’] looked startled, but Hitler laughed. ‘Excommunicated? Never! Why, if I were to go into the Frauenkirche this minute the whole place would soon be black with priests come to greet me.’ ‘Don’t go then,’ said Unity.\textsuperscript{425}

Hitler gave impersonations for close acquaintances at Bayreuth and his apartment. On one occasion, Winifred Wagner’s daughter described him imitating the stumbling gait and falsetto voice of a diplomat who visited him.\textsuperscript{426} Diana told Mosley of Hitler miming his way of rolling cigarettes in his starving artist days. “On another occasion he imitated Mussolini being presented with a sword by the Arabs, flashing it out of the scabbard and brandishing it to heaven; then he said, ‘I’m no good at all that, I would just say to my adjutant, “Here, Schaub, hang on to this’’.\textsuperscript{427} Laughing at a dictator could be a dangerous business, even as he laughed at himself. Few Germans had as little to lose as Unity Mitford did if the joke soured, and whatever the consequences, Unity loved taking risks.

In spring 1935, the press attention towards Unity Mitford started. The \textit{Sunday Express} published a brief article tucked on page seventeen on 28 May. Under a large photo and the title “She Adores Hitler: Daughter of a British Peer,” the paper’s Munich

\textsuperscript{424} Speer, \textit{Inside the Third Reich/ Memoirs}, 40.
\textsuperscript{425} Diana Mitford Mosley, 153-4.
\textsuperscript{426} Friedelind Wagner, 118.
\textsuperscript{427} Mosley, \textit{My Life}, 367.
correspondent wrote about Unity Mitford’s “Nordic” good looks, her peerage, and her acquaintance with Hitler. The article contained less than a dozen sentences, but it mentioned Unity Mitford praising Hitler, “The hours I have spent in his company are some of the most impressive in my life. The entire German nation is lucky to have such a great personality at its head.” The correspondent also quoted Unity saying, “I should like to remain in Germany because I like the Germans very much, but my parents will not allow it.”

This was Unity Mitford’s first interview with the press in any country. Her parents were quite upset at the attention their daughter drew, but she wrote a defensive letter home on 29 May: “I hope that neither you nor anyone else supposes for a moment that I gave such an interview about the Führer. I would rather die than do such a thing, it would be terribly unfair to him.”

She described the interview quite differently than the visit to the ‘Heim depicted in the tiny article. Instead, Unity wrote, “A German journalist rang up and said, could he have an interview about Fascism and I said Yes. Quite at the end of the interview he said ‘You know Hitler don’t you’ and I said Yes. He said was I enthusiastic about him but I said I wasn’t going to say anything about the Führer. And now that bloody Beaverbrook goes and publishes a thing like that on his middle page.”

She fretted that Hitler had started to seem more remote since the article’s publishing. She also told her parents she was eager to speak with Dietrich (Hitler’s press chief) to explain “Beaverbrook’s spiteful little action” and reassure him she was not so disloyal. Lord Beaverbrook, owner of the Sunday Express, was a powerful press baron, and his papers (including the “World’s Largest Daily Sale”—aka. the Daily Express—and the Evening

429 Redesdale MS, 63-4.
430 Ibid.
431 Ibid., 64.
Standard) favored isolation.\textsuperscript{432} According to a study by Franklin Gannon, Beaverbrook’s papers drew readers across all economic levels, but especially the “next to the lowest [income] group.”\textsuperscript{433} In the 1930s, the style of tabloid journalism already popular in cities like New York started to reach London.\textsuperscript{434} Printed media already held a particularly central role in highly-literate British society. By 1938, there would be “52 morning, 85 evening, and 18 Sunday newspapers published in Great Britain of which 20, 3, and 10 respectively were published in London.”\textsuperscript{435} Printing was a lucrative and competitive industry when “in 1934 every 100 families bought 95 morning and 57 \(\frac{1}{2}\) evening newspapers every day, and 130 Sunday newspapers every week.”\textsuperscript{436} Entertainment sold papers. With the gradual decline in the nobility’s political power, journalists increasingly considered aristocrats’ private lives fair game in a more overt way than they had before the First World War. Certainly, aristocrats still maintained enough power and wealth to fascinate newspaper readers of the 1930s. There was still “‘an eclectic brilliance about it, a merging of Baroque décor with Victorian charm that was fascinating’” at events like “the Duke of Kent’s wedding in 1934, the Silver Jubilee and the Coronation,.. the London season,…the royal garden parties, Covent Garden, first nights at the theatre or the ballet, opera at Glyndebourne, the private view at the Royal Academy, the races at Ascot or Goodwood,” all of which were “occasions for display.”\textsuperscript{437} In an interview describing the decreasing privacy of aristocratic life in 1932, Lady Angela St. Clair Erskine remarked on the transition taking place around her:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{432} Gannon, 34-7.
\item \textsuperscript{433} Ibid., 34.
\item \textsuperscript{434} Horrie, 46. The \textit{Daily Mirror} (as of September 1934) especially contributed to this trend.
\item \textsuperscript{435} Gannon, 1-2. Numerals= sic
\item \textsuperscript{436} Ibid., 1-2. Numerals= sic; notes that this is across class barriers.
\item \textsuperscript{437} Charles Loch Mowat, \textit{Britain Between the Wars, 1918-1940} (London: Methuen 1956), 521-2.
\end{itemize}
‘The real difference between then and now is that our one endeavour was to keep our deeds, whether good or bad, from the public. Young people call us hypocrites. We merely had no advertising sense, and what we did we did because we wanted to do it, and not to attract attention or bring us to notoriety. Today publicity has been brought to a fine art, and to be recognized by Sasha or Schwabe is a modern accolade.’

This publicity was new to Unity Mitford’s personal experience. Diana had some negative history with gossip, but press interviews alarmed Unity at first. In time, she would come to embrace this “self-advertisement” in an effort to further her political aims. This was a modern thing for a young aristocrat to do. Her parents certainly did not appreciate it, and like all celebrity figures, Unity Mitford would have trouble limiting press access once it began. She marked a turning point in public perceptions of aristocrats and their behavior.

Unity’s worries that Hitler and his press chief would think her disloyal after the interview in the Sunday Express soon dissipated. Hitler invited her to his table at the Osteria Bavaria as usual on 2 June. In spite of cold weather, the dictator and his group sat in the restaurant’s garden for some time. Unity recorded that he “was in the sweetest mood imaginable.” She goes on to write, “To-day he was so kind and divine that I suddenly thought I would not only like to kill all who say or do things against him but also to torture them. It is so wonderful to think that someone like him can ever have been born or thought of. We certainly are lucky to live now and see such a phenomenon.”

She repeated these thoughts after lunching at Hitler’s flat on 3 June. Unity saw his latest art acquisition (a painting by Swiss symbolist Arnold Böcklin who felt the influence of the Romantics during the later nineteenth century), met Hitler Jugend (Hitler Youth)

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438 From “Fore and Aft” quoted in Sinclair, 222. Sinclair argues that peers have moved from “warriors” to “entertainers” as they have redefined their European society.(220-1).

439 Letter to Muv from 4 June 1935, Redesdale MS, 64-5.

440 Ibid. Italics= sic
leader Baldur von Schirach for the first time, and received the leftover strawberries she so enjoyed as a gift, but more importantly, she wrote that she spent that night in bed “thinking out tortures for all those who have done [Hitler] wrong” because “…you can’t imagine how beloved the Führer was” at the lunch earlier that day. Unity Mitford’s language here is exceptional. It shows her own increasingly violent devotion to Hitler and also how effective the images of martyrdom and sacrifice applied to the Führer in propaganda was in inspiring his followers. Interestingly, when Nicholas Mosley asked Diana in later years, why Hitler commanded an eerily devoted loyalty Sir Oswald Mosley never had, she told him, “I will tell you exactly: when people met your father they thought: Here is this wonderful man who has an answer to everything himself so what is there for us to do? When people met Hitler they thought: Here is this wonderful but unfortunate man who seems to have all the cares of the world on his shoulders, so we must do all we can to help him.” Diana’s explanation resonates in the primary sources many of Hitler’s followers created. Unity’s letters in early June mentioned dread at the prospect of returning to Britain at the end of June. Hitler, who told her that “Fascism must come in England, nothing can prevent it. The New Age has come,” suggested she threaten to work as a fascist activist in Britain so that her parents allow her to stay in Germany. (She wrote her mother that she did not tell the dictator that she had already tried this tack.) Besides visiting her illustrious friend, Unity spent long, lazy summer days in the “big grassy meadow near the aerodrome,” talking with her S.S. friends, Max Ettinger and Fritz Stadelmann: “If you say I must leave at the end of June Max and

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441 Ibid.
442 Nicholas Mosley, Beyond the Pale, 335.
443 Letter to Muv from 4 June 1935, Redesdale MS, 64-5.
Stadelmann and Klaus are going to wreck all the trains so that I can’t go.” She also mused, “It is extraordinary the way they have no work to do—just sitting about all day in their uniforms.”

Part of Britain came to Germany in early June 1935 when two of Unity Mitford’s more conventional siblings visited her. Pamela, the second oldest Mitford daughter, came for a brief stay. She had managed the Guinness farm at Biddesden until Diana’s divorce; Pam found herself at loose ends until her marriage to Derek Jackson in December 1936. Travelling interested her greatly so she came to see Unity in Munich twice in 1935. This first trip in June was brief. Pamela and Unity’s brother, Tom, stayed a little longer. He had friends in Austria from his time studying music in Vienna after Eton. Tom spoke German well enough, and he enjoyed travelling in Germany and Austria when he was not busy practicing law back in Britain. A letter to Unity from 2 May 1935 asked her to take him to see “some brass bands in beer houses… some country dances and even—if there is such a thing—yodelling.” This may have been a tease, but Unity tried to avoid introducing her brother to Hitler. She worried neither man would like the other and even tried to time her visits to the Osteria Bavaria with Tom so that they would miss its most famous regular. Hitler, however, chose to lunch early one day, and his meeting with Tom then was unavoidable. Tom and the dictator also met once more before Unity’s brother returned to London. The theatre of Nazism, Hitler’s unusual personal appeal, and Germany’s economic revival seemed to strike Tom.

Ibid. Stadelmann was a junior adjutant to Hitler. Photographs of Unity with Max Ettinger in his S.S. uniform exist in family sources, but his role is unclear. “Klaus” does not appear again. His identity is also unclear.

Murphy, 78.
Letter from Tom to Unity dated 2 May 1935, Redesdale MS, 111-2.
J & C Guinness,, 354; Murphy, 78.
didn’t want him to meet him I am quite pleased now. He adored the Führer—he almost got into a frenzy like us sometimes, though I expect he will have cooled down by the time he gets home—and I am sure the Führer liked him, & found him intelligent to talk to. So really I think no harm is done…”

Unity later wrote parodies of hymns and Nazi anthems about Tom as “the lost sheep which Hitler [had] retrieved.” Sheilah Graham, an American gossip columnist and actress who had dated the Mitford siblings’ Uncle Jack and joined the family for a ski holiday at St. Moritz some years earlier, described a certain enthusiasm Tom expressed after meeting Hitler. “Tom Mitford, back from Munich, could talk of only one subject. ‘I’ve met the most fascinating man in my life!’ he exclaimed. ‘Absolutely amazing. Sweeps you off your feet when he speaks! The most persuasive man I’ve ever met.’”

Tom’s fascination with Hitler probably never extended to unqualified devotion. Diana, for example, remained skeptical of Tom’s devotion to fascism. Although her brother became friends with Mosley, he strongly opposed the anti-Semitism in Nazism and increasingly in the B.U.F. Tom also refused to condemn Decca’s growing Communism. The Mitford sisters could not agree on Tom’s political position, but this is not surprising because while the sisters seldom agreed with each other on the subject of politics, Tom had always acted as the family diplomat. His chief interests were books, pianos, and assorted female lovers. This steady good humor

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450 J & C Guinness,, 355.
451 Sheilah Graham and Gerold Frank, *Beloved Infidel: The Education of A Woman*, 1st ed. (New York: H.Holt, 1958), 111 (earlier dealings with the family are 103-4). This interest worried some of Tom’s anti-fascist friends like his cousin Randolph Churchill. While Tom never whole-heartedly embraced fascism, he did claim to understand its appeal for Germans. He asked to fight in the Far East during the Second World War, and this request probably contributed to his death there after the war in Europe had ended and many of his British friends had returned home.
452 J & C Guinness, 354; Charlotte Mosley, *The Mitfords*, Footnote 1 on 57; Murphy, 78.
balanced his more extreme siblings.

Unity Mitford’s extreme devotion to fascism attracted further publicity at a midsummer festival in Hesselberg on 22-23 June 1935. Unity had written a letter to Der Stürmer earlier that month. While Julius Streicher, the paper’s editor and Gauleiter of Franconia, did not publish the letter immediately, he invited Unity to attend the festival, and she accepted his invitation.454 The Nazi party had turned the minor celebration of summer’s peak with folk music and dancing into a political reference to Germany’s pagan past. Any celebration of the Volk was a celebration of the Party. Emilio Gentile argues that while Nazism “added a strong pagan component to the concept of sacralised politics which centred on the sacredness of blood and race,” this unique pagan fascination co-existed with the other traits of sacralized politics in other fascist and totalitarian states such as “the sacralisation or messianic deification of the state, the nation, the race, and the proletariat; the systematic use of symbols and collective rituals; the fanatical dedication and the implacable hatred for adversaries demonstrated by militants; the faithful enthusiasm of the masses; and the cult of the leaders.”455 Some Nazi leaders went so far as to openly advocate replacing traditional Christianity with a new civic religion. While some conservatives supported Nazis because they seemed an alternative to atheistic communism, Joseph Goebbels, Reinhard Heydrich, Heinrich Himmler, Adolf Wagner, Alfred Rosenberg, and other especially radical party leaders privately felt Christian churches competed with Nazism for Germans’ loyalty.456 Unity experienced a

454 Murphy, 85. Note that Franconia is a zone within Bavaria.
ritual at Hesselberg designed to reinforce the mythic, “religious” power of the Volk that existed in Nazi ideology. On 22 June at 9:30 p.m., Unity rode in a column of black government Mercedes past uniformed S.A. men, a band, and a crowd of roughly 200,000 people. The mass of spectators and the stormtroopers carried torches. After a large bonfire, Streicher gave a speech. He surprised Unity when he mentioned his English guest on the stage behind him. He called her “a brave English girl” and read excerpts from her unpublished letter to Der Stürmer.\textsuperscript{457} He also presented the stunned Mitford with a bouquet in front of the giant crowd. Unity wrote home, “He went on about me for ages… It was all so unexpected, I can still hardly believe it.”\textsuperscript{458} She also described the fires that followed: “It is the custom in Germany at midsummer midnight, to roll great burning wheels from the tops of the hills into the valley. It is a most extraordinary sight to see fiery wheels bowling along down the hill, getting faster and faster. There were huge bonfires on all the distant eminences around.”\textsuperscript{459} As regional tradition melded with party rally, the most devout Nazis probably fantasized that this was the sort of civic religion they would foster as their vision of the Third Reich developed.

On 23 June, Unity Mitford attended further celebrations with Julius Streicher. There was a large demonstration in the afternoon with uniformed S.A. and S.S. troops. Unity sat near the party leaders on Hesselberg Hill: “We had seats on the Tribune, full in the blazing sun, so hot that not only my blouse but also my skirt and jacket stuck to my skin.”\textsuperscript{460} Streicher once again mentioned Unity Mitford and her letter to Der Stürmer in his speech. Then, he asked her to come forward. Unity wrote home about the occasion:

\textsuperscript{457} Letter to Muv dated 23 June 1935, Redesdale MS, 67-8.
\textsuperscript{458} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{459} Ibid.
I was pushed forward by a lot of men in uniform and climbed on to the speakers’ little platform. The crowd cheered and I gave the Hitler salute. Then Streicher whispered ‘You must say something to them’. Can you imagine anything more horrifying in front of two hundred thousand people. I said a few sentences into the microphone, then Streicher shook hands with me and thanked me.\textsuperscript{461}

Twenty-year-old Unity Mitford had stood in front of the crowd of 200,000 and said she hoped Germany and Britain would always be friends.\textsuperscript{462} As she left the rally, the crowd called out to Unity, \textit{“Heil England!”}

Luftwaffe Commander and Prussian Prime Minister Hermann Goering had given a lengthy speech after Unity Mitford’s brief moment on the stage at Hesselberg. When the party leaders and Unity travelled on to Dinkelsbühl for “a march past of children,” Streicher asked Goering to meet Unity Mitford, “our brave English girl,” before their audience.\textsuperscript{463} This greatly entertained Unity. She was not fond of the large man who would become Hitler’s designated successor and German Reichsmarschall. She teasingly called Hitler “your beloved” in letters to her mother because Lady Redesdale felt he was “the best of the bunch.”\textsuperscript{464} Unity also called Goering “Girling” in several letters to friends and family. His make-up, girth, and ego struck her as ridiculous. She wrote that when Streicher asked Goering to acknowledge her, “he looked furious, but had to give me his hand, while cameras clicked all round. Poor Goering, he does like to have the stage to himself.”\textsuperscript{465} Unlike Gauleiter of Berlin and Reich Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels, a man whose frequent laughter impressed Unity during a brief meeting at the Osteria Bavaria in early March 1935, Unity felt Goering was “somehow… not quite

\textsuperscript{461} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{462} Murphy, 85.
\textsuperscript{464} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{465} Ibid.
human, quite the opposite of Goebbels.” She may have felt he was less charming than this new wife (Emmy Sonnemann Goering had only married him in April 1935), but Goering was popular with the German public until Luftwaffe defeats in the Battle of Britain and the invasion of Russia. Even his ego and excesses, surprisingly, struck some Germans as endearingly human. Unity noted the crowd’s reaction to him and the shower of flowers and banners that greeted him along the group’s approximately fifty-mile drive from Dinkelsbühl to Anspach.

In the wake of Unity Mitford’s experience at Hesselberg, there was a small flurry of press coverage. Several English tabloids described the event as “pagan.” There was a small scandal that a British peer’s daughter would attend anything so heathen. More damaging for Unity was the small mention in the *Daily Telegraph*, a relatively staid and conservative paper not known for gossip. Farve cancelled a proposed trip to Munich after that article. Unity wrote home, expressing both frustration at the parental disapproval and worry at having upset her family:

> What harm is there in the whole thing? Of course I think it’s a pity [the *Daily Telegraph*] put [the article] in but I couldn’t help it. The correspondent was there. Farve writes as if it were my fault. You must try to look at the whole thing from my point of view. I couldn’t refuse Streicher’s invitation could I, firstly for politeness sake, secondly because I naturally longed to go. When once there, I couldn’t refuse the bouquet offered to me, nor could I refuse to go to the microphone when he called for me… Really I do think it is unkind to write like

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466 Ibid., 70; J & C Guinness, , 376.
467 Letter to Muv dated 25 June 1935, Redesdale MS, 69-70. Mrs. Margaret Budd recalled throwing rose petals at Goering from the steps of the Deutsche Bank during her time in Germany. Mrs. Margaret Budd, interview with author, November 6, 2008.
468 Gannon, 44. The *Daily Telegraph* would support the National Government, and its editor’s proximity to Chamberlain caused many to view it as an important source of information on that prime minister’s mindset once he was in office. Franklin Gannon, however, argues that in spite of significant support for Chamberlain and some for appeasement, the conservative nature of the paper made it fiercely protective of Britain’s imperial interests. Support for Empire occasionally led it to favor Churchill (who used the paper as a key source of information) and Eden rather than Chamberlain in some foreign policy situations in the late 1930s.
that, as if I’d done something wicked. Surely all that matters is that it shouldn’t go against my own conscience, and it doesn’t…. Oh dear Oh dear I hope the displeasure of the family won’t last for long, it is so awful… I am sorry if I have caused embarrassment or annoyance.469

Unity’s letters home during 1935 frequently apologize or justify actions that she knows her parents will disapprove. Just as in her debutante year, she provides ample evidence that she is knowingly stepping outside the bounds of expected and proper behavior for a young aristocratic lady, but in these letters from Germany, she refers back to her conscience and her happiness to justify her action. In one letter before a prospective visit back to Britain, Unity wrote her mother, “Of course I see how difficult it is for you to let me stay [in Germany], but you must understand that I know this is the happiest time of my life—perhaps the most interesting and thrilling too—I shall never be so happy again, so it’s only natural I want to hang on to it a few months more.”470 That notion of choosing a path that disappoints her parents and expectations in pursuit of her own path recurred again and again in the letters home as Unity attracted negative media attention back in Britain.

The German press also started to notice Unity Mitford around the time of the Hesselberg. The Münchner Zeitung timed an interview with Unity so that it came out the same weekend as the festival. Under the headline, “Eine britische Faschistin erzählt” (A British Fascist Woman Talks), the article first describes an open-minded but old Lord Redesdale. It relates how he feels bound by tradition, but his young daughter involved

469 Undated letter from Unity to Muv, Redesdale MS, 70-1.
470 Letter to Muv from Unity dated 4 June 1935, Redesdale MS, 65-6. Italics= sic. Nancy parodied the Hesselberg event writing Unity on 29 June 1935, “We were all very interested to see that you were Queen of the May this year at Hesselberg. Call me early, Goering dear. For I’m to be Queen of the May. Good gracious, that interview you sent us, fantasia, fantasia.” In the same letter, she teased Unity about Himmler wanting her to tour concentration camps for a comic novel. Letter from Nancy to Unity dated 29 June 1935, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 60-1.
“with body and soul!” in the British fascist movement has helped him learn about the
“new age” and “Germany” with a more open mind.\(^{471}\) The idealistic reference to some
power Unity could have over her parent’s politics is telling in how some Germans
misunderstood the political power of English peers (and Unity’s impact on her father).
The article goes on to describe how Unity felt stifled by old traditions in London and how
she escaped this by passing out flyers for the B.U.F. in the city streets. It is unclear how
much of this prelude to Unity’s actual words came from her description of herself and
how much came from Nazi ideas contrasting a Britain bound by tradition with the
supposedly young and virile Nazi Germany. Unity’s interview stated her admiration for
Hitler, but the bulk of her talk promoted Mosley and the B.U.F. She spoke of how
Mosley’s experience at the frontlines of World War I gave him a sense of mission and
belief in victory. Unity also credited this belief with Mosley’s many changes in political
party affiliations while he sat in Parliament. She continued, “Oswald Mosley is our
Führer, which we English fascists are behind with the same enthusiasm the whole
German people are behind their wonderful Führer today. We British fascists can learn
much from Germany. We stand only at the beginning of a fight that the National Socialist
movement in Germany has already completed victoriously.”\(^{472}\) Accordingly, Unity stated

\(^{471}\) Page 7: Title: Ausschnitt aus der “Münchner Zeitung” v.22./23.6.35. [Cutout from the “Münchner
newspaper” ](article pasted below in gothic type:) title: Eine britische Fascistin erzählt. [A British
Fascistin tells. ] Newspaper clipping reproduced in Vertrauliche Anfrage der Polizeidirektion
München vom 2 Mai 1935 (Pol.-Dir. München 10 117), Bayerische Hauptstaatsarchiv, München. In his
diaries, German count and patron of the arts Harry Kessler notes on 22 August 1935 that “…neo-
heathen notions are making progress not only in Germany, but in Britain and Holland too. Lord
Redesdale’s daughter has come back from Germany entranced by these ideas. She attended the
midsummer’s night festival at Göring’s place and participated in the rites the whole night through.”
(Harry Kessler, Berlin in Lights: The Diaries of Count Harry Kessler (1918-1937), translated by
Charles Kessler, edited by Charles Kessler, 1st American ed. (New York: Insel Verlag, 1961; Grove

\(^{472}\) Ibid.
that Mosley endorsed strong friendship between Germany and Britain. One element where Unity hinted British fascism had come further than Nazism was in the role of women. She argued that women had a much greater role in the B.U.F.’s “struggle” for power than they had in Germany’s Kampfzeit. Unity described herself handing out leaflets and physically removing female protesters from B.U.F. rallies and meetings, a role she said Germans believed only men should hold.473

A Fränkische Tageszeitung interview with Unity Mitford ran just after Hesselberg on 24 June 1935, and it covered many of the same topics. Under a title roughly translated as “Miss Mitford Answers! A conversation between our editor and the young English lady who brought greetings to the new Germany from awaking England,” Unity spoke about how it took a man of Hitler’s “size” to bring about fascism in Germany. She explained that Mosley had already made great strides towards convincing the British of the merits of absolute leadership by introducing uniforms. She also said that the British media unfairly silenced the B.U.F. at present but that she expected political gains from the next elections.474 The paper asked her about her association with the area’s Gauleiter, Julius Streicher. She praised him, expressed how proud she was to have been at Hesselberg, and declared that she read Der Stürmer (Streicher’s paper) faithfully. A photograph of Unity Mitford with Julius Streicher was near the article amid descriptions of the Hesselberg festivities.475 This article had none of the political references to Unity Mitford’s father and her rank that the Münchner Zeitung featured, but the talk about links between British and German fascists and Mosley’s movement were enough to concern

473 Ibid.
474 “Miss Mitford Antwortet!” Fränkische Tageszeitung (Nuremberg), 24 June 1935, 8.
475 Ibid.
the British Embassy in Germany and the Foreign Office. This was to be the first of several reports to feature Unity Mitford. The Embassy passed along news of the Munich article with a note worrying Unity was Mosley’s representative in Germany. The Foreign Office correctly added to the document a note that Mosley was not using her as anything of the sort. The office was aware of Unity’s friendship with Hitler and her family’s ties to Mosley, however, where the embassy was not.476

Instead of acting as a representative for Mosley, Unity Mitford promoted B.U.F. interests in Nazi Germany on her own initiative. Unity’s own increasing anti-Semitism showed in her interviews with the Münchner Zeitung and the Fränkische Tageszeitung, but when she described the British fascist movement as anti-Semitic, her statements had wider implications. Anti-Semitism and racism were more important to Nazism than to other forms of fascism. Italians and Britons never placed the same importance on race as a determinant for membership in the national community as Germans did.477 Most fascist movements railed against age and tradition, and the British Union of Fascists was no exception. It was distinctly “technocratic,” according to Roger Griffin, in its vision of a future utopian society.478 The B.U.F. might rail against older parliamentarians, socialists, and the diverse races subject to British colonial rule, but Jews attracted little attention in the movement’s early days.479 This led some in Nazi Germany, such as Julius Streicher, to

476 F.O. 371/18859, Foreign Office Files, National Archives at Kew; See also Dorril, 347.
478 Griffin, Modernism and Fascism, 355.
479 Gisela Lebzelter, Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918- 1939 (London: Macmillan Press, 1978), 174. Note that according to Philip Coupland Mosley often felt it safe to ignore race because he felt the Empire “had been created ‘without race mixture or pollution, by reason of the British social sense and pride of race’” so any legislation demanding racial purity was unnecessary and potentially a liability that would only create a sense of stigmatization among the so-called inferior races of the Empire. (Philip Coupland, “Great Britain: The Black-shirted Utopians,” in volume 4 of Fascism: Critical Concepts in Political Science, eds. Roger Griffin with Matthew Feldman (London: Routledge, 2004),
initially deride the B.U.F. as a “‘Jewish catch-up movement.’” Since 1934, however, the B.U.F. had become increasingly anti-Semitic. Some historians have argued that this was “an attempt to revive [the movement’s] flagging fortunes by exploiting the latent popular hostility against Jews.” In her study of anti-Semitism in the British Union of Fascists, Gisela Lezbelter argues that the organization merely returned to its early inclination towards anti-Semitism that Rothermere’s presence had temporarily mitigated before he withdrew support. Philip Coupland locates the B.U.F. interest in race along the lines of certain strands of anti-Catholicism: a group with “internationalist interests because of faith puts other interests above the British state.” Although the B.U.F. press “rejected Jew-baiting, persecution and pogroms as counter-productive and un-British,” it started to advocate “compulsory Zionism… a policy of segregation and deportation.” It also came to describe Jews as fundamentally different from Britons in terms of character and mental and physical qualities. Whatever the motivation for its increasingly visible prejudice, it pleased radical Nazis observing British fascists from Germany. The Fränkische Tageszeitung asked Unity Mitford why Mosley had started to become more anti-Semitic, and she told her interviewer, “The Jews were not an obvious danger in England as the case was in Germany. But Mosley soon recognized that the Jewish danger may move its badness from country to country, but it represents a fundamental world

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483 Lezbelter, 96.
danger for all people.” Unity is articulating a belief she holds in this answer, but she is also defending British fascism. She told the *Münchner Zeitung* that moving through ridicule and slander was a key step forward for British fascists as they followed Germany’s example from the *Kampfzeit*, but “…if only the Jewish opponent will attack us ---we know this time will probably come very soon--, then our fight steps into its last crucial stage.”

Unity Mitford’s profoundly anti-Semitic letter to *Der Stürmer* had many of these same ideas. *Der Stürmer* was a particularly crude source of anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany. Cartoons based on gross stereotypes littered it pages. For example, on the cover of the issue featuring Unity’s letter, there was an image of a short, fat, and bald man in a suit with a giant nose and glasses. He wielded a giant fountain pen in attempt to block two soldiers with angular faces from shaking hands in front of the Nazi banner. Newspapers such as the *New York Times* spill out of his pockets. Nazi authorities posted the weekly paper on local bulletin boards across Germany so that passersby would read it, and it was notoriously radical and licentious but popular among S.S. troops. Images of Jewish men seducing or assaulting scantily-clad blonde “Aryan” women were common. There were also articles on alleged Talmud instructions on “ritual murder” of children and Jews as sources of disease, corruption, socialism, media control, and prostitution.

Julius Streicher, the paper’s publisher, was equally unsavory. He had

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484 “Miss Mitford Antworte!” *Fränkische Tageszeitung* (Nuremberg), 24 June 1935, 8.
487 One example on pages 149-150 in Randall Bytwerk’s biography of Julius Streicher. (Randall Bytwerk, *Julius Streicher* (New York: Dorset Press, 1983)) While he focuses on Britain, Colin Holmes also explores such particularly lurid examples of anti-Semitic myth in his book (Colin Holmes, *Anti-
strong völkisch roots and a connection to the Nazi Party reaching back to 1922. Streicher had been Gauleiter of Franconia since 1925, but his corruption was legendary. He had a reputation for a rapacious and vaguely predatory sexual appetite, led boycotts of Jewish businesses, and even published lists of “ethnic Germans who had any business or social contact with Jews” throughout the 1930s. Streicher could be crude and sadistic. Many fellow Nazis disliked his rough edges and penchant for slandering his colleagues, but Hitler remained remarkably loyal to his old ally and his weekly paper. Unity Mitford had associated with many of the salty and crude “Old Fighters” from the Kampfzeit in Munich such as Adolf Wagner. The Munich- Upper Bavarian area’s Gauleiter, Wagner irritated even Hitler at times: “…he smoked one hundred cigarettes a day, drank to excess (even by Bavarian standards), and chased everything in skirts (despite his pegleg and sagging paunch).” These characters seemed to tickle Unity Mitford’s sense of humor. She also had an attraction to violence these individuals probably helped to fulfill. These were not like people she met in London’s high society circles. Her willingness to write to Der Stürmer and subsequently to become friends with Streicher has some of its roots in this, but the anti-Semitism expressed in her letter is also about a belief system she increasingly adopted. A photo of Unity Mitford illustrated her blonde-haired and blue-eyed credentials. Beyond the paratext, the editor introduced Unity’s letter as a “Letter

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Stackelberg, Routledge, 248; Bytwerk.

Hamilton, 238-9. Decca once wrote that Diana had called Streicher a kitten, but Diana disputed this in an interview with Mary Lovell (page 191). Also, according to Unity Mitford, Streicher was unaware that Unity was friends with Hitler before he met her at Hesselberg (Redesdale MS, 70).

Large, Munich, 273. Struck down by a stroke in the middle of an anti-Christian tirade (to the delight of his religious opponents), Wagner’s stroke and Bormann’s wrath could not keep him from exercising power with Hitler’s support until his death in 1944. (Hamilton, 408).

Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, interview with author, October 29, 2008.
from An English Woman” that “gave us [aka. the paper’s staff] great joy.” Unity wrote:

Dear Stürmer! As an English fascist woman I would like to express my admiration for you. I have lived in Munich for one year and read the Stürmer every week. If only we had such newspapers in England! The general English public has no idea/ knowledge of the Jewish danger. The English Jews are always described as “decent.” Maybe the Jews in England are shrewder with their propaganda than in other countries. I do not know, but it is a well-determined fact that our fight is very hard. Our worst Jews work only behind the scenes. They never come into the public and because of that we cannot show them to the English people in their true terribleness. We have an urgent need for newspapers like the Stürmer which tell people the truth. Hopefully, however, you will soon see that we in England will also become victorious against the world enemy, despite all its cunning. We look forward to the day on which we can say with force and authority: “England for Englishmen! Out with the Jews!” With German greeting! Heil Hitler! Unity Mitford. P.S. If by chance you find space for this letter in your newspaper, then please publish my whole name. I do not want to sign my letter with “U.M.”, but I want everyone to know that I am a “Judenasserin”[ literally a Jew-hater in the noun’s feminine form].

The comparisons between a German and an English “struggle” to establish fascism in power and the idea of “the Jews” as a key barrier from success echoed the interviews published in June. (Unity wrote this letter in June although Der Stürmer published it in July.) The same prejudice against Jews as a category instead of singling out individual Jews is also consistent between the interviews and the newspaper letter.

In his essay “Anti-semitism [sic] and the B.U.F,” Colin Holmes offers three forms of expressing anti-Semitism. These include prejudice against individual Jews or small groups “even though such attacks carry with them implications of a wider hostility,” prejudice against Jews that “lumps all Jews together to discuss them as a category rather than in ad hoc terms, to stereotype them, but to do this without any reference to genetics or biology,” and prejudice against all Jews so that “biologically, genetically, all Jews are

493 Ibid.
an unwelcome presence in the world." Mitford’s anti-Semitism is a complex blend of the second and third forms. She did not target individual Jews so much as Jews as a category, and her prejudice was highly emotional. Fascists exalted feeling before intellect. Blind faith in the group and particularly its leader marked the ideal fascist, and Unity Mitford’s intensity fit this. Robert O. Paxton describes how fascist leaders galvanized followers with “mobilizing passions” that forged a close-knit national community. Part of the construction of a national community that would fulfill some millenarian destiny and build individuals’ self-worth as members meant excluding others, often blamed for the national community’s past failures. Fascist leaders glorified violence against those excluded from the community. Unity embraced the accompanying notion of some vague “Darwinian struggle” for racial/ national survival or an impending apocalyptic battle between good (the fascist national community) and evil (those excluded from the national community such as Jews). Her anti-Semitism never had a clearer pseudo-intellectual articulation.

While his conclusions in Hitler’s Willing Executioners remain highly controversial, Daniel Goldhagen’s anthropological approach in the introduction of the book best articulates the type of anti-Semitism Unity Mitford demonstrated. Goldhagen suggests that anti-Semitism in twentieth-century German was a form of “magical thinking.” According to this theory, the Nazis’ radical anti-Semitism was not the product of logic or reason:

496 Ibid.
Indeed, the corpus of German antisemitic [sic] literature in the 19th and 20th centuries—with its wild and hallucinatory accounts of the nature of Jews, their virtually limitless power, and their responsibility for nearly every harm that has befallen the world—is so divorced from reality that anyone reading it would be hard pressed to conclude that it was anything other than the product of the collective scribes of an insane asylum.497

Goldhagen believes that describing those that believed in such writings as amoral is inaccurate and even demeaning. Instead, he argues they had different beliefs and behavioral maps motivating their violent prejudice.498 The nineteenth-century emergence of race as a social construct had enabled older prejudices with various motives to coalesce around the notion of Jews as racial category. The Jews as a race became “the secular worldview’s Devil, no less, if not as explicitly articulated, than medieval Christian minds had identified Jews with the Devil, sorcery, and witchcraft.”499 This odd mix of mysticism and science is evident in the conspiracy theories Unity Mitford regurgitated in her interviews, articles, and letters. Like Melita Maschman, Unity Mitford saw the Jews as “an evil power, something with the attributes of a spook. One could not see it, but it was there, an active force for evil.”500 The fairy tale quality of simplistic heroes and villains appealed to Mitford’s romantic nature. Fighting the Jewish “spook” to defend fascism gave her a life mission.

Her family did not share this enthusiasm. Unity Mitford’s anti-Semitism and devotion to fascism had a zeal that struck her parents as unseemly for an aristocratic woman. The fourth Mitford daughter never minded “drawing attention to herself,” but the

499 Ibid., 66-7.
500 Ibid., 88-9.
young lady’s attraction to violence pushed her farther beyond the pale than childish pranks had.\footnote{Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, interview with author, October 29, 2008.} Political liaisons with Nazis by other British aristocrats or curiosity about the seeming conservatism of Hitler’s cronies occurred.\footnote{Sinclair, 111. The British public tolerated (and even enjoyed) eccentricity in their aristocrats (Sinclair, 243, 250), but such open defiance of gender norms would have sounded too many alarms to receive such indulgence.} These, however, were quite different than an unchaperoned, young female loudly throwing her support behind the aspect of Nazism least respectable in the eyes of many Britons. Aristocrats also attracted press attention in Britain as tabloid journalism emerged between the world wars.\footnote{Horrie, 46.} Their association with wealth and glamour made gossip about their antics even more delicious to readers of London’s numerous daily papers. Unity Mitford was back in Britain for a family visit when the press storm broke around her letter to \textit{Der Stürmer} in July and August 1935. One headline inside the \textit{Daily Mirror} read, “Peer’s Daughter as Jew Hater.”\footnote{“Peer’s Daughter as Jew Hater,” \textit{Daily Mirror} (London), 27 July 1935, 13. Note that Unity Mitford’s visit home may well have been because Diana was in a serious car accident on 19 July. \textit{(Daily Herald} (London) 25 July 1935, front page; Barrow, 77).} An article in the \textit{Evening Standard} and several additional articles about Unity Mitford’s letter infuriated her father. Mail in support of her statements and in protest of them arrived at High Wycombe. Unity answered letters from supporters on several occasions and ignored the rest.\footnote{J & C Guinness, 380. Guinness writes that Decca wrote to Unity to let her know that she disapproved of her actions but loved her nonetheless. Lady Redesdale’s Memoir features one of the letters Unity Mitford wrote her mother about German reactions to \textit{Der Stürmer}: “I get a lot of letters of praise for my Stürmer [sic] letter every day, from all part of Germany. Some of them send me little presents, and one young Austrian S.S. man who is having to return to Austria, where he will be put in prison probably for five years, came to see me and said he would like me to have his dagger and Swastika arm band. Poor thing, I was so sorry for him. The dagger is lovely.” (Lady R MS, 72). She wrote home again on 26 August, “I enclose a new thing about me in this weeks Stüermer. [sic] It’s not [sic] my fault that it appeared, so please don’t punish me.” (Redesdale MS, 73).} A letter published in the \textit{Jewish Chronicle} on 2 August 1935 led Arnold Leese, founder of Britain’s Imperial Fascist League, to encourage Unity
Mitford to respond with a lawsuit. Under the headline “‘Unity’ is not Strength,” the Chronicle had described her letter to Der Stürmer as a desperate bid for attention by a young lady in need of “traditional discipline.” It also criticized the attention British newspapers gave Mitford “as though [her letter] was of a pronouncement of high political importance.” Her request that Der Stürmer include her name seemed particularly telling: “She realized that without her title, which was, of course, a mere accident of birth, her vapourings would have been of no more concern to the public than those of any other irresponsible young hussy out to get her name in the papers.” These were the most overt references to the importance the British public placed on Unity Mitford’s gender, age, and class in responding to her actions.

Not all the press, however, was so critical of Nazism and Unity Mitford’s relationship to it. During the 1930s, scoops and special investigations by newspaper journalists fascinated the British public. “British newspapers and journalists… played an active role in the events they reported and in shaping public attitudes and reaction towards them.” By “personalizing” news in other parts of the world, foreign correspondents were especially powerful in this regard. In her study of literature produced by British visitors to Britain during the years Hitler was in power, Angela Schwartz analyzes how the correspondents (like other visitors) often saw whatever their own political bias predisposed them to see in Nazi Germany. Germans worked hard to present a “New Germany” to visitors. The British were coveted potential allies at this

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506 KV2/882 211314: National Archives report from 2 August 1935 copied in Unity Mitford’s file from the records of the Metropolitan Police Special Branch.
507 2 August 1935 Jewish Chronicle from KV2/882 211314 National Archives.
508 Gannon, 2-3.
509 Angela Schwartz, Die Reise ins Dritte Reich: Britische Augenzeugen im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland (1933-1939) (Munich: Vandenbôck und Ruprecht, 1997).
point, and the power of the press was clear to Nazi politicians. Correspondents lacking firm ideological roots were a golden opportunity for Nazis to promote their image abroad and for correspondents to write colorful copy. For most of the 1930s, journalists felt reluctant to prod Europe closer to another war. Instead, they described Nazi pageantry for eager audiences back in Britain. As Franklin Gannon notes, “the stage-management of the Nuremberg Parteitag seemed more interesting than the speeches made at it.”

One such British foreign correspondent swept away in the drama of Hitler’s Germany was Michael Burn of the *Gloucester Citizen*. Burn and Mitford were friends from London’s social scene, and when he left for Germany in hopes of a news story in August 1935, Burn already hoped Unity Mitford (whom he called “Bobo” as her sisters and many friends did) would provide him with an entrée to the Nazi elite. He wrote his parents on 16 August, “Bobo Mitford is terribly grand and very nice. People think quite seriously that she is going to marry Hitler, who gives her lunch parties in his flat. But as she does not like asking him favours, I am not likely to see him through her, though I may.” Unity and Michael Burn haunted the Osteria Bavaria together during Hitler’s lunch hour. The journalist frequently observed how Unity interacted with Hitler’s other admirers at the restaurant:

Bobo makes up a great deal and when she went into our restaurant the last time a German girl made a face at her, as Hitler is supposed to hate make-up. Hitler then came in, stopped at our table and spoke to Bobo, and then summoned her to lunch with him, make-up and all. The German girl burst into tears of disillusionment as she had remained ugly for his sake. They are hysterical about him.

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510 Gannon, 2, 70.
511 Burn, 69-70. In his memoir, Burn is careful to reproduce his original letters home to his parents so that he would not succumb to the temptation to mitigate his enthusiasm for Nazi Germany at this time. He attempts to be as honest as possible about what he felt at that time.
512 Ibid., 70.
513 Ibid., 70-1.
This echoes the scorn Unity Mitford’s make-up attracted at her first Nuremberg rally. Unity Mitford’s very visible association with a very English brand of femininity (cosmetics) made it clear even to bystanders unaware of her identity that she was not German. Nazi ideologues advocated “natural” or “healthy” beauty, and many German women refrained from using all but the most “discreet” make-up, tanning lamps, and hair removal creams to meet this new ideal.\textsuperscript{514} Despite resistance by many German women, some felt adhering to these guidelines allowed a woman’s physical appearance to reinforce her belonging to the national community.\textsuperscript{515} Unity Mitford may not have belonged, but she certainly had acceptance from Hitler himself. Michael Burn describes how Unity Mitford and Hitler shared a “creepy” sense of humor in private. For example, she told Burn how Hitler described how “he had a job hiding Lady Londonderry’s photographs of herself which she kept on sending him.” \textsuperscript{516} While he suspected part of Hitler liked her aristocratic background and opinions as a Briton (although certainly an atypical one), Burn felt Hitler considered Mitford an “idealist” and could be protective of her.

Michael Burn admits that he himself enjoyed Unity Mitford’s company. While he tipped a coffee tray into her boyfriend Erich’s lap one afternoon after they argued about Britain, Burn did not fight with Unity herself. “Used to her bland determination to shock, I was not infuriated as many were by ‘that flat enthusiasm the Mitfords manage’, that

\textsuperscript{514} Günther, 103-4.
\textsuperscript{515} Ibid., 13. Some Nazi thinkers associated the use of make-up with French fashion domination or American silver screen vamps. (Ibid., 99-100).
\textsuperscript{516} Burn, 78-9.
dead pan on which she liked to present her witch’s brew.”

Their chief disagreement came when Burn introduced himself to Hitler against Unity’s instructions not to do so. This ended well because Hitler was flattered by the foreign attention. He later offered Burn a signed photograph through Unity Mitford. Reflecting on his experiences in Nazi Germany during this time, Michael Burn admits that he fell under the spell of Nazi propaganda in spite of countless warning signs that all was not idyllic in the “New Germany.” Nazi officials granted him special access to visit Dachau concentration camp to counteract the anti-Nazi book, *I Was Hitler’s Prisoner.* With shame and embarrassment, Burn recalls how in his resulting article he compared the camp’s severe beatings and brutal living conditions with British use of the cat-of-nine-tails. He left out any mention of how the prisoners came to the camp, their supposed crimes, or how one prisoner fell from a solitary confinement cell “like a plank” after “special treatment.”

Burn confesses signs of Nazi terror were unmistakable. Just after his own meeting with Hitler, for example, Unity Mitford’s talk with Hitler moved from his recent trip to Italy and speech-writing for the upcoming Nuremberg rally to German anti-Semitism:

> [Hitler told me that] he stopped the putting of placards in the windows (placards in non-Jewish shops saying ‘Jews are not wanted’) not for love of the Jews nor for fear of English opinion but because he says it’s no good having printed placards all the same. The placards must be thought out by the individual shopkeeper himself and come from the heart. You [Unity’s mother] say you wonder why all this anti-Semitism has started again, after it had seemed to die down. The reason is that when it died down the Jews started pouring back into Germany, so it had to start again.

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518 *Ibid.*, 71; Redesdale MS, 73.
519 Burn, 75, 71.
520 *Ibid.*, 75-6. In the same article, Burn admits he compared the mentally ill prisoners with the storm troopers practicing for Nuremberg, writing that clearly the ones behind bars at Dachau belonged there instead of the SA and SS troops alleged to be murderers....
521 Redesdale MS, 73. Parenthetical reference re: placards is in the original manuscript.
Visitors to the Nuremberg Party rallies that September 1935 would have been similarly unable to avoid encounters with anti-Semitism. The theme at that year’s Parteitag was the announcement of the Nuremberg Laws: the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor as well as the Reich Citizenship Law. Germans with Jewish ancestry could no longer marry or have sex with non-Jewish Germans. They also could not employ non-Jewish women or display German flags. Jewish Germans became “members of the state” instead of citizens. In Eichmann in Jerusalem, Hannah Arendt explains how some naively hoped this legalization of anti-Semitic brutality might stabilize and regulate the current prejudice and even prevent outbursts of violence. While it did contribute to a temporary decline in the number of “Germans’ attacks on Jews… through 1937,” its codification of the sharp divide between Germans with Jewish ancestors and other Germans never quite provided the “laws of their own” some Zionist politicians wished it would. As Daniel Goldhagen remarks, while the “sheer volume of violence diminished” after the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, “Germans continued to assault Jews verbally and physically, and the ongoing legal, economic, social, and professional exclusion of Jews from Germans’ life proceeded.” This could include beatings, forced cutting of Jews’ beards or hair, public humiliations, maimings, and even killings in addition to destruction of Jewish property.

In spite of the overt celebration of anti-Semitism, the Nuremberg Parteitag impressed several English visitors as much as previous rallies had won over Unity

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522 Gannon, 102-3; Burn, 74.
524 Ibid., Goldhagen, 98.
525 Goldhagen, 98, 92-4.
Mitford herself. (Many Britons attended the rallies in 1935, and when one Foreign Office official wrote asking if the government was aware Henry Williamson had attended, another official scrawled in response, “No, but there were a number of particularly silly people at Nuremberg.”) Michael Burn felt spellbound by the ceremonies, “songs about national liberation,” and testimonies claiming Hitler had made Germany into a classless society. He wrote home on 18 September: “…the Party Rally only finished this morning. I cannot really think coherently after this week. It has been so wonderful to see what Hitler has brought this country back to and taught to look forward to. I heard him make a speech yesterday at the end of it all which I don’t think I shall ever forget and am going to have translated.” While boredom set in after so much marching, speech-making, and singing, “the hypnosis was powerful enough for me not to write home a word about the purpose of it all. For this was the Party Rally at which the infamous anti-Semitic Nuremberg decrees were promulgated.” This spell affected the audience so strongly that Michael Burn witnessed shuddering and hysterical exclamations when Hitler mentioned his inevitable death during one of the speeches. It was only with hindsight that the reporter shook off the spell and that he realized that, as a young British citizen, his treatment was not a true reflection of life in Nazi Germany.

British naturalist and writer Henry Williamson never altered his initial excitement from those days in Nuremberg during September 1935. As a veteran of the First World War, he felt an attraction to the order of fascism with its promises of trench-like

526 FO371/18858, Foreign Office Files, National Archives at Kew. In addition to those mentioned, the Reverend Frank Buchman was a notable guest at Nuremberg that year.
527 Burn, 71-2. Another letter home two days later exclaimed, “The Reichsparteitag was absolutely wonderful! I was just behind Hitler for nearly all the big speeches.” (Ibid., 72)
528 Ibid., 74.
529 Ibid., 77.
camaraderie and economic security for poor veterans. This led him to join Mosley and the British Union of Fascists. When he visited Germany, Williamson was deeply emotional about avoiding another war with that country, and he felt a connection with Hitler as a fellow veteran of the conflict. The logistics of the events, the enmity towards communism, and the promises of peace won the writer over to Nazism over the course of the rallies. While the crowds were difficult for him, he wrote in his memoir *Goodbye, West Country* (1937) that the British press exaggerated Nazi anti-Semitism when there was so much more to the “New Germany” than prejudice. The fascist vision of a new world held seductive power for him. Williamson’s companion during his travels in Nazi Germany and his excursion to the Nuremberg Parteitag was another British writer, John Heygate.

John Heygate only published his reflections on the 1935 Nuremberg rallies in 1940. It is impossible to know if they accurately reflect his impression from five years before or if his memory changed in the wake of the 1939 declaration of war, but Heygate represents himself as much more suspicious than Henry Williamson. He describes the marching columns of troops as eerily reminiscent of the troops from the First World War, “who, one cannot but feel, are ready to march again, in that strange perverted illusion, of which Germans are victims, that it is not they, but the not-yet-contacted enemy, who are the aggressors.” He understood Hitler’s pull even as he worried it would lead to

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530 Alastair Hamilton, 300-3. In fact, Williamson felt such a close bond with other veterans of the First World War that he wanted to fly to Germany in August of 1939 so that he could speak to Hitler as one former soldier to another. He was sure this could prevent another war.


533 John Heygate, *These Germans: An Estimate of Their Character Seen in Flashes from the Drama 1918-1939* (London Hutchinson, 1940), 178.
another conflict:

The voice of Hitler rises and falls, takes on those electric modulations, those ups and downs, humour and gravity, voice-breaking direct appeal and bitter indirect comment, so that the heart and head are alternately moved and a man can hardly bear to hear it any longer, but must cry out: ‘Stop! It is enough!’ covering his head in his hands, not wanting to hear or to see.\textsuperscript{534}

All of these guests noticed Unity and Diana Mitford in the stands as Hitler’s personal guests. Heygate wrote he felt amused to see them “arriving to see Hitler and his show, as if it might be the Lord Mayor’s, or the Richmond Horse, of the Chelsea Flower Show, instead of a display of armed might designed primarily to rehabilitate Germany in despite of England…”\textsuperscript{535} Unity spent much of the Rally with Diana and with Julius Streicher, whom she had “immediately rung up” on arriving in Nuremberg.\textsuperscript{536} Although this important connection meant the sisters had little time for British acquaintances like Michael Burn during the Parteitag, Burn noted that as “guests of honour” Unity and Diana Mitford were such perfect examples of the Nordic ideal that they seemed like stage props instead of living beings at such an event\textsuperscript{537} Streicher himself described the two women as “not Angles, but Angels” when he introduced them to a gathering of Nazi party members from various countries.\textsuperscript{538} (This was a play on an old papal anecdote.) This special attention delighted Unity Mitford who enjoyed Streicher’s raunchy and racist humour, but it also attracted the notice of London’s Daily Mirror and Nuremberg’s own Fränkische Tageszeitung.\textsuperscript{539} No other outing generated similar press. Instead the sisters

\textsuperscript{534} Ibid., 182.
\textsuperscript{535} Ibid., 180.
\textsuperscript{536} Redesdale MS, 73.
\textsuperscript{537} Burn, 73. “Tall, flaxen-haired and cornflower-eyed, their faces perfectly rounded exhausts to a bland superiority, they strolled through the lounges of the privileged hotels like a pair of off-duty caryatids…”
\textsuperscript{538} Redesdale Ms, 74. This meeting of representatives from various Nazi Party offshoots that existed outside of Germany took place in Erlanger, Bavaria.
enjoyed an alfresco dinner party “on the Burg” where they teased Hitler about Hanfstaengl’s previous failure to introduce them to him. They also enjoyed the integration of music with speeches and the local opera’s performance of Wagner’s *Meistersinger of Nuremberg*.

Life returned to something of its old routine after the Nuremberg celebrations in early September. Unity continued to wait for Hitler’s lunches at the Osteria Bavaria when he was in Munich. For example, on 19 September, she wrote Diana about meeting Hitler unexpectedly in the street and being shaky with surprise. She wrote further about a lunch where Hitler had stomach pains that made her ache in sympathy and detailed their jokes about some childhood pictures of Hitler’s friend Heinrich Hoffmann. Unity Mitford’s awe and admiration comes across quite clearly. She describes several times how he worried over separation from the German people at the end of the Parteitag and how graciously she felt he greeted a fan from Dresden who approached to meet the dictator. This typically emotional depiction of Hitler captures her relationship with the man over the course of 1935: a strange mix of friendship and humour with deep reverence. Unity’s correspondence depicts constantly vacillation between being the clear subordinate and being something like equals with Hitler in their interactions.

In spite of her absolute devotion to Hitler, Unity Mitford never let it infringe on her family relationships. Later in September, Unity’s sister Decca came to visit before her finishing year in Paris. The “Bouds” were still especially close in spite of their political differences. Decca’s letters to Diana would tease: “You are lucky to have been

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540 Diana Mitford Mosley, 133.
out to Germany to see my hated Boudle [Unity]. Did she write & tell you how she saw the Führer, of whom she writes as “Him” with a capital H, as for Christ or God!! I love my Boud in spite of all.”

This affection led the budding Communist to write Unity about saving funds for their ten day tour, and the pair had grand plans. Pam, the second oldest Mitford, acted as chaperone. Unity wrote her mother petulantly, “Pam will be a good chaperone. I would have been too, but of course would not be trusted as such.”

The three sisters went to the Oktoberfest, the Brown House Nazi Party headquarters, and the Osteria Bavaria for lunch. Fortunately for Unity, Decca’s visits never happened to coincide with one of Hitler’s. Pam later told Jonathan and Catherine Guinness how “Decca seemed to enjoy herself and that there was no hint of political uneasiness.”

Interestingly, Unity writes her mother on 2 October to describe her visit to the Munich police prison that morning. Since Decca seems to have left 4 October, it is unclear if she heard the details in the letter, but Unity wrote her parent about how well she thought the prison treated the Jewish men and non-Jewish girls locked there for “race violation” (dating outside of their alleged race). Unity had special permission to see the prison, talk with the prisoners unsupervised, and even sample prison lunch. She felt it was highly entertaining that one of the women in the prison thought that Unity even as an English woman had been imprisoned with them for “race violation.”

If Decca had

544 Redesdale MS, 74. Underlining is in the original.
545 J & C Guinness, 398-9. Note that according to Redesdale Ms page 74, Pam had already met Hitler and lunched with him that September at the Osteria.
546 Redesdale MS, 74-5. According to David Clay Large, political arrests had filled local prisons and “ad hoc detention centers in and around Munich” to the extent that Dachau opened outside Munich in March 1933. Large also notes that the Nazi government’s best attempts at secrecy could not prevent rumors of Dachau’s horror spreading as early as May of that same year. “As one old lady put it, ‘Dachau [camp] wasn’t built to hold geese.’” (brackets and camp= sic). Large, Munich, 238-9.
heard this, she would probably have repeated her earlier vehement objections to Unity’s anti-Semitism. It seems likely Unity chose not to share this, just as Decca must have held back some comments on the SS troops and swastika pennants she would have inevitably encountered. The Munich area’s castles, churches, museums, and boat trips provided enough additional excitement to distract the sisters from political tension.

Decca left Munich in early October, and Unity was to follow with a trip back to Britain and then on a family visit to see Decca in Paris. She protested bitterly at the thought of leaving Munich for several months: “Oh dear Oh dear are we really going to Paris for four months. I think I shall be for the Seine, though I would prefer to drown in the Isar… The only bright spot about the arrangement is that perhaps there will be a revolution in Paris while we are there.”

Illness only made Unity’s depressed reaction to leaving Munich more extreme in those first two weeks of October. Her letters home take a mournful tone as her doctor recommended bed rest to cure her “very bad throat.”

Melancholy took over. Outside information came from the radio and Erich. Unity Mitford did her best to follow political developments such as the elections in Memel and the grand opening of the annual Winterhilfswerk. The former (a disputed electoral success for pro-Nazi German activists in this area torn between Germany and Lithuania in the wake of the First World War) and the latter (the Nazi charity and public relations campaign) both lifted her spirits some. Although Unity refused his offer to move her to his mother’s house for recuperation, Erich’s records, gifts, and specially permitted visits

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548 Ibid., 76-7.
(regulated by Unity’s chaperone, the Baroness LaRoche) helped cheer her as well.

Unfortunately, all these things were not enough to cure her sickness. Erich left for military duties on 14 October. The doctor suggested removing her to a clinic.

Unity Mitford’s father decided to visit, as family back in Britain grew more and more anxious. Unity wrote her mother soon after his arrival: “Forge is wonderful, he fetches me the lovely cold soup I love, from the Regina, and braves ridicule by carrying the pot through the hall to a taxi. Yesterday, against strict orders by the doctor, we went out to lunch at the Osteria. To-day the doctor will come and find me flown. We plan to leave here for Berlin on Sunday.”\textsuperscript{550} It is unclear if Unity Mitford saw another doctor in Berlin. Regardless, she was well enough to tour the city with her father, according to a letter sent 21 October. This letter and the ones following it describe her father’s inability to embrace Germany to the extent his daughter did:

He worries all the waiters and servants dreadfully. You see they can mostly speak a little English and he will talk to them as if they were English, and on the train he suddenly said to the dining car man, ‘I don’t think much of your permanent way, but the rolling stock is pretty good going on. These cigarettes are killing me by inches.’ Of course the man didn’t understand anything and Forgy went on repeating it without explaining. Then he fires questions at them like ‘Do they sell Brambles here?’ (his kind of hat) or he tells them about her ladyship and expects them to know it’s you. The poor things are so confused, I think they think he’s a bit cracked.\textsuperscript{551}

While Lord Redesdale comes off as the bad stereotype of a Briton abroad, Unity’s position as someone who understands both the German confusion and the British confusion in this culture clash is significant. This position with a foot in each world had increasingly become her own view of her existence. While both Britons and Germans

\textsuperscript{550} Redesdale MS, 77. 
\textsuperscript{551} Ibid., 78.
regarded her as an outsider, she believed herself an insider in both countries.

The one place Unity was a growing insider was Hitler’s inner circle, and she used her connections to introduce her father to the dictator on 24 October. 552 “Sweet Dr. Goebbels,” as she called him in a letter home, attended along with his wife Magda (one of the handful of women occasionally termed the Reich’s substitute first lady) and the pair’s three-year-old daughter Helga. 553 Unity Mitford felt pleased that her father had met Hitler even if she expressed frustration over the language barrier. 554 She wrote her mother, “I think the Führer liked Forge… The Führer roared with laughter when I said all Farve liked doing was skating.” 555 Because of translation difficulties, the conversation quickly settled on serious topics like politics. According to Unity’s relation of events, Hitler and her father discussed England’s approaching General Election, English dissatisfaction with Italy’s recent treatment of Ethiopia, imperial economics, and the ineffective League of Nations. Hitler seems to have been cagey, characterizing England and Italy’s problematic relations as “a misunderstanding.” He appealed to Farve with the

552 Joseph Goebbels, Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels: Teil I, Aufzeichnungen 1923-1941, edited by Elke Fröhlich, 9 vols (München: K.G. Saur, 1998-2005), 335. Goebbels describes being at this meeting in his diary entry for 24 October 1935, but he seems to mistake Lord Redesdale for his wife. His mention of the pair is quite brief, and this could be the reason for the error. Since the date falls within Lord Redesdale’s confirmed visit to Unity during her illness and her letters to Lady Redesdale back in England exist at this time describing the meeting between Lord Redesdale and Hitler, it seems much more likely that Goebbels made a mistake. Instead, there is evidence (for examples see J & C Guinness, 377; Letter for April 1935, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords) that Unity’s mother met Hitler earlier (in April 1935). In Beyond the Pale, Nicholas Mosley repeats this mistake (probably based on the published Goebbels diaries) of connecting Unity’s mother’s meeting with Hitler to the fall 1935. He does, however, quote Lady Redesdale as saying that “she got the impression that Hitler ‘had plenty of leisure…. In congenial company he would stay and talk for ever… he gave the impression of doing always whatever he wanted at the moment, unhampered by any set time table or urgent work waiting to be done.’” (368).

553 Letter to Muv from 24 Oct 1935 about tea on 23 Oct 1935, Redesdale MS, 79. In his diary entry describing the tea, Goebbels wrote proudly of how his daughter was very sweet and well-behaved so that Hitler welcomed her presence. Goebbels, 9 Volumes Diaries, 335

554 A man Unity describes as “Herr Schmidt” served as translator for the conversation. This is probably German Foreign Service translator Paul Schmidt. Paul Schmidt, Hitler’s Interpreter (New York: Macmillan, 1951).

555 Redesdale MS, 79.
idea that Italians underestimated the English because they had not fought them in the last war. Only Germans who knew firsthand English ferocity had an adequate idea of their strength.\footnote{Ibid., 80.} Neither party cared much for the League of Nations, but Farve’s assessment that Germany grew in influence with its rejection of the League must have been exactly what Hitler wanted to hear. Lord Redesdale felt “everyone now waited for Germany’s opinion.”\footnote{Ibid., 81.} Goebbels’ diary mentions that Hitler learned how Germany’s new policies were growing in popularity in England, and such an impression probably comes from statements like these.\footnote{Goebbels, Diaries [Elke Fröhlich, ed., Samtliche Fragmente, Teil 1, Band 2, 4 vols. (München: K.G. Saur, 1987)—in other series would’ve been in Teil I, Band 3/I, 2005:] 24 Oktober 1935.} Several scholars have noted that the Germans had an exaggerated sense of the British aristocracy’s political importance. This would have made Hitler and Goebbels more likely to pay special attention to Lord Redesdale’s opinions. (Another common misconception among Nazi leaders was how much aristocratic British guests favored their movement. While many British aristocrats voiced admiration for fascism’s perceived efficiency and opposition to communism, most aristocrats were too ardently patriotic and enthusiastic about Britain’s own Empire overseas to ever seriously support German power.)

Unity Mitford’s father continued to dismay her with his dislike of sightseeing, but all of the Mitford siblings treated intractability and curmudgeonly ways as a great joke. None of the siblings seemed to truly fear their father. Decca even sent him cartoons of himself yelling at fellow skaters in letters.\footnote{Decca’s early letters to Muv and Farve from Paris, (211: 1697), Jessica Mitford Collection, Ohio State University Archives.} This suggests Unity Mitford would not have been shocked by her father’s preference for all things British and his room at the
Kaiserhof. Instead of being genuinely angry, she went to opera with Magda Goebbels and Goebbels’ sister Maria (who had been his hostess and housekeeper before his marriage to Magda) after Farve declined an invitation to attend with Hitler and Josef Goebbels. Magda also took her to museums amid lunch at the British Embassy and another lunch with Wagner and Ribbentrop. Lunch at the British Embassy for a British peer would not have been exceptional. Unity's invitations to spend so much time with two of the Third Reich's First Ladies, the Gauleiter of Munich and Upper Bavaria (Wagner), and the future German ambassador to Britain suggest, however, something of the importance Unity Mitford held within Hitler's inner circle. Munich was a city where the Nazi Party elite came to play, and it was all very well to socialize with an amusing young lady there. In Berlin though, this was the heart of government. To take time from work in the nation's political capital would have meant something different. This early in Unity Mitford's acquaintance it is hard to discern whether this was due to Nazi overestimation of the influence British peers held over their government, but even if her father's proximity lent Unity importance during this trip to Berlin, she was clearly not a tourist without political implications in the city. Her quick note to her mother that Wagner was “divine” but she “didn't like Ribbentrop much,” for example, later impacted her views shared with Hitler on Ribbentrop's appointment as ambassador. Unity’s status in Germany had shifted, as would her status in Britain, as a result of her friendships and politics.

Between her late October visit to Berlin and a late December return to Germany,
Unity Mitford visited her family in Britain and accompanied Muv and Decca to Paris. Little record in the form of Unity's letters exists of this visit to France. A letter cited in Mary Lovell's book describes Decca and Unity flirting with Oscar Wilde's niece, Dolly Wilde. Nancy connected them with this queen of Parisian society, but the sisters enjoyed teasing their mother about Wilde's open lesbian orientation more than they appreciated the connection to the artistic geniuses of the city: “...Unity and Decca deliberately irritated Sydney by pretending to be 'in love' with Dolly, fighting to sit next to her in a taxi, stroking her fur collar, and accepting gifts of frilly nightgowns from her.”\textsuperscript{562} The letter cited, however, does not give a date, and this may have been a later trip to the city. Instead of Unity's own record, most information from these months comes from mentions in her sisters' letters and actions. Diana received press coverage after she came upon a Hyde Park demonstration. The speakers promoting a ban on German goods because of Nazism upset her, and according to Jonathan Guinness, she felt a keen sense of injustice as so many with a very different point of view from her own surrounded her. She was the only person present to raise her hand in a vote to oppose the ban, and when she gave a Nazi salute as the National Anthem played, the situation turned ugly.\textsuperscript{563} Such outspoken behavior was not characteristic of Diana, but her devotion to politics was often based on her own sense of personal loyalty to Mosley, Hitler, and others. Her statements suggest she saw this as a defense of her unusual beliefs instead of the sort of provocative action Unity relished. In a 28 October News Chronicle article, Diana stated, “‘I simply wanted to give my opinion like anyone else.’”\textsuperscript{564} Only a letter fragment from Unity to Diana

\textsuperscript{562} Lovell, 202-3. Undated 1935/6 letter from Jessica to Nancy Mitford, Select correspondence between Diana Mosley and Unity Mitford, Chatsworth House Trust Papers.  
\textsuperscript{563} J & C Guinness, 381.  
\textsuperscript{564} News Chronicle (London), 28 October 1935.
describes the two sisters' communication about the elections that fall. Unity simply laments how out of touch she feels with the British Union of Fascists and its electoral plans: “Oh dear, I have been telling everybody, including the Führer and Ribbentrop, that the Leader [Mosley] is standing in the election. And now he isn't. They will think I am stupid not to know.”

The letters from Decca in Paris gave more information on the Mitford family's most ardent fascist throughout November 1935. Before Unity's arrival in Paris, Decca was already thinking of her closest sister with mixed emotions that come through in one letter to Diana. She starts teasingly, “It is so lovely being in Paris again, we are all enjoying it terrifically, specially me. Do try & get Boud not to come as I don't think she'd like it, one doesn't want a really huge wet blanket in such a small flat.” The second reference to Unity in the letter, however, is less jocular: “Muv saw in the papers that the filthy old Boud has been putting posters on people's cars, saying 'The Jews take everything, even our names' (it didn't actually say Boud, but of course, we guessed).” Her teasing her tries to be light. The reference to “the filthy old Boud” is typical of the sisters' affectionate ribbing, but a certain discomfort with Unity's public role and her racism comes across at the same time. In one of her autobiographies, Decca writes about arguments with Unity and Diana over fascist anti-Semitism. The Brown Book of Hitler Terror exposé had alerted her to the violent persecution already emerging in Germany, but this early documentation of Nazi cruelty was too “Communist-inspired” to convince

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565 Letter fragment in image is from Unity to Diana from 24 Oct 1935 in Berlin, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 32.
566 Letter from Decca to Diana in Nov 1935, Jessica Mitford, Decca, 21. Another letter at Ohio State from this time period contains a caricature of an enormous Unity overwhelming a closet-sized apartment. Underlining and ampersand in the original. (Letter from Decca to Muv (211: 1697), Jessica Mitford Collection, Ohio State University Archives)
567 Ibid. Underlining in the original.
the rest of her family.\footnote{Jessica Mitford, \textit{H \& R}, 95-6. Fascism worried Unity’s parents from time to time because it was not traditional or British, but Communism was much worrying for the conservative aristocrats.} Letters to Unity contain less of this discomfort, but instead they contain the usual Boud poems teasing about death and Boudledidge phrases. Still, she signs, “Give [Diana] my love, & hate to Hitler.”\footnote{Letter from Decca to Unity dated in with Decca at Swinbrook after Paris, Charlotte Mosley, \textit{The Mitfords}, 67.}

Decca was not the only Mitford sister to feel unsure about how to deal with Unity's new public persona by the end of 1935. Nancy had published her own attempt to come to terms with the family's relationship with fascism that spring. Unlike Decca, Diana, or Unity, Nancy never devoted herself to a particular political ideology, but through her writings and her intrinsic character, the oldest Mitford sister did reveal a sort of allegiance to ridicule and satire. When Decca wrote about arguments over Nazism reducing her to tears of frustration, Nancy responded by inventing a Jewish great-grandmother in the Mitford family tree.\footnote{Jessica Mitford, \textit{H \& R}, 96.} Nancy's most controversial act, however, was her 1935 novel, \textit{Wigs on the Green}. The book describes four young Londoners rusticating to avoid uncomfortable social situations. They discover several local eccentrics, including a young lady named Eugenia Malmains. Eugenia's impassioned speeches in support of the Union Jackshirt movement from the top of an overturned washtub on a village green both amuse the Londoners and endear this eccentric young woman to them. The Union Jackshirts are a thinly-veiled British Union of Fascists parody. Eugenia's size and hairstyle also match descriptions of Unity around 1934, and her one-woman rural crusade with a beleaguered “yellow pacifist of a Nanny” rushing after her must have stung Nancy's sister. Eugenia ropes her new friends into muddling former British kings...
and queens into an odd “great fascists in British history” pageant.571 The bored Londoners ultimately decide that the Union Jackshirt movement is rather ridiculous. They retain affection for Eugenia's bizarre mix of eccentricity and innocence, however. This quirky fondness for Eugenia that comes across both in the main characters and the author is probably the best guide to Nancy's feelings. While both the ridiculous and even the repulsive in the Union Jackshirts are subject to criticism, Eugenia Malmains, a fat, crazy fascist character, is essentially fun. The other characters like her. Nancy Mitford captures her sister's paradoxical ability to combine the most hideous political views and violent racism with the power to summon extraordinary loyalty, love, and humor.

Unity and Diana both saw Wigs on the Green as something of betrayal. Nancy had temporarily worn the Black shirt with her husband Peter Rodd, and she knew before the book's publication that it would upset family relationships. She wrote Unity in May 1934, “Darling Forgery, The book about you is going to be extraordinary, your grandparents who you live with are called Lord and Lady Tremorgan (TPTPOF) & you are called Eugenia let me know if you rather not be.”572 Unity referred back to the book in a long chatty letter in July: “Now seriously, about that book. I have heard a bit about it from Muv, & I warn you you can't possibly publish it, so you'd better not waste any more time on it. Because if you did publish it I couldn't possibly ever speak to you again, as from the date of publication.”573 Nancy's letter from 6 November 1934 ignores such comments

571 Nancy Mitford, Wigs on the Green, quote regarding nanny from page 244. Page 45 in Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords notes that Nancy didn't republish the book because of just family disapproval but because of the atrocities discovered at the end of World War Two. Also, note that despite the many digs about Unity's size which Nancy gives in the book, a letter from Dec 7 of 1935 to Decca (box 212: folder 1707, Ohio State University Archives) notes that she loaned a dress to Unity recently. A new edition of Wigs on the Green has recently been published with an introduction by Charlotte Mosley.

572 From Nancy to Unity dated 8 May 1934, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 44.

573 From Unity to Nancy dated July 1934, Ibid., 49. Italics in original.
and explains that the book progresses well with more and more about Eugenia. The letter is even addressed to “Eugenia Fitzforgery.” By May 1935, however, Nancy has caved to Unity's demand that the book not mention Hitler. Nancy writes:

Darling Stone-Heart Bone-Head,
I am very glad to hear that you are returning anon. Do leave your rubber truncheons behind & pump some warm palpitating blood into that stony heart for the occasion. I have taken out all reference to the F. (not the P.O.F., the other F.) in my book, & as it cost me about 4/6 a time to do so, you ought to feel quite kindly towards me now. [Nancy differentiates between the Führer (Hitler) and the Poor Old Führer (Mosley)] …
Head of Bone
Heart of Stone
Sister-hater
Mother-baiter
I will finish this poem later
Love from your (undoubtedly) Genius Sister

The letter sent to Unity 21 June 1935, immediately before the book's publication, is almost frantic: “Darling Head of Bone & Heart of Stone, Oh dear oh dear the book comes out on Tuesday. Oh dear, I won't let Rodd give a party for it, or John Sutro either, who wanted to. Oh dear I wish I have never been born into such a family of fanatics. Oh dear.” Nancy pleads with her to avoid it, then to love it as much as I Face the Stars (a German novel about a Rhineland family devastated by the Versailles Treaty) or Mein Kampf... “So now write quick & say you forgive me. I did take out some absolutely wonderful jokes you know & all the bits about the Captain. Oh! Dear!” Unity seems to have gotten over her anger quite quickly, but while it did not depict Diana, the third Mitford sister seems to have been angry about the novel longer than Unity. Unity was

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574 From Nancy to Unity and Diana from 6 Nov 1934, Ibid., 51.
576 Nancy to Unity from 21 June 1935, Ibid., 69.
577 Ibid., 70.
accustomed to teases such as the cartoon Nancy drew of her with a bone head, stone heart, a rubber truncheon in her first, and “hobnail boots for trampling on Jews” on her feet in one letter. The same letter called her “Mrs. Wessel” at the same time it bragged about the collage of Hannibal crossing the Alps Unity gave Hitler for his birthday. Diana, however, was always notable for being fiercely protective of her loved ones. She refused to tolerate slights to Mosley. A letter from Nancy to Diana in June 1935 tries to defend her ridicule of Mosley and refers back to a tense conversation over Wigs on the Green at the Ritz “ages ago.” While these two sisters were able to meet at a mutual friend's luncheon by November, Diana stayed “cold but contained”.

Jonathan Guinness points out that Nancy never visited Wootton Lodge, Diana's home from 1936-1939. Politics were especially personal for this Mitford sister.

Britain held a General Election in November 1935. Unity was in her native country for the event, but she probably had little to do with the event. Mosley and the British Union of Fascists, as described above in her partial letter to Diana, did not stand in the election. After the chaos at Olympia and Rothermere's abandonment, the party decided to wait until the next General Election. Nancy would have known this, but in a letter to Mark Ogilvie-Grant, she quipped, “I hear that Bobo & Diana are going to stand outside the Polls next polling day & twist people's arms to prevent their voting, so I have invented (& patented at Gamages) a sham arm which can be screwed on & which makes a noise like Hitler making a speech when twisted so that, mesmerized they will drop it &

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579 Nancy to Diana from 18 June 1935, Ibid., 58-60.
580 Nancy to Mark Ogilvie-Grant from 9 November 1935, Nancy Mitford, Love from Nancy, 70-1.
581 J & C Guinness, 303.
By December, Unity Mitford was eager to be back in Germany. Things must have been more cramped over the winter as the Mitfords sold Swinbrook and made Old Mill Cottage their primary residence. Diana's home must once again have provided something of a refuge for Unity. A picture of Unity with Diana and her two young sons, Jonathan and Desmond, shows her in profile before Diana's fireplace. Desmond is in her lap, and Unity must have enjoyed her time with the small boys as her letters mention frequent gifts and goodies she sent them from Germany. As a close relative described, however, “She loved children, but she wasn't by the fireside sort of domestic. Not at all.” Instead the only unmarried Mitford daughter to live on her own hurried back to Munich and relative independence at the Pension Doering.

The return trip to Munich gives a glimpse of travel in the Third Reich. Instead of the picture of steely efficiency, Unity is scrambling to make her train, accidentally goes four hours in the wrong direction before discovering she's taken the wrong train, and there are barely enough seats until a soldier offers his to the young lady. Wailing children, overcrowded middle seats, and inadequate reading light are complaints a modern traveler can relate to, but Unity adds that she sat near “a Tcheko Slovakian Jew, fat and young, who of course had the corner and behaved disgustingly all night.” This comment marks one of the few documented occasions when Unity Mitford displays her vehement anti-Semitism towards an individual instead of attacking “The Jews” as some abstract

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582 Nancy to Mark Ogilvie-Grant from 9 November 1935, Nancy Mitford, *Love from Nancy*, 70-1.
584 Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, interview with author, October 29, 2008.
585 Letter to Muv from 21 Dec 1935, Redesdale MS, 82.
menace. It provides the reader with a disturbing reminder of how one human being could try to strip another human being of his/her humanity even as they stand face to face.

December 1935 in Munich provides further evidence of Unity Mitford's growing commitment to Nazism, unique independence from gender norms for a woman of her class, and status among Hitler's inner circle. It was on her return to Munich that month that she moved from the Studentininheim to the Pension Doering. This could have been because the 'heim was for female students, and after the visa issues earlier in 1935, it was becoming increasingly clear that Unity no longer lived in Germany as a student. In addition, the pension offered more space at less cost than Unity's previous residence. She wrote enthusiastically, “My room looks out right on the Siegestor (Arc de Triomphe as you used to call it).”\footnote{Ibid., 83.}

Regardless of the motivation for the move, Unity Mitford would have had much more freedom as a boarder there then in the dormitory atmosphere of her previous place. The older woman described as “keeping” the pension would have worried about her residents' respectability, but she probably would have had less authority than a dorm matron.

Bavaria is at its best at Christmas. The state's whimsical combination of rural gingerbread and magisterial baroque architecture under snow is enchanting, and the Bavarians are world famous for their elaborate Christmas customs: ornate trees, carved nativity scenes, busy Christmas markets full of shoppers and spiced wine... Unity Mitford had an obsessive love for Munich, and such views of its streets at Christmas only encouraged this. She wrote home on 21 December, “Munich looked wonderful, deep snow and bright blue sky and hot sun, and decorated lit-up Christmas trees at the street...
corners, huge ones. I am so happy to be here again, I can hardly believe it when I find myself walking in the Ludwigstrasse. I visited Max [Ettlinger] in the Brown House, they have two huge Christmas Trees in the hall.”

Another day she wrote, “I can’t tell you how lovely the Christmas Krippenmarkt (market for Christmas cribs) is. The Cribs are simply wonderful and also the little angels and other figures. I bought the three Kings, dressed in velvet and satin and with gold crowns and carrying gold gifts, for six marks. I am longing for you to see them.”

Another evening, Unity impressed all the wives at the Stormtroopers’ Christmas party with her new beaded dress—They expressed awe over what they misinterpreted as hand-beading, but Unity let them: “I felt it gave me great added kudos... I hope you will enjoy Christmas as much as I am doing. There is certainly nothing like a German Christmas.”

Unity's contact at the Osteria Bavaria, a waitress named Ella, informed her of Hitler's impending visit on December 23. Unity spent an afternoon there listening to him:

He was absolutely heavenly all the time, in a wonderful mood and very gay.... [A letter to Diana describes him playfully flipping a coin to decide which soup to have.] I told the Führer all about Paris and he roared [with laughter—this is a common expression among the Mitford siblings] when I told him about the German-Jewish dance evening I went to. He talked a good deal about the Jews and said that lately 10,000 have gone from Germany to Italy because there they can do good business in the way of profiteering. He is happy to be rid of them.

It is not clear from remaining documentary evidence what party Unity refers to in Paris, but her anti-Semitic joking clearly delighted the dictator. When Unity described the same afternoon in a letter to Diana, she wrote, “He talked a lot about the Jews, which was

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587 Ibid., 82-3.
588 Letter to Muv from 25 Dec 1935, Ibid., 84-5.
589 Letter to Muv from 23 Dec 1935, Ibid., 84.
lovely.” That afternoon, Hitler also introduced her to the German boxer Max Schmeling, “who is just back from America... very nice, and handsome in a boxerish manner.”

Schmeling’s successes as a heavyweight champion delighted the Nazis, who saw this as further evidence of Nordic excellence. Unity mingled with the man, Heinrich Hoffmann [Hitler’s photographer], and later, Mercedes Direktor-General Jakob Werlin. She worried over SA-Adjutant Wilhelm Brückner’s health and gossiped until leaving with Werlin to tour his new shop and “all the beautiful motors.” The afternoon was especially exciting for Unity “because at intervals a man from the table went to the telephone and returned with the latest news from Abyssinia and Egypt.”

That night she attended a Christmas party at a Munich clinic run by an SS doctor named Hössl:

…it was terribly pathetic, with all the little lupus-faced children dressed up as angels. The grown-up patients were pathetic too... The head doctor rushed up to me & thanked me profusely for all my kindness to the children, I felt awful as all I have even done is to club with Armida & Rosemary [Macindoe, two English sisters also studying in Germany] & send them a Prinz-Regenten-Kuchen. So I sent them another today.

Goose and pheasant dinners at the Osteria took the place of more British turkey and bread sauce. The lunches, the charity event, the evening parties all sound like the whirl that would have surrounded Unity Mitford back in London’s high society. While it is easy to dismiss this as trivial socializing, whether consciously or not, Unity was building and

591 Letter to Muv 23 Dec 1935, Redesdale MS, 83; Hamilton, 338. Schmeling won the world heavyweight title in 1930. He also had a famous rivalry with African American heavyweight Joe Louis. He defeated Louis in 1936 in his opponent’s first loss, but Louis won a later bout in just over two minutes in the first round, however. Schmeling would enlist in the Luftwaffe during World War II and remain popular among fans on both sides of the Atlantic long after the war was over.

592 Letter to Muv 23 Dec 1935, Redesdale MS, 83.

593 Letter to Unity from Diana letter from 23 Dec 1935, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 68-9. Odd reference to a “Dr. Bartel” in the SS who worked for a hospital that treated patients suffering from venereal disease is in Pryce-Jones (114) interview with Rosemary Macindoe. It is not clear if this relates in any way to the hospital mentioned above.
maintaining the social and political ties that started to compose a more adult life for her in Germany. No longer a student, she would start to refashion herself from socialite abroad to unofficial ambassadress.
Chapter Five

The Uncommon Reader:

“Then of course there was the rather sad sister who had the fling with Hitler.”

While never demonstrating a direct impact on politics, Unity Mitford attracted increasing attention as a symbol of British fascism in Germany and a symbol of Nazism in Britain. This attention increased as her relationship with Hitler grew closer. Over the course of 1935, Unity Mitford received more and more special attention from Hitler himself. On Christmas Eve 1935, “when I came home I found in my room a lovely Christmas Tree, all decorated and with candles and standing in a huge basket quite full of boxes of chocolates, cakes, biscuits, fruit and nuts. On it was a card with an eagle and a Hakenkreuz [swastika] printed on it, saying 'Frl Unity Mitford, Best Christmas and New Years wishes sends you faithfully Adolf Hitler.’” Unity hosted a small party with her visiting boyfriend Erich, her friend Mary Woodisse, and Mary's future husband. The gift sounds common enough, likely one of several such baskets Hitler's administrative assistants would have sent on his behalf during the holidays, but even her name's presence on a list of recipients signifies Mitford's growing status. As the one man at the pinnacle of power in Nazi Germany, Hitler ran the country like a sick parody of a medieval monarch. He frequently pitted factions against each other and encouraged competition for his favor. To make this system work, he could be liberal with gifts and titles for his followers. He fostered an atmosphere in which they would compete for such rewards and then treasure them. For women, not allowed official access to political

595 Letter to Muv from 25 Dec 1935, Redesdale MS, 84. Party described below is from the same source. Note that although Unity looked forward to Erich's visit for five days that December, she also spent quite a lot of time with her friend, Julius Stadelmann.
power, the gifts would be more personal items. Evidence of this comes from Hitler's gifts to Unity and to other important women in the Third Reich. For example, Winifred Wagner received “an ivory sewing case one year and a small pendant in the shape of a triple swastika the next, and a leather vanity case which her son Wieland later sold on, and then that new Mercedes for Christmas in 1938.” Unity herself would later receive a camera, a small gold swastika pin, signed and framed photographs, and other small gifts.

After a New Year’s celebration with fireworks, Unity spent a little less time engaged in the social whirl. While she still visited the Osteria Bavaria and met with Hitler there, she spent more time almost studying National Socialism. She wrote her mother about work on “an abridged translation of Mein Kampf” and her interest in Ludendorff’s “new book” Der Totale Krieg [Total War; Ludendorff was one of Germany's more famous conservative generals leftover from the First World War]. The latter seemed to worry her because of both the potential for violence and worries the foreign readers would see the Ludendorff text as “representative of National Socialist Germany”. Five days later, Unity Mitford applied to her friend Gauleiter Wagner for permission to tour the concentration camp at Dachau. He promised to arrange this for her, although the government did not customarily allow women to tour the facility. This crusty “Old Fighter” struck Unity as “a sweet man and I love him, so would you. He reminds me of Uncle Percy.”

Unity Mitford supplemented her January education with the opera

Winifred's gifts in Nike Wagner (157). It should be noted that women also gave Hitler gifts as bizarre tributes. In Geppert's article, he describes the women sending things like baked goods for the dictator's birthday, and Unity, in addition to the Hannibal collage mentioned previously, once gave a Hitler a ring the Mitfords teasingly called “the chicken mess ring.” (For information on the ring, see Lovell, 267, and Letter from Debo to Diana from 19 April 1984, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 697).

Letter to Muv from 2 Jan 1936, Redesdale MS, 91-2.
Letter to Muv from 8 Jan 1936, Ibid., 92. This letter also discusses several visits with Hitler at the
Tannhäuser and a film on the German army's reconstruction under Nazism. Unity wrote of the film: “It made me proud to belong to the Germanic race. I hope one day our soldiers will fight side by side with that wonderful new Army.” As usual, Unity Mitford sees nothing odd in celebrating what she perceives as German successes. Instead, she makes assumptions that all this will somehow give Britain a strong new ally to build a new world.

Mitford's British patriotism made itself evident in her reaction to the sudden death of King George V on 20 January. She had fussed over his health in a letter to her father, but by the 22nd, she wrote her mother on black-edged paper. Diana was visiting at this time, and the pair wore black arm bands, foregoing an invitation to the opera from General Ritter von Epp and even the extravagant Fasching carnival out of respect for the King's passing. They also visited the British foreign consul in Munich to sign their names. Through all this, Unity wrote home, eager to tell her parents how she felt Germany stood beside England during this time: “There was I thought a very sweet bit in a German paper. At the end of the account it says 'Germany stands with the English people at the King's bier, and takes party in the grief which moves England to-day.'”

She also speculated over which official representative of the Third Reich Hitler would send to attend the funeral, describing all the flags at half-mast as Diana flew out several days later. On 2 February, Unity Mitford dragged her reluctant friend Mary Woodisse to a formal memorial service for the King. Unity felt slightly scandalized not everyone

599 Letter to Farve from 20 Jan 1936, Redesdale MS, 93. Unity saw a second film, this one directed by Leni Riefenstahl, “about the Army” with Diana on 22 January 1936.
600 Letter to Muv 22 Jan 1936, Ibid., 94. More information on the King's death available on page 79 of Barrow's Gossip.
601 Letter to Muv from 30 Jan 1936, Redesdale MS, 95.
wore the appropriate black clothing, and the service itself also failed to live up to her expectations for a German tribute to the deceased British King: “The service was dreadful, because the parson was so awful & made a hopeless sermon in very bad English, mixing his metaphors so much that in the end one forgot whether the King was a temple or a pillar in the temple or a bird nesting in the roof of the temple.”

Unity Mitford's one bright spot during this time period came from the celebrations of the third anniversary of Hitler coming to power. Unity lunched with him the day before his address to “the youth” [university students from Munich and other German cities who travelled to watch the dictator speak]. The crowd's emotional reaction made Unity proud to be in the exclusive inner circle at Hitler's Osteria. (Because of its location near Munich's university, many students came there that day in hopes of seeing Hitler.) She was especially pleased that no one reacted spitefully to her presence as a foreigner since just two weeks earlier women in a crowd outside the State Library mocked her lipstick until Hitler caught sight of her there and came to greet her. This would be almost the closest Unity ever came to acknowledging her outsider status in Nazi Germany. “We were afraid perhaps they were hating us for being so lucky, because after all they have struggled for him and we haven't. But they didn't hate us a bit and we talked to quite a lot of them and when we went they all stood up and saluted us.”

Even as she expressed concern over German jealousy, she used her contacts to show a young American Nazi Hitler from a distance at the restaurant. Still, she followed the SS, SA, and NSKK

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602 Letter to Diana dated 2 Feb 1936, Select Correspondence, Chatsworth House Trust Papers.
603 Lipstick incident from 8 Jan 1936 and Osteria from 30 January 1936. Both letters to Muv in Redesdale MS, 92-5. Bits regarding American= from letter to Diana dated 2 Feb 1936 with an addendum dated 4 Feb 1936, Select Correspondence, Chatsworth House Trust Papers.
604 Letter to Muv from 30 Jan 1936, Redesdale MS, 95.
parades the next day in Munich's Königlicher Platz and listened to the radio broadcast of
the Berlin SA rally. Hitler's speech there thrilled Unity. She shared her favorite lines in a
letter to Diana: “Alles was Ihr seid, seid Ihr durch mich; und alles, was ich bin, bin ich
nur durch euch allein.” [sic; translated by CM as “Everything you want to be, you want
to be through me; and everything I am, I am only because of you all.”]605 Press back in
Britain took note of the excitement, but did not react to this with the same elation Unity
Mitford found from this one man claiming to mystically embody the German Volk. As
Franklin Gannon notes, “Watching the snaking columns of torch-bearing storm troops
who marched past Hitler's window that night, Wadsworth wrote to the Observer that the
event was covered by the German Press 'with an enthusiasm perhaps not entirely shared
by the people as a whole'. “606

In 1936, the Third Reich's focus was on promoting itself to the rest of the world,
and the Winter Olympics followed close on the heels of Hitler's anniversary festivities.
Unity wrote Diana that the weather turned from sun to snow just in time for the events.607
As a prelude to the larger and more famous Olympic Games set to take place that
summer, the Nazi hierarchy carefully stage-managed every detail, and it seems that at the
last minute even the weather did not dare to deviate from their plans. Joseph Goebbels
and German Sports Federation President Theodor Lewald recognized the Olympics as a
chance to win hearts and minds both within Germany and without it so preparations had
started soon after the Nazis arrived in power. (The International Olympics Committee had

605 Letter to Diana from 2 Feb 1936, Select Correspondence, Chatsworth House Trust Papers.
606 Gannon, 89.
607 In 4 Feb 1936 addendum to the letter to Diana dated 2 Feb 1936 from Chatsworth House Trust Papers.
awarded the Games to Germany back in 1931.) The small town of Garmisch-Partenkirchen in the Bavarian Alps had a new Olympic ski-jump, two new stadiums, and elaborate new press facilities for the event. The Nazis began their Olympics in the midst of a minor blizzard, and as the Olympic flag joined so many other nations', cannons, bells, Olympic oaths, and a brief Hitler speech all competed for the audience's attention.

Unity drove from Munich with her SS friend Stadelmann to be there in the freezing snow for these opening moments. She watched from a distant stand, admiring some of the ski suits and the giant Olympic flame. When she wrote her mother, however, Unity felt particularly pleased that each nation's flag dipped in salute as it passed Hitler. She added, “I am glad to say that England was one of the few countries which saluted with the Hitler salute when passing him.” (In his history of the 1936 German Olympics, *Hitler's Games*, Duff Hart-Davis describes these salutes somewhat differently: “In the stadium most teams elicited roars of applause when they raised their hands to the Führer in what appeared to be Nazi salutes. In fact they were supposed to be Olympic salutes, with hand and arm outstretched, but the crowd took them for straightforward tributes to their leader.” Since the fascist salute originated as an imitation of an earlier Roman Empire salute, this makes the confusion entirely plausible.)

While the value of a successful international sporting event to a country's public relations and tourist industry is well-known even today, the Nazi regime had extra work
sweeping its ugliest realities under the rug during this invasion by foreign press. The United States hotly debated attending the games because of Germany's Nazi government, and American athletes and reporters proved difficult to please as guests, complaining about the level of applause in their entrances and the press space allotted. SS squads suppressed all evidence of an air crash in nearby Munich's central shopping area, which killed four and injured more, on the very day of the opening. Most telling of all was what would become known as Nazi Germany's “Olympic Pause.” This “pause” meant a temporary ban on anti-Semitism overt enough that foreigners would report back to their home countries about the brutality. In light of the genocide that followed, historians too often see the pre-Kristallnacht attacks on Jews as mere steps down the path to mass murder. It is important to remember, however, that this violence from 1933-1938 was hideous enough, even not knowing what would come later. The previously mentioned Nuremberg Laws eradicated German Jews' rights as citizens. Many lost their jobs, their friends, and their sense of safety in the face of boycotts of Jewish businesses, laws forbidding Jewish men and women to work for the German state, and physical and verbal violence. Visitors to Germany during the 1930s often mentioned the signs banning Jewish individuals from public facilities, shops, and even entire towns: “Jews Not Wanted Here,” “Jews Enter This Place At Their Risk,” “Jews Strictly Forbidden in This Town,” or “Warning to Pickpockets and Jews.” Orders came from the Nazi Minister of
the Interior that all such signs “along the railway line and the road from Munich to Garmisch-Partenkirchen” had to come down along with publicly posted copies of Der Stürmer.\textsuperscript{614} Openly anti-Semitic (and anti-African American) slurs in the press halted along with physical attacks such as beatings “to avoid giving foreigners propaganda to use against Germany.”\textsuperscript{615} The closing ceremonies on 16 February dazzled guests, in spite of their militaristic tone. Army, Navy, and Labor Service regiments surrounded the field with flags and artillery salutes as Dr. Ritter von Halt awarded the medals. After extinguishing the flame, organizers created a light-show from searchlights and fireworks.\textsuperscript{616} German officials paid close attention to foreign press reports to gauge reactions to their Winter Olympics. All of this formed a dress rehearsal for the coming summer.

As historian David Clay Large notes, tourism peaked in Munich between 1936 and 1937. Economic depression and uncertainty about the new regime deterred earlier visitors, and then, after 1937, the anxieties over Hitler's foreign policy became too much for many travelers.\textsuperscript{617} (Some would remain skeptical about visiting Germany throughout the 1930s because of the rumors of violence towards opponents of the regime, Roma, and Germany's Jewish population. Others, however, clearly had no such qualms.) During this time, Lord Londonderry, a distant relative of Unity Mitford and subject of a fascinating

\textsuperscript{614} Kruger, 24-6. Kruger notes that Roma and Sinti in Germany experienced no such “pause” but instead found themselves herded into concentration camps that ultimately led most inmates incarcerated during these Olympics to their death. (25)

\textsuperscript{615} Kruger, 25.

\textsuperscript{616} Hart-Davis, 102-3.

\textsuperscript{617} Large, \textit{Munich}, 278.
study by Sir Ian Kershaw, attended the Winter Olympics with his wife.\textsuperscript{618} Although they were ultimately closer with Goering (Londonderry hunted with him on occasion), Hitler received the pair with their daughter at the Reichskanzlei in early February 1936.\textsuperscript{619}

These and other events convinced the couple to encourage closer diplomatic ties between Britain and Nazi Germany. Londonderry was just one of several elite Britons interested in promoting connections with Hitler, and many joined the Anglo-German Fellowship. The Fellowship, which Ernest Tennant founded in 1934, included approximately 250 members by this time including “Lords Bracket, Lothian, McGowan, Mottistone, Redesdale [Unity’s father], the Earl of Glasgow, and the Duke of Wellington.”\textsuperscript{620} These men encouraged Hitler’s hopes for an Anglo-German alliance, but as mentioned above, Hitler continually underestimated their devotion to Britain. Their interest in Hitler was genuine. The dictator’s seeming economic revitalization, obsessive patriotism, militarism, opposition to communism, and even his racial policies attracted many. Forced to make a decision however, very few would abandon the aristocratic tradition of support for the British Empire and its interests. The British aristocracy had too great a history of military service to support another state’s interests before that of their own. This is part of why Unity Mitford disliked the Lord Londonderry and his wife, who she saw as stodgy and out of touch. She wrote Diana, “I felt bound to say that I was horrified that he should receive such people, and that he would soon find that practically all his English

\textsuperscript{618} Hart-Davis, 102-103.

\textsuperscript{619} Letter to Diana from 8 Feb 1936 Charlotte Mosley, \textit{The Mitfords}, 69. In this letter Unity writes that around this time, Hitler discussed at tea how his plans to make Germany’s army the greatest in the world within two years would make the British navy and the German army an unbeatable combination.

\textsuperscript{620} Kershaw, \textit{Londonderry}, 143-4. Griffiths discusses this in his \textit{Fellow Travellers of the Right} (Redesdale on pages 174-5), but while groundbreaking, the book takes the form of an expose of how many members of the British aristocracy felt attracted to fascism rather than a more searching analysis of why their attraction existed.
acquaintances were in concentration camps... he must have a very bad advisor as to which English people he receives.”

Just as Hitler failed to realize the depth of British aristocrats' attachment to the country they saw themselves as symbolizing, Unity Mitford never seemed to anticipate that her dual devotions to Britain (albeit a fascist version) and Nazi Germany might collide. In 1936, she was not the only one to feel that way. Unity grew increasingly close to Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels and his wife Magda during this time. She had an invitation from Magda and Goebbels' sister to the Olympics on 10 February, but when she arrived in warm winter clothes, Hitler had requested they visit him instead. She went with them to lunch at the Vier Jahreszeiten (Four Seasons) before touring the newly built Königsplatz and its new buildings. Riding in the long line of black Mercedes with Hitler and the Goebbels thrilled her. Touring the new buildings with him excited her almost as much: “One can see how much the Führer loves his buildings by the way he shows them with such pride. Of course they are the realization of his great ambition.”

When Unity toured the Brown House that afternoon, she enjoyed shocking her friend Max Ettlinger by arriving there with such exalted company. Only days before she had gone with Mary Woodisse and the Goebbels to tea in Hitler's private apartment. (Goebbels described this occasion in his diary, noting that Hitler discussed his feelings on churches in some

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621 Letter to Diana from 8 Feb 1936 Charlotte Mosley, *The Mitfords*, 69. Unity hints that Ribbentrop was the sources of bad advice when it came to meting British people on many occasion (including press baron Lord Beaverbrook, “which horrified me even more.”). Besides believing it would take the different connections to truly promote Nazism in Britain, Unity Mitford felt: “After all, he isn't like an ordinary politician, who has to receive anyone who is important. Visits to him should be reserved for those who have deserved it, by doing something for his cause or at any rate really loving him, regardless of titles & money & importance...” (page 69 also). She felt others just spread rumors and wasted time.

622 Letter to Muv from 11 Feb 1936, Redesdale MS, 97-8.

Unity Mitford's parents extended this stay in Germany a few weeks longer than planned when the Goebbels invited her to stay with them in Berlin after the Olympics. She went with Mercedes director Werlin to a motor show, and the Goebbels asked her to attend a Propaganda Ministry reception a few days later. She sounds proud in her letters home. The motor show allowed her to mingle with English journalists, and the reception at the Ministry featured about 600 individuals, including the entire Diplomatic Korps.

While Unity always preferred Munich's more relaxed atmosphere, she clearly enjoyed being at the center of political power. During these ten days in Berlin, Unity spent a few days with the Goebbels children and took at least one meal with Hitler and his circle nearly every day. When she left the Goebbels' home and Berlin, Unity rode back to Munich with Hitler in his private train. They talked together until three in the morning, and this was the closest she came to time alone with the dictator, as everyone else in Hitler's entourage eventually left to sleep. One night, she went out dancing at the Fasching carnival with Viktor Lutze, head of the SA after the Röhm purge and her “new great friend.”

Although Unity Mitford went home to Britain for a month soon after this, little evidence of how she spent this time exists, and she was soon back in Germany with her sister Diana.

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624 Goebbels, 9 vols. Diaries, 11 Feb 1936. Note that the most radical Nazis, including Goebbels, hoped to eventually replace Christian churches with devotion to the state. In the case of some like Himmler, this would take the form of a bizarre “replication” of pagan rituals from ancient Germanic tribes. In spite of this dislike of Christianity as a rival for Germans’ allegiance and a way of thinking that could encourage dangerous compassion, few Nazis openly attacked Christianity for fear of public backlash. They aimed instead at its gradual replacement. (Large, Munich, 246).

625 Letter to Muv from 21 Feb 1936, Redesdale MS, 100.

626 Letter to Muv from 24 Feb 1936, Ibid. Unity wrote her mother that Lutze was a popular and rather silly figure out dancing. She describes him in the middle of a large group at the Regina Bar while the crowd shouted “Lutze tanz! Lutze tanz! [Dance, Lutze!]” as she sat on the sidelines.
In early March 1936, Hitler had sent German troops to reoccupy the Rhineland, a zone demilitarized according to the Treaty of Versailles. Cologne, one of that area's most important cities, attracted particular focus in the press, and Unity and Diana met Hitler there when he visited on 28 March. During this time, Hitler was allegedly preparing for re-election. This was a dubious process at best. For example, the ballot only contained Nazi Party candidates, “thus 99 per cent of the electorate went to the polls, and 98.9 per cent voted for the Party list.”627 In spite of its fixed results, Hitler wanted to present the election results as the German people's enthusiastic response to his time in power so far. This meant extensive campaigning and promotion of the popular Rhineland reoccupation before the March 29 “election.” The dictator clearly did not expect the two sisters to be in this city for his campaign speech, but he responded to their presence with delight. Unity wrote, “Diana and I see the Führer at the Dom Hotel, Köln. [aka. The non-anglicized spelling of Cologne] He is astounded to see us and very pleased, and says “Oh wie schön.” He invited us to tea with him and other leaders in his room. I sit next to him.”628 The Mitfords' cousin, Randolph Churchill, wrote in his “Londoner's Diary” column in the Evening Standard that the two women even rode in Field-Marshal von Blomberg's car with Hitler “when he drove in triumph through the streets of Cologne that afternoon.”629 Churchill was not the only British journalist to notice the sisters' treatment. In fact, G. Ward Price of the Daily Telegraph mentioned this incident, which he witnessed himself, in his book I Know These Dictators. Price interviewed both Hitler and Mussolini

627 Per cent as 2 words= sic. Notes from Gannon, 100.
628 Replicated diary entry from 28 March 1936, Redesdale MS, 104. The meeting is also mentioned in Nicholas Mosley, Beyond the Pale, 368.
throughout the 1930s after making a name for himself in reporting before the First World War, and he ultimately became a friend of sorts to Unity. He also describes Hitler meeting the two Mitford sisters in the context of trying to argue what a well-mannered individual Hitler was and how rumors of him as a “woman-hater” were false. In spite of this goal in writing of Cologne, Price's account offers another perspective on the event:

As Hitler came into the hall, his expression was set and stern. He raised his hand automatically in response to the roar of 'Heil!' that met him, and to the sudden upflinging of arms in the Nazi salute. Then his eyes fell to the two sisters. His face broke at once into a smile.

'Was! Ihr beide hier!' he exclaimed. 'You must come and have tea with us.' And the warmth of the welcome that Mrs Guinness [Diana] and Miss Mitford [Unity] received from the leading members of the Nazi government assembled upstairs was proof of their popularity in the highest political circles in Germany.630

Price also notes that the two are some of the few foreigners allowed into Hitler's inner circle on occasion. He explains that the two avoid politics other than encouraging Hitler to think the best of Britain. This is not altogether true that Unity Mitford did not discuss politics with Hitler. In fact, she often shared her opinions, hoping to forge a fascist alliance between Britain and Germany someday. Diana, however, had additional goals during this time.

In 1936, Diana grew closer to the Goebbels just as Unity did. The friendship was perhaps a natural one as Magda Goebbels had much in common with the two sisters. Magda's politics and parenthood provided some of the basis for this, but she was also one of the few women in Hitler's inner circle who shared the sisters' tastes. While Nazi propaganda offered images of women in dirndls or uniforms, Magda ignored this in favor

of designer clothes. She wore make-up in public, smoked cigarettes in private, and had some minor scandals in her past. These traits may have made her unsuitable for the role of full time “First Lady of the Third Reich,” but they also made her more like the Mitfords' British friends. Goebbels too had greater education and more social experience than Unity's more uncouth “Old Fighter” and young SS friends in Munich. Diana spent time with both the Goebbels, including on 31 March in Berlin. Unity, Diana, and the Goebbels dined with Hitler in the Reichskanzlei that evening, and in his diary, Joseph Goebbels noted that they discussed the state of British politics and Mosley's movement over the meal. Unity and Diana joined the Goebbels and Hitler again on 2 April, but their topic of discussion does not appear in Joseph Goebbels' diary entry for that night.

By mid-April, Unity left to join her two younger sisters and their mother on a cruise, but Diana was in Berlin more and more on her own to discuss funding for Mosley's movement with the Nazi leadership. (It is not clear how much Unity Mitford did or did not know about this.) Between 24-25 April, Diana negotiated money at Schwanenwerder, the Goebbels' vacation home. She met with Jospeh Goebbels to discuss funding again on 19, 20, and 24 June of that year, but by his diary entries for 29 July and 6 August, Goebbels expresses frustration that Mosley wants more money. He writes that Mosley needs to do more for his own movement. More concerned entries

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631 Günther, 131 and 133. Magda shared the role of “First Lady” with Emmy Goering and Gertrud Scholtz-Klink. Goering was too ostentatious and had the same passion for fashion that clashed with Nazi propaganda while Scholtz-Klink’s austerity alienated many and lacked the sophistication necessary for entertaining on a grand scale. (Günther, 133-4, 137). For information of the Nazi propaganda images of women, Günther, 109, 119, and 138.

632 Goebbels, 9 vols. Diaries, 31 March 1936. Also dinner notes in Redesdale MS (104) diary entry replicated from 31 march 1936 in which Unity adds, “[Hitler] says about when he saw us at Köln, ‘Also, ich war so erstaunt Ich wusste nicht, traüme ich oder traüme ich nicht!”

633 Goebbels, 9 vols. Diaries, 2 April 1936

634 Ibid., 24 and 25 April 1936.

635 Ibid., 19, 20, and 24 June plus 29 July and 6 August 1936.
about funding Mosley throughout late 1936 and 1937 include Hitler stories about how the struggle during the early phases of the Nazi Party movement only strengthened it. Despite this attitude, money continued to go to British Union of Fascists during this period.\footnote{Ibid., 19/20 June, 15 Nov and 5/8 Dec 1936. Plus 17 Feb, 6 March, 10 April, 1/14 July, and 5/12 Oct 1937. Particularly interesting is Ulrich von Hassell's diary entry from 18 July 1939 questioning if the Nazis are paying Mosley (The Von Hassell Diaries, 1938-1944: The Story of the Forces Against Hitler Inside Germany (Garden City: Double Day, 1947), 51). The money also features in analyses of Bayreuth where funds came up between Goebbels and Diana. (Hamann, 257).}

Mosley was desperate for funds now that he lacked Rothermere's support. Increasing government crackdowns on the party also played a role. Some time during this year, Sir Oswald Mosley formed a plan with British Union of Fascists party member W.E.D. Allen. Allen had a background in business and Ulster politics before joining with Mosley in the New Party. He recommended a money-making scheme for Mosley whereby the two men would found a radio station outside the country. They hoped to make money by appealing more to the youth of Britain and selling advertising spaces. Diana worked from Berlin to find German backers to sell airspace to Mosley and Allen for this project.\footnote{J & C Guinness, 384-5.}

The plan only succeeded in gaining air space in 1938 after Hitler annexed Austria, and by the time the station was ready to launch, the Second World War had started.\footnote{Nicholas Mosley, Beyond the Pale, 399-401; Goebbels, 9 vols. Diaries, 2 July 1938.}


Regardless, Hitler seemed to question Mosley for the wrong reasons during these early years of their interaction. Instead of doubting Mosley's character strength in a crisis, he should have questioned Mosley's...
significance in British politics and his loyalty to Hitler. Fascists have shown an extraordinary ability to underestimate their potential opponents, and relations between fascist groups in different countries were no different. Germany, for example, would support Italy as a fascist ally, but only as long as it served Germany's interests since fascism is essentially ultra-nationalism. Yet, Germany never seemed to suspect that Mosley and the British fascists had similar ideas. They were avid supporters of Hitler when he held funds and spouted fascist theory, but one of the arguments historians have made about British fascists and the possibility of Nazi plans for a puppet regime under Mosley in the event of a successful invasion of Britain is that Mosley was too obsessed with chauvinistic British patriotism as a British fascist to ever agree to German dominance. Hitler learned this from experience, and ultimately, German invasion plans suggest Mosley was not a candidate for puppet rule. Unity, however, never learned that different nations' fascist movements clash when national interests oppose each other. This political naivete is probably part of why she knew little or nothing about Diana's work on Mosley's behalf during this time.640

For two weeks in April, Unity cruised the Mediterranean with Decca, Debo, and Muv. While Decca and Unity in particular grew farther and farther apart in politics, the three youngest Mitford siblings embraced the opportunity to travel. Travel to Greece intrigued Unity.641 Decca and Debo wanted adventure after their time in Swinbrook's school room with governesses and Decca's dismay at her social debut. Muv, however,

640 Dalley wrote on 244 that Unity wasn't trusted because she denounced people like Putzi Hanfstaengl, but Diana was probably too loyal to see her in this light. Putzi features later in this text, and Unity's ignorance seems like a more probable motivation for Diana's silence. (Although Mosley might also have requested Diana keep secret.)

641 Letter to Muv from 11 Feb 1936, Redesdale MS, 97.
hoped for an educational experience. Sir Henry Lunn, the tour's travel agent, advertised lectures by Greek scholars and even the London Museum's director, Sir Mortimer Wheeler. They toured Corsica, Greece, Constantinople in Turkey, Malaga and Granada in Spain, and Algiers in North Africa. All the family memories of the event seem to involve the hilarity of the sisters' antics rather than the educational value or even the world famous sites, despite Muv's best efforts. Decca feigned a crush on Lord Rathcreedan (whom she mistakenly recollected as Lord Strathmilton in Hons & Rebels). She would sneak near the poor man, singing naughty ditties about a red-headed “lord on board” such as “Strathmilton, Red, come to bed.” Other passengers acquired nicknames like “the Chicken Man” and “the Lecherous Lecturer.” Decca and Unity colluded to convince the tour director's son, Peter Lunn, that “Unity said her nightly prayers to Hitler while giving the Nazi salute.” Loud conversations at meal time about white slavers, and veiled references to an elderly eunuch encountered during a tour of Constantinople resulted in frequent lectures from the sisters' beleaguered parent. As Decca later remembered:

When bridge tournaments were announced, Debo and I insisted on pressing for a 'Hure, Hare, Hure Commencement' tournament to determine the pain threshold of our fellow passengers. Following a lecture on democracy by the [Church of England] Canon, Boud formally demanded, and received, the floor to eulogize on the glories of Nazi dictatorship. We 'borderlined' continually, this time seeing how far we could go in shocking my mother and the other people on the cruise.

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642 Deborah Mitford, 74; J & C Guinness, 381-3. In her letter about plans for the cruise, Debo wrote Unity despairing that the lectures would suck the "romance" right out of the cruise. (Letter to Unity from Debo dated 1936, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 71).
643 Jessica Mitford, H & R, 104; Deborah Mitford, 74-5. Decca recalls Debo engaging in this with her, but Debo claims in her memoir that this was all Decca's work. See also letter in OSU 1566, JM to DD, 11 June 1990 cited in Lovell, 202-3. Instead of much of a tendre for Rathcreedan, Debo seems to have developed an affection for art critic Adrian Stokes who later took her to Covent Garden in order to see the Ballets Russes with Nanny Blor as chaperone. (Deborah Mitford, 75).
644 Deborah Mitford, 75; J & C Guinness, 383; Lovell, 203.
645 Jessica Mitford, H & R, 104.
Unity still enjoyed breaking rules with her siblings as she had once enjoyed rebelling against schoolmistresses. In spite of their pranks, Unity's politics and growing notoriety made her stand out among her sisters during the trip. Muv made her remove her swastika badge in Tetuan. The political tension in Spain worried her. This was just months before the Spanish Civil War broke out in July 1936, and in some Spanish towns, angry crowds beat on the windows of their touring cars. In addition, Sir Henry Lunn arranged a debate on board the ship on 18 April. The SS Laetitia was at sea for two days. With passengers eager for entertainment, Lunn proposed Unity Mitford and the Duchess of Atholl debate the motion “That the disadvantages of the system of government in Italy and Germany outweigh the advantages claimed for them.” The Duchess of Atholl was a Member of Parliament. She was known as the “Red” Duchess for her sympathy for Spanish Republicans, and her husband had served as one of the few mediators trusted by both sides during the General Strike of 1926. After their initial speeches, others such as Sir Ernest Benn and the Duke of Atholl joined in. Passengers switched sides freely and seemed to enjoy the debate, but the Atholls responded to Unity Mitford after the debate with an interesting combination of kindness in light of her youth and inexperience as well as a more serious caution about fascism's dangers--The Duke sent over a glass of champagne, and the Duchess sent a note: “Dear Miss Mitford, May I say how well you delivered your speech to-day. It was so unaffected and so sincere. If I said anything which you did not like I hope you will believe that I did so out of no personal feeling against

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646 J & C Guinness, 383. Guinness notes that in Decca's description of Granada this gets confused with the Tetuan incident.  
647 Ibid., 381-2.  
you or anyone else. But as a Member of Parliament at a time of great national anxiety, I feel it my duty to try to make known what I believe to be facts, and facts which it is important for our people to know.**649 This attitude of indulgence combined with very gentle chastisement seems typical of British high society's approach to Unity Mitford at this time.

Throughout May, June, and July, Unity Mitford travelled between Germany, Austria, and Britain. First, she stopped in Düsseldorf to visit Erich before hosting the British Earl of Airlie and his family in Munich. Her tour of Munich reveals something of what she found most important and attractive about the city: Mixed in with Nymphenburg Palace and cafes with live music, Unity took them to tour the Nazi headquarters at the Brown House as well as a Labour Camp and a stretch of the Reichsautobahn. She hoped to impress with not just art and entertainment, but Unity promoted the Nazi construction projects to highlight their contribution to Germany’s celebrated economic recovery since the devastation of the 1920s. A local hotel manager even helped Unity to find some veterans of the same front as the Earl's regiment during the First World War, and they spent an afternoon sitting at the Osteria in the hopes of seeing Hitler.**650 Hitler and the tourist sites come as no surprise, knowing Unity Mitford's passions, but the importance she placed on showing these British visitors construction projects and the Labour Camps (where young German youths worked by order of the state on national improvement projects) shows more political and economic interest than

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**649 Note from Duchess of Atholl to Unity dated 18 April 1936 replicated, Redesdale MS, 106-7.  
**650 Letters to Muv from 28 May and 3 June 1936, Ibid., 114-5. The suffering many young men experienced in what Nazis billed as a great opportunity to feel fresh air and national devotion comes across in the description of Friedelind Wagner's brother in the Labour camps. (F. Wagner, 124). Also, see footnote on page 119 of 6 sisters re: how the 12th Earl of Airlie (mentioned above) had a daughter who was Debo's close friend.
her usual interest in songs, rallies, and light shows suggests. After a week in Berlin with the Goebbels and another ride back to Munich on Hitler's private train, Unity indulged her love for the fascist ceremony and aesthetics once again at Streicher's Hesselberg festival. In the midsummer festivals, Hitler Youth and Hitler Maidens stood with torches as Streicher spoke of Unity once again to the crowds:

Streicher spoke from the Tribune. Towards the end he said 'The daughter of England who was with us last year is with us again to-night'... Then he said 'Unity Mitford is one of you, she understands you' and so on. After the National Anthems he said 'Now you may see the young English girl' and I was again dragged to the microphone, they all cheered for ages and I saluted and then said a few sentences. When we left I was nearly killed by crowds of Jugend who pressed round me and wanted to shake hands. Streicher is so funny and such a love. When we left the Tribute the whole crowd all the way roared Heil Miss! Heil England! To which I replied Heil Hitler!⁶⁵¹

Just as during her earlier visits with Streicher, Unity Mitford found the vicious racist known for his perverse humor charming and attentive. A picture of the “Engländerin” even appeared in the local Fränkische Tageszeitung.⁶⁵² With territorial battles constantly raging between Nazi district leaders, Streicher may have had an interest in promoting contact with Hitler's young friend at this time. Streicher also believed in the most bizarre and mystical legends of “Aryan ancestry” so he would have seen an alliance between England and Germany as “natural.” In addition to this, the odd pair could have been simple friends in spite of their very different backgrounds.

More in keeping with Unity Mitford's aristocratic upbringing were her friendships in Austria. After his time at Eton, Unity Mitford's brother Tom spent several months studying music and German while boarding at the home of Count Janos Almasy. He

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⁶⁵¹ Letter from 22 June 1936, Redesdale MS, 116-117.
⁶⁵² Fränkische Tageszeitung, 24 June 1936.
remained close friends with Almasy and other notables in the area. Tom had visited in Munich (possibly with Janos Almasy) in early June, and after the Hesselberg event, Unity Mitford joined his friends at Bernstein, the castle at Janos' country estate. Bernstein was part of Austria's Burgenland after the First World War rearranged Europe's borders, but the estate had been Castle Borostyanko when the Almasy family purchased it in 1892. What was originally a thirteenth century fortress still had all the romance Unity Mitford could wish for in the 1930s. The family lived a life something like that of British country gentry. A largely German-speaking village and forests for hunting “boar, bear, and wildfowl” provided entertainment for guests outside the home. Inside, Bernstein had artifacts of its fascinating history on the border between Austria and Hungary. (It even had the alleged ghost of the “White Lady” in its corridors.) Today it is a hotel run by the family, and author John Bierman described it best in his biography of Janos' brother Laszlo (immortalized in the novel *The English Patient* by Canadian Michael Ondaatje):

...the castle, albeit now a hotel, remains largely unchanged: it still contains a dungeon complete with rack and whipping bench, an armoury and an 'alchemist's kitchen.' Its massive buttressed walls enclose a flagstoned courtyard and under the portcullis entrance the main staircase is decorated with the escutcheons of its previous owners. A corridor encircles the ground floor, containing a Rittersaal, or knights' hall, where the Magyar knights of old used to gather under a magnificent stuccoed ceiling featuring scenes from Greek mythology. On the first and subsequent floors are the bedrooms... crammed with antiques and heated in cold weather by wood fires, while the bathrooms, though necessarily not of medieval

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653 Redesdale MS, 117.
654 John Bierman, *The Secret Life of Laszlo Almasy: The Real English Patient* (London: Viking, 2004), 13, 20-4. Janos (and his brother and occasional guest Laszlo, immortalized in the novel the *English Patient*) had been raised with an almost mystical pride in the family's Magyar heritage instilled by his father. The family, in spite of participation in the Magyar rebellion of 1848, had supported the Habsburg pretender against Admiral Horthy following the First World War, during which both Janos and Laszlo served in the 11th Regiment of Hussars. This earned the family a title, although the Hungarian parliament did not confirm it. The family was old, Catholic, and quite possibly counts until the 1848 rebellion resulted in the loss of their family title, according to some family genealogists.
655 Bierman, 25.
Janos' wife was a wealthy Esterhazy princess, Maria Rosa. After a riding accident at age sixteen, she was “tragically” beautiful, confined to a wheelchair and unable to bear children. She became deeply devoted to her Catholic faith and spent most of her time in a ground floor suite. The match had been political-- The Esterhazys were eager to marry off a daughter approaching thirty and unable to reproduce, while Janos was eager for the connections to the powerful family name and fortune. Since 1929, Janos spent his time between the estate and love affairs in the cities of Budapest, Vienna, Berlin, Paris, and Cairo. Despite his roaming, something his wife seems not to have protested against, Janos and Maria Rosa did have a common fascination with spirituality. Her devotion took the shape of relics, images of martyred saints, and other devotional objects. Janos' took a darker turn, however. Bierman refers frequently to the “cabbalistic and necromantic mumbo-jumbo that seemed to fascinate” Janos, his father, and his grandfather. A skull wearing a yarmulke sat on his study desk, and there was a large horoscope painting on one wall. Bierman adds in a footnote: “Books in the locked cabinets of Bernstein Castle to this day include such arcana as Vehlow's *Astrologie*, Eliphas Levi's *Salomonische Schlüssel*, Papus's *Traité élémentaire de science occulte* and *The Tarot of Bohemia*. The cabinets also contain an array of pentacles and related black magic paraphernalia.” His fascinating obsessions and beautiful home intrigued Unity.

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657 *Ibid.*, 27-8. Bierman notes that he was known as something of a ladies' man who spent liberally, particularly in bordellos. He also writes, “nor was he averse, when at home, to exercising his droit de seigneur over the local peasant girls.” (28). Much of this information come from family interviews and an interview in *Egyptian Mail* from 7 June 1997 with Victor- Mansour Semeika. This behavior was also typical of Janos' father, according to Bierman, to the extent that it destroyed his marriage.
As much as he was a standard aristocrat in some ways, he was as unconventional as Unity in others. She wrote her mother, “This is the most beautiful and thrilling place I have ever seen, it's like living in a fairy story to be here.”

In addition to the breathtaking mountain views and eccentric personality, Janos proved himself a fan of Hitler. (Central European aristocrats were notoriously feudal and elitist by comparison to their British counterparts. This made them less prosperous in the twentieth century, much more resentful of the erosion of aristocratic political power, and even more attracted to fascism's promises of stability.) Unity made fast friend with such a host and rewarded his hospitality with tickets to the Nuremberg rally later that summer.

Unity Mitford spent some quick time in Britain after her week at Bernstein. She brought stage designer Benno von Arendt's wife to visit. During this time, records exist of a meal with Duff Cooper, then British Secretary of State for War, and a lunch with British former secret agent Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart and Lady Muir (“daughter of a former Bulgarian Minister in London) at the Ian Hamiltons. Lockhart recorded in his diary, “[Unity Mitford] is madly pro-Nazi and will not speak to her sister Nancy because she is anti-Nazi.”

These were individuals with an interest in European politics and British foreign policy, but it is unclear from the surviving evidence if they found Unity Mitford's observations and beliefs interesting evidence of what was taking place in Nazi
Germany (regardless of their personal political sympathies, thoughts from a personal acquaintance of Hitler may have intrigued them) or if these were simply social connections of the Mitford family that happened to have political positions. Around the time these meetings took place, the Spanish Civil War was breaking out, and Europe's eyes turned to the Iberian peninsula, watching what only the most perceptive guessed would be a dress rehearsal for the Second World War.

Unity Mitford never lingered long in Britain during the years she followed Hitler. At the end of July, she was back in Germany with Diana so the pair could attend the Wagner festival at Bayreuth and the summer Olympics in Berlin. Hitler's devotion to Wagner was legendary, and while they had their own connection through their grandfather, the Mitfords came to the festival at his invitation. (They seem not to have had any particularly keen interest in the composer before Hitler.664) The dictator had long loved Richard Wagner for his ideas about the intersection of art and politics. Wagner's great contribution to opera was making it into the sort of Gesamtkunstwerk that Hitler's propaganda masterminds sought to emulate: music, drama, and aesthetics all had to work together to create a life-changing spiritual experience in Wagner's mind. The composer's political views still provoke fierce debate. He shifted from more left wing revolutionary ideals to right wing nationalism quite freely over the course of his life, and as a thinker he “believed in a peculiarly German form of revolution in which the sacred German race was to blaze a path to freedom. This would emancipate the whole human

664 The one mention of Wagner that exists before Bayreuth take place less than two months before the festival itself. On this occasion, Unity accompanied her brother to a Wagner performance in Munich: “Tom and I went to Rienzi, Wagner's earliest opera, it is very un-Wagnerian but very grand, at one moment there are five horses on the stage and at the end a huge tower collapses in flames. It is all about a Fascist leader [sic caps on Fasc] in 14th century Rome extraordinary really, it might be Mussolini.” Letter to Muv from 3 June 1936, Redesdale MS, 116.
race from a loveless and irrational way of life, symbolized, and at the same time made practical, by the Jews.” Wagner was certainly anti-Semitic, but how central anti-Semitism was to his worldview and artistic production remains debated. Much clearer consensus exists, however, on how deeply völkisch, right wing, and anti-Semitic the circle of Wagner followers at Bayreuth became. As David Clay Large and William Weber write in their introduction to *Wagnerism in European Politics*, Wagner became a cause, particularly the “artist as a culture hero... [and] therefore became a crusade for many people who believed in that idea... Wagnerism ultimately departed from Wagner the man and became a movement in its own right-- with principles, goals, and possibly doctrines often only loosely related to the original source of inspiration.” This form of Wagnerism attracted Hitler at least as much as Wagner's own vision, maybe more. As a failed artist himself, Hitler also must have felt an attraction to this idea of political and spiritual redemption through art.

During the 1930s, Wagner's daughter-in-law Winifred (British widow of his son Siegfried) effectively ran Bayreuth. She was a supporter and eventually a personal friend of Hitler. In the *Royal Family of Bayreuth*, Winifred's (eventually estranged) daughter

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665 Paul Lawrence Rose, *Wagner: Race and Revolution*, American ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 2-3. Other sides of the debate exist in works such as Kohler's *Wagner's Hitler* (which argues Hitler's anti-Semitism had roots in his passion for Wagner) and Salmi's *Imagined Germany: Wagner's National Utopia* (which argues Hitler and many right-wing followers didn't understand Wagner properly but instead oversimplified the composer's politics for their own ends).


667 Haaman is good on this, but also notes that in interviews, her grandson Gottfried Wagner has noted that the Bayreuth archives surrounding Winifred's correspondence with Hitler are locked even to him because the family does not like to discuss its Nazi past.
Friedelind recounted how the family home at Wahnfried in Bayreuth changed with Hitler's arrival. Bodyguards and adjutants flooded the area, requiring security passes for every local tradesperson coming to the house, and the household shifted to accommodate Hitler's late bedtime and late rising. She describes S.S. guards hushing her as she played in the garden one morning with her dog before Hitler awoke. She also watched him work as he walked in the garden as “ambassadors, cabinet members, or generals... arrived by plane, [consulted Hitler,] and were whisked away again before the performance started” at four each afternoon. Although her mother had met Unity once before, the young girl felt curious to meet Unity Mitford when she first came to Bayreuth in 1936. Friedelind had heard rumors that Unity would marry Hitler, and she felt delighted when Winifred invited the British fascist to lunch with Hitler. [She remembered Hitler saying Unity lived on little funds and had to continually convince her parents to let her return to Germany so he saw an invitation to lunch as generous support for his young friend.] When she came, Friedelind thought, “Unity was an attractive girl, ash-blonde hair, grey eyes, very much like a Botticelli, until she smiled and displayed the ugliest set of teeth I have ever seen. She spoke German fluently with a broad Bavarian accent and made conversation by ridiculing her family and everything English.” Diana was much more beautiful in her eyes, and Friedelind did not believe Unity could want an alliance between Britain and Germany if she teased about her own nation so much. The clothes and make-up of both sisters scandalized her as well.

Unity probably did not know or care that she had disappointed Winifred Wagner's daughter. The formal clothes were fun for her, she saw Hitler frequently, and the routine

668 F. Wagner, 126-7.
669 Ibid., 127-8.
struck her as surreal but pleasant. As she wrote her mother:

Our day is somewhat queer. We generally get up very late, just in time to snatch some lunch, rush home about 2.30 and dress-- start for the opera 3.30 and it begins at 4. There are two long intervals of about an hour each. We generally sit with the Führer at his table in the restaurant in the intervals and then we go back to dinner with him in his house afterwards, and generally stay up late chatting. Last night he lent me his coat to drive home in because his motor's open and I hadn't much on, so I sat in his place in the motor in his coat.\textsuperscript{670}

No opinion of the performances remains, but Unity felt that Winifred and her children were generous hosts. (After returning briefly to Munich in Hitler's private train, she asked her mother in a later letter to send her a book of Burne Jones pictures for young Wieland Wagner.\textsuperscript{671}) Whatever her sister's thoughts on the performance, Diana loved both the socialization with Hitler and the Wagners and the music. She wrote that the experience was “as heavenly as the Olympic Games were boring.”\textsuperscript{672} Attending the festival became a lifelong habit for this Mitford sister (when politically possible). She particularly enjoyed the performance of the \textit{Ring} that first year, although Diana found \textit{Parsifal} less approachable. (Goebbels wrote in his diary about the same evening, complaining that \textit{Parsifal} was “too pious” for his taste without any German gods at war in the opera house to alleviate his boredom.\textsuperscript{673})

The festival in Bayreuth split in half on either end of the Olympics in 1936.\textsuperscript{674}

\textsuperscript{670} Letter to Muv from 25 July 1936, Redesdale MS, 119. A letter from 3 Aug 1936 notes that at least one of Unity's letters from Bayreuth never arrived, and she angrily blamed Ribbentrop's adujtant for the error. (Redesdale MS, 121).

\textsuperscript{671} Letter to Muv from 30 July 1936, \textit{Ibid.}, 120.

\textsuperscript{672} Diana Mitford Mosley, 142. Records indicate the \textit{Ring} Cycle, \textit{Parsifal} and \textit{Lohengrin} made up the schedule in 1936.

\textsuperscript{673} Goebbels, 9 vols. \textit{Diaries}, 21 July 1936. In her discussion of \textit{Parsifal} (\textit{Life of Contrasts}, 142) Diana writes that Hitler told her that she would enjoy \textit{Parsifal} more as she aged and that this has indeed been the case.

\textsuperscript{674} F. Wagner, 140.
the Summer Games in Berlin. In theory, the Olympics were an athletic event, but once again, the Nazi propaganda machine worked at a furious pace, applying everything it had observed during February's Winter Games. The “Olympic Pause” on anti-Semitism once again went into effect. The degrading signs and posters temporarily disappeared along with the glass cases posting copies of Der Stürmer. Residents of Berlin received special instructions on how to treat “foreigners,” what to discuss in public, and “men were to give up their seats to women in buses, trams, and trains, 'even if the woman looks like a Jewess.” Plain clothes policeman kept a close eye on events while censorship of domestic and foreign press was extreme-- even by the Third Reich's rigid standards. For example, the German press followed orders to minimize coverage of German successes because early charts tracking German medals had drawn foreign criticism. While Nazi Germany famously encouraged the most chauvinistic view of sport, competition, fitness, and strength, this was not an image it sought to project at the time. Radio broadcasts around the world, film for newsreels and the Leni Riefenstahl film Olympia, and “the first live television coverage of any sports meet” came from the regime's plan for self-promotion.

As Nuremberg showed annually, the Nazi Party knew how to dazzle all too well, and they hoped to use that ability while staging the Games to win international support for their political positions. After the very first Olympic torch relay (from Olympia,
Greece, to Berlin), French Ambassador André François-Poncet recalled how Hitler opened the Games from a stand across from the International Olympic Committee members. His guests of honor included “the King of Bulgaria, the Prince of Piedmont, Princess Maria of Savoy, the crown princes of Sweden and Greece, and the sons of Mussolini.” A brand new hymn from Richard Strauss and the release of “thousands of doves” followed the Olympic oath. With her sister Diana as a guest of the Goebbels family, Unity Mitford wrote home angrily about how British teams decided not to give the traditional salute because of its confusion with the Nazi salute at the Winter Games.

Unity Mitford wrote later letters about England's (lack of ) progress in the several events, and she attended some of the races with Diana. This was the year African American Jesse Owens won four gold medals, and while many Nazis cringed at this challenge to their ideas of “Aryan superiority” or considered Owens a stereotype of African American “brute strength”, the policies of the “Olympic Pause” kept them relatively silent. Hitler's snubs remained insidiously subtle. Unity Mitford herself wrote home that Black athletes won all the running events, but she did not express particularly virulent racism towards them or even mention Owens by name. Diana wrote in her memoir that “it was a pleasure to watch [Jesse Owens]” but incorrectly remembered him competing with an athlete from India. Diana also recollected that she found most events rather boring--

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679 Letter to Muv from 3 August 1936, Redesdale MS, 121; confirmed as a decision on page 80 of Richard Holt essay in the *Nazi Olympics*. In a letter dated 4 Aug 1936 to her mother (Redesdale MS, 121), Unity notes that the Goebbels were seldom at their house at Schwanenwerder during this time because of the social whirl. Magda was particularly busy: “the Italian Crown Prince has taken a great fancy to the Frau Doktor Goebbels and comes nearly every day, which means that we, as English people, have to be sent off to lunch with Helldorf or something.”

680 Holt, in *Nazi Olympics*, 81; From Unity letter to Muv from 4 Aug 1936, Redesdale MS, 121.
“Fortunately Unity and I had seats far away from our hosts so that we could wander from the stadium from time to time.”

With extravagant entertainments put on by the Nazi regime at all hours to seduce foreign visitors to support their government, Unity and Diana experienced “a fearful rush of parties and receptions and theatres etc.” Unity wrote her mother, “I shall soon die of tiredness. There's never a moment to sit down or write a letter...”

Distinguished guests received marks of favor from the regime. For example, Henry “Chips” Channon found himself with car and a stormtrooper chauffeur. Senior British diplomat and Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office Sir Robert Vansittart's wife found “a foot-bath of orchids” from Goebbels waiting for her on her arrival at the British Embassy. Duff Hart-Davis best describes the whirlwind of events faced by guests whom the Nazis sought to impress such as the International Olympic Committee members:

...[they] had scarcely been in Berlin an hour before they found themselves invited to at least one formal banquet or reception at every lunch-time and dinner-time for the next 16 [sic] days. It seems a miracle that they survived, for their schedule was appalling: lunch given by the City of Berlin in their honour; lunch given by the Reich Sport Leader at his home; dinner arranged by the President of Germany...

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681 Diana Mitford Mosley, 141. David Clay Large writes that the sisters' wandering caused something of a sensation because of their notoriety as associates of Hitler. However, he also describes them sipping gin from a flask, which seems unlikely considering Unity seldom drank (a habit only reinforced by Hitler's own dislike of alcohol) and Diana was such a well-established society belle (someone who would have seen such an act as poor taste). (Nazi Games: The Olympics of 1936 (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 2007), 217-8).

682 Letter to MuV from 4 Aug 1936, Redesdale MS, 121-2. In the list of parties and events, one event Henriette Hoffmann mentions Unity at one event which is missing from this text because of narrative flow and space. That is the debut performance of Eberhard Möller's Thingspiel Das Frankenburger Würfelspiel. Thingspiele were outdoor theatres allegedly based on ancient German meeting spaces. Few cared for these venues and events held there, but Möller's works were relatively popular. The playwright was an avid Nazi, who often focused on regime-sanctioned versions of German history and anti-Semitic themes in his work. Hoffmann also recollects her enjoying Palucca dancers. (see Henriette von Schirach, Frauen um Hitler, 3rd ed. (München: F.A. Herbig Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1987), 90).

683 Hart-Davis, 147, 203. Duff Hart-Davis notes that “The contingent from Britain was particularly strong,” including Lord & Lady Kemsley, Sir Austen and Lady Chamberlain (although Sir Austen remained aboard his yacht), Lord Jellicoe, & Kenneth Lindsay (146). Unity mentions Douglas Douglas-Hamilton (who became the 14th Duke of Hamilton) and Countess Baillet Latour as well.
the Organizing Committee in the White Room of the Berlin Royal Palace; gala dinner in the House of German Fliers, given by the Commissioner of Berlin's Metropolitan Police; gala dinner in the Golden Gallery of Charlottenburg Palace, given by Baron and Baroness von Neurath; gala dinner given by the City of Kiel; lunch on board various warships at Kiel; gala dinner given by Dr Lippert, the Commissioner of State; lunch in the stadium's terrace restaurant given by Dr Diem... And so it went on.684

The British Embassy hosted an evening reception for one thousand guests one night. (Himmler shouting at police arranging parking outside the window startled the hostess, Lady Vansittart.) Hitler gave a formal dinner party another evening (The dictator worked hard to express his admiration for Britain's empire by discussing the film *Lives of the Bengal Lancers*, which he had seen five times), and Ribbentrop threw a champagne-soaked party at his home in Dahlem during this time (He crammed six hundred guests into his yard with a Hungarian violinist, coconut mats over the lawn for dancing, and plants filling the pool).685 Goebbels and Goering, however, hosted the most memorable events. Goebbels hosted his dinner on the Wannsee's Peacock Island (Pfaueninsel) nature reserve. German army engineers built “a bridge of boats to connect the island with the mainland” for the occasion. A military honor guard, young girls in “Renaissance page” costumes, and fireworks astounded the two thousand guests as they sat down to dinner.686 Goering's government dinner at the State Opera House featured baroque costumes on servants, velvet banners, and tables of guests where the seats usually were. Dancers between tables and opera singers hidden in boxes back in the wings entertained everyone as they ate.687 Even more opulent was Goering's garden party at the new Luftwaffe

684 Ibid., 204.
685 Ibid., 204, 208-211.
686 Ibid., 212-3.
687 Ibid., 205-6.
grounds. Searchlights and paper lanterns lit the evening, and a swimming pool of “floating lilies lit from underneath” included “the five Olympic rings made from real flowers.” A specially built “miniature replica of an eighteenth-century village” delighted guests, and “there was a pageant of the different German States in olden times, each section with its own band, all in wonderful dresses.” Four bands provided opportunities to dance, and during dinner the Berlin Opera's ballet corps performed. Towards the end of the evening, an entire carnival with staff in traditional Alpine costumes emerged as attendants drew back painted screens. The carnival included:

- a merry go round, switchback, a sham aeroplane which lopped the loop, a shooting range with a real motor car as first prize, a Bavarian beer garden, a reproduction of the Nürnberger Bratwurstglöckl with the real proprietress of the real Bratwurstglöckl roasting the sausages inside, and endless other booths and stalls, all so prettily painted and arranged, and all the attendants in fancy dress as soldiers, fairies, peasants etc... I heard someone say “This is better than Hollywood.”

Circus ponies even ferried guests through the sites in small carriages. Unity Mitford admitted, “It was altogether the most sumptuous party I ever went to.” Such excessive extravagance dazed visitors, but the “Pause” seemed to give more hope to British visitors that Germany could make a reasonable ally. Many foreigners sympathetic to Germany felt that Germany might have “outgrown” violent anti-Semitism and made a stable ally.

As the event ended with laurel wreaths for the winners, Unity Mitford and the Nazi elite

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688 Ibid., 205; Letter to Muv from 19 Aug 1936, Redesdale MS, 125-6.
689 Ibid.
690 Letter to Muv from 19 Aug 1936 Redesdale MS, 125. underlining= sic. In the same letter, Unity wrote, “I nearly didn't go, as none of the Goebbels party were going, but in the end I took my courage in both hands and went alone. I got there about 8, and Goering was all over me which is very rare, he paid me wonderful compliments and slapped me on the back and armed me around, I was quite overcome.”
691 Ibid., 126 .
692 Gannon, 102. In fact, author Franklin Gannon writes that the “Pause” “very likely forestalled a major pogrom over the murder of the Nazi leader of Switzerland, Gustloff, in February [1936].”
seemed unaware that the “Pause” in violence was at least as effective at garnering foreign support for Hitler as the parties.

In late August, Unity Mitford returned to Munich. Her sister Pam visited briefly with her fiancee Derek Jackson, and Unity visited with Erna Hanfstaengl as well as Douglas Douglas-Hamilton, a pioneering aviator whom Goering had invited to inspect the new Luftwaffe. She took the Scottish lord to the Hofbraühaus and accompanied him on a tour of German military airports. (During one tour, she wandered across a landing field, and a small Junker just missed her.) On her own, Unity toured an SS china factory with Himmler’s permission and celebrated the increased German conscription term-- something she wished Britain would legislate into existence as well. Shortly before the annual Parteitag in Nuremberg, Unity had a bout of tonsilitis. Mary Woodisse’s future husband looked after her during this time, bringing a projector from the SS to watch films with her. While she did not see Hitler during this stretch of time (“he has shut himself off from the world in order to make his Parteitag speeches”), Unity Mitford felt elated that Lloyd George came over from Britain to meet with the dictator. She considered this Hitler’s first “intelligent Englishman, instead of the sheepsheads he has seen in the past.” Lloyd George’s meetings with Hitler famously impressed him. The dictator’s charisma, economic plans, and references to Britain and Germany becoming allies after the bloodshed of the First World War won his support for the time being. While this must have delighted Unity Mitford, she remained ill as she trekked towards Nuremberg with her brother Tom for the annual rally.

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693 Letter to Muv from 28 August 1936, Redesdale MS, 126-7. Pam married Derek Jackson in December of that year (fn on 87 in Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords).
694 Letters to Muv from 5 & 7 Sept 1936, Redesdale MS 130-131.
695 Unity signed up for tickets with Hitler’s adjutants well in advance of the rally. Records of her on lists for
Speculation about the theme of the 1936 Nuremberg Parteitag ran high. Some wondered if anti-Semitism would be the center of focus to re-establish Nazism's sick priorities after the “Olympic Pause,” but instead, the Party focused its attention on opposition to communism “with the demand for colonies running a close second to it.” In late July, Hitler had committed his country to intervention in Spain's emerging Civil War, and this brought “Bolshevism” to the forefront of his mind. (In November, the Third Reich opened an exhibition titled “Bolshevism: The Great Anti-Bolshevist Show”.) Not only was Spain in Hitler's mind, but he must have been aware that his opposition to the “Red Menace” of communism was one of his most attractive features to many of the guests at the year's earlier Olympic Games. This theme for the annual Party rally was a clever public relations choice. Especially impressive to visitors in 1936 was Nazi architect Albert Speer's first Cathedral of Light. The “cathedral” was made of over one hundred searchlights designed for planes. Speer used them like the walls and buttresses of a cathedral, and witnesses were in awe of the effect that would become a staple of future Nuremberg rallies. The very word and concept of a cathedral is important.
Scholars of fascism have only recently looked at fascism as a “civic religion.” Work like that of Italian scholar Emilio Gentile who examined “the sacralization of politics” under fascism or Günter Berghaus who examined the aesthetic actualization of this have drawn attention to not just how much Nazi leaders echoed religious practices, but how conscious they were of what they were doing: “Whilst fascist mythology provided the ideas for the New Order, politics established the 'dogma' and rituals became the 'liturgy.' The fascist leaders were fully aware that well-staged rituals had the force to produce 'consensus and blind and global adherence...’”699 The high emotion, fervor, and mystical quality of the rallies also clued followers and participants in the rallies into this goal. As Berghaus quotes one attendee of the 1936 Parteitag musing, “‘Is this a dream or reality? ...It is like a majestic church service (Andacht) [sic the German translation] where we have congregated to find new strength. Yes, it is the ceremonial hour of our movement, a service held to protect us in a sea of light against the darkness out there.’”700 As the 1930s progressed, the Nuremberg Parteitag grew from the first four day rally Unity Mitford saw in 1933 to an eight day extravaganza alternating between “mass rallies and hours of commemoration, appeals and parades, military show manoeuvres and public entertainment.”701 The oaths, celebrations of martyrs, and even the Nazis' growing “liturgical calendar” designed to ape the Catholic one encouraged fierce devotion.702


700 Ibid., 53.


702 Ibid., 179. François-Poncet describes this year of rituals as well in his memoir of his time as French ambassador to Nazi Germany: Hitler's coming to power, Heldentag (Festival of Heroes) in March to commemorate veterans of the Party and German wars, Hitler's birthday in April, Labor Day in May (to
Unity enjoyed her ritual of devotion in spite of her illness, and she wrote her mother sure that she had made a move towards converting her brother Tom (the most politically neutral sibling and therefore, the one all sisters wanted to pull to their side) and Janos von Almasy. Miss Mitford felt pleased that Nuremberg had “quite terrifically impressed” her two guests there.\(^{703}\) Fellow fascist Diana, who had also attended the rallies, received a pithier letter changing the lyrics to the hymn “‘There were Ninety and Nine’, making Tom out to be the lost sheep which Hitler has retrieved.”\(^{704}\)

After the excitement of the Parteitag, Unity Mitford always expressed a feeling of deflation and boredom, but this year she made plans to keep herself busy. Unity accompanied her brother and Janos back to the Burgenland. They stayed at Kohfidisch, an estate owned by the Palffy-Erdödy family near Bernstein. Countess Johanna Palffy-Erdödy (her older sister, known as “Jimmy”) was a friend and neighbor, and Countess Francesca Palffy-Erdödy (known as “Baby”) dated Tom Mitford for a time.\(^{705}\) Unity wrote several letters home about touring the area with Tom, Janos, and the two sisters, and she seemed to relish the rural environment and the historical atmosphere. She wrote of one palace they toured: “...I never saw more fascinating place of its kind, all the rooms were too pretty for words and completely untouched for more than a century, the stuffs

\(^{703}\) Letter to Muv, from 19 Sept 1936, Redesdale MS, 131. Tom is hard to pin down in terms of political views. He loved Germany, and both Diana and Unity wanted to claim him as a fascist because he came to Nuremberg and Mosley rallies. Decca, however, writes that he shared communist sympathies with herself. It seems Tom was a man who liked to keep his sisters happy. He probably had some sympathy for British fascism (see J & C Guinness, 355), but he probably had his father's interest in Britain's military might above that of any rival. He enlisted in World War Two-- although he did request not to fight in Germany. This could be because he had friends there, or this could be because of some lingering sympathy. Both ways appeal to Mitford biographers, and only Tom could say.

\(^{704}\) Letter from 2 Jan 1937 to diana, J & C Guinness, 355.

\(^{705}\) Note one, Charlotte Mosley, *The Mitfords*, 98; Letter to Muv from 19 Sept 1936, Redesdale MS, 131-2.
were pretty too. [sic awkward plural]” Jimmy impressed her by coming home from a hunting trip to Romania with large stag's antlers on the front of her car, but even in this place that must have struck Unity Mitford as the place of Nazi legend with its forests and castles and resistance to change, a trip to Budapest brought out her anti-Semitic slurs:

“Buda Pest is a lovely town. We went to a fearful lowdown Jewish bar, and were told that King Edward had been there every night during his stay in Pest. I can tell you I felt ashamed for him.” Unity's implication that “Jewishness” equates to urban and seedy is reminiscent of Nazi associations of city life with alleged “Jewish corruption” there as opposed to rural life, which was somehow “purer” and “more Germanic.”

Unity Mitford did not linger more than two weeks in the Burgenland that autumn because exciting events were about to take place in Berlin. Diana had written her on 17 September about plans for a secret wedding to Sir Oswald Mosley in Germany. By early October, Magda Goebbels and Hitler had helped her to accomplish the paperwork. Diana's scandalous divorce, Mosley's wife's recent death, worries of how such a close association between Hitler and Mosley might strike the British public, and above all, worries that this would expose the business plan for a radio station kept things quiet.

Beyond personal affection for Diana, however, it seems hosting this wedding struck Hitler as a possible way to cement a positive relationship with Mosley. In his diary,

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507 Quote is Ibid., but info re Jimmy is from Letter to Farve from 29 Sept 1936, Redesdale MS, 132-3.
508 Letter from Diana to Unity from 17 Sept 1936, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 75-7. Note that Diana seems relieved that Ribbentrop will not be involved at all, but it is not clear if this is because of the event's strict secrecy or because Unity [and possibly Diana] disliked the man. His nickname between the Mitfords was “Joan Glover,” according to a footnote Charlotte Mosley puts in the letter. “Tom Mitford had made up the nickname, inspired, for no particular reason, by the medieval song, ‘Go to Joan Glover, and tell her I love her and at the mid of the moon I will come to her.’” (note 11 on page 77).
509 J & C Guinness, 386. Unity only mentions going to “a party” in Berlin in her letters to her parents. Since they only heard of the marriage later and everyone else didn't hear until the story broke two years after that, it's clear she kept this secret.
Goebbels wrote that he felt uncomfortable sponsoring the event, but his wife and Hitler had committed to it. Unity came from Munich with Hitler in his private train, and on 6 October, Diana married Mosley in the Goebbels’ Berlin drawing room. Diana's chief memory in a letter to Unity the next day and again in her memoir is of watching Hitler from a window as he walked towards the house from the Reich Chancellery. She also wrote of how “the Standesbeamter's [registry clerk's] heart was beating so loud because he was happy to see the Führer.” Besides Hitler and the Goebbels, Unity Mitford and B.U.F. Members William Allen and Robert Gordon-Canning were the only guests at the brief ceremony. Hitler gave the couple a signed photograph of himself in a silver frame, and the Goebbels gave them a special edition of Goethe's complete works bound in leather. A lunch followed at Schwanenwerder, the Goebbels' nearby country estate, where two of the Goebbels daughters carried in flowers. After the wedding luncheon, an interpreter arrived so that Mosley and Hitler could discuss politics. Mosley does not discuss their conversation in any detail in his memoir. He combines this incident with the early meeting in April 1935 and his general observations on Hitler's character then. Better evidence of their discussion exists in the Goebbels diaries. The Minister of Propaganda recorded that Hitler taught Mosley “the fundamental ideas of tactics, organization, and propaganda.” On this occasion, he seemed more generous to Mosley than in other diary entries, and he explained that Mosley was young, a bit brash but eager to learn.

Goebbels predicted that Diana would be a valuable asset to her new husband. Hitler

711 Letter to Diana from Unity on 7 October 1936, Charlotte Mosley, *The Mitfords*, 77; Diana Mitford Mosley, 142.
713 Diana Mitford Mosley, 142-3.
hosted a dinner for everyone at the Reichs Chancellery that evening, and the wedding party went to hear his speech for the opening of the annual Winterhilfswerk at the Berlin Sportsplast. Diana wrote, “M[osley] at that time understood no German but it interested him to see the meeting, and the technique of the speeches.”715 After this, Unity rode back to Munich with Hitler, once again in his private train. This time she stayed up late laughing at Gauleiter Wagner and Heinrich Hoffmann as they made tipsy jokes about English women and their alleged frigidity.716 After a Nazi government ceremony marking the death of right-wing Hungarian politician Gyula Gömbös, Unity Mitford returned to Britain and stayed there for the rest of the year.717

Unity Mitford's return to the United Kingdom coincided with Joachim von Ribbentrop's arrival there as the new German ambassador to Britain in October 1936. In April, the former ambassador had died of heart trouble quite unexpectedly in London.718 In August, Hitler had appointed Ribbentrop to take the man's place, but he only arrived at the Court of St. James several months later.719 Unity Mitford actively disliked Ribbentrop and opposed his appointment. His early background as a champagne salesman and its contrast with his pretentious posturing after a family member adopted him so that he

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715 Diana Mitford Mosley, 143. Diana and Mosley quarrelled that evening, and she was unable to remember exactly why but suspected it may have been over her admiration for Hitler.
716 Letter from Unity to Diana on 7 Oct 1936, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 78-9. Unity also mentions that she's due to go to the Kreistag events with tickets from Wagner. She seems to offer some sarcasm when she writes, “I shall hear Frau Scholtz-Klink speak, aren't I lucky.” – Scholtz-Klink was the only high-ranking woman in the Nazi administration and served as Reich Women's Leader. She had a rather severe and dour manner.
717 Gömbös had been prime minister under extreme right-wing Admiral Horthy in Hungary, and his anti-Semitism, support for a Hungarian alliance with Nazi Germany, and desire to run a dictatorship like Hitler's made him popular with the Nazi Party. Hitler and Goering attended the mock funeral in Munich, which Unity claims started at the Residenz and then involved a long procession with soldiers, a (presumably empty) coffin, and a gun salute. Letter to Muv from 7 Oct 1936, Redesdale MS, 133. Unity also notes in this letter that Goering has been very friendly once again at the Winterhilfswerk and the ceremony.
718 Barrow, 81.
719 Gannon, 104.
could add the noble “von” before his last name kept Ribbentrop a figure of ridicule among some of his fellow Nazi Party members. According to biographer Michael Bloch, Unity felt he would only “become a joke in London.” Goebbels, Goering, and Rosenberg also felt he was ill suited to encouraging Hitler's goal of an alliance between Britain and Germany, but Hitler made the decision to send him. This decision proved to be even worse for Nazi plans than most of Ribbentrop's opponents had feared.

Ribbentrop scandalized Britons by using the Nazi salute at official occasions to great the British King. He also left for notably long periods of time to return to Germany. While several Nazi supporters and connections warned Hitler of “Ribbentrop's mistakes, his rudeness, and his gaudy parties that invited criticism from the very guests who guzzled his champagne,” Hitler placed greater confidence in Ribbentrop's reports that he had succeeded in winning over British public opinion. Nazis like Putzi Hanfstaengl felt Ribbentrop only deluded Hitler that the politicians and particularly the aristocrats interested in Nazism's policies would translate into official government policy towards Germany. The ambassador's approach changed, however, by the time he left the post in 1938. When it became clear to Ribbentrop that Britain would not support German

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720 Bloch, 106.
721 Gannon, 105.
722 This quote comes from a specific incident when Friedelind Wagner spoke with Hitler about the blunders. While she broke quite firmly with her mother's Nazi connections eventually, at that time she was still meeting with Hitler and connected enough to return to Germany from her stay in London. Page 168. Loch Mowat's discussion of Ribbentrop's time as ambassador to Britain argues that these parties convinced some of the upper class to favor Nazi Germany (page 592), but as discussed earlier British aristocrats tended to be too closely tied to military service and the state to look beyond Britain's own interests when they clashed with Nazi Germany's. [Ribbentrop often courted right-wing sorts-- German socialite Bella Fromm notes this in her own diary entry (201-2).]
723 Hanfstaengl, Zwischen, 322. He also accused Unity Mitford of encouraging these delusions by suggesting that Britain and Germany would make natural allies. Unity Mitford may well have done that. She was one of the few British individuals Hitler encountered in his life, although she was not a professional politician working for his government. Of course, as the evidence above suggests, Hitler only heard what he wanted to hear most of the time regardless.
expansion in continental Europe as Hitler wished, several scholars argue that his own bitterness at Britons' personal rejection of him also led him to encourage Hitler to give up plans for an alliance: “Ribbentrop's unfavourable reports acted like a steady drop of acid in the Führer's ear. They were able to do so because of Britain's continuing failure to respond to Hitler's offers of an Anglo-German accord.”

Ribbentrop's animosity was still far in the future, however, in autumn 1936, and Unity felt much more interested in the British Union of Fascists' activities now that she had returned. On October 4, the Battle of Cable Street had erupted in London. Mosley and his organization marched through the city's East End. Despite official pleas from political organizations to stay away, many locals felt the march was deliberately provocative in the working class area with a large Jewish population. A clash between the Metropolitan Police and counter-protesters took place around a barricade erected to keep Mosley and his Blackshirts out. The riot diverted Mosley's march to Hyde Park, but the chaos attracted extra government attention to the BUF. In December, this new focus on the BUF manifested itself in the Public Order Act. The act banned political uniforms such as the BUF blackshirts, gave the Chief of Police power to ban political processions which might incite “a breach of the peace,” and encouraged political meetings' leaders to report rowdy attendees to constables. This added to the Emergency Powers Act of 1920 and the Sedition Act of 1934 in the British government's legislative toolbox. They were

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724 Strobl, 97.
725 Unity wrote her mother about the Battle of Cable Street on 7 October (Redesdale MS, 134): “I was very disappointed to have missed the big fight with the Jews last Sunday, it must have been swell, the papers here were full of it and the Führer said it reminded him so of the time when he [sic] was struggling for power, in fact he got quite sad because he said it was so sad that the wonderful struggle was over, and that was really the best time.” Diana seems to have been in Berlin during this time. She even writes Unity from Germany on Dec 2 (Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 79-80).
726 Hodge & Graves, 312-3.
not just better able to control the BUF as a threat to stability, but calling attention to the uniforms and political unrest were part of a wider campaign that helped discredit Mosley and his organization. The uniforms and affiliation with movements in Italy and Germany struck many Britons as too “foreign.” It was a small step from there to seeing the movement as “unpatriotic” in spite of its chauvinistic ultra-nationalism.\textsuperscript{727} As historian Richard Thurlow writes, the British state used this sort of “informal pressure” even more effectively than legal prosecution [which was] moderate, slow, and cautious. The media message was either ignoring the BUF or “blaming the Blackshirts” for disorder and unpatriotic disturbances.\textsuperscript{728}

The Public Order Act was a blow to the BUF, but at the same time, an event occurred which helped garner positive publicity in some corners. In early December 1936, King Edward VIII announced his abdication. Rumours flew in American and other European newspapers, but their British and German counterparts remained eerily silent until the last minute. They had hoped for a compromise between the desire of Edward to marry American divorcee Wallis Simpson and the desire of the British establishment (particularly Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin) to avoid the scandal of its King (head of the Church of England) marrying such a woman.\textsuperscript{729} Edward's stance on social change and his youth appealed to the British Union of Fascists, and they started a press campaign to “rally opinion on the King’s behalf. John [Beckett of the BUF] designed the campaign under the slogan 'Stand By The King', wrote the leaflets and pamphlets, organized


\textsuperscript{729} Gannon, 106.
chalking on walls and produced a special newspaper called *Crisis* which sold 37,000 copies." 730 This was positive publicity for the BUF in some circles. Mosley allegedly told Beckett his support for Edward might even lead to a call for the BUF to form a government. Fascists in all European nations were notorious for their obsession with youth and virility. Press reported Unity Mitford in the House of Lords gallery during the crisis, claiming Edward's abdication would make Hitler unhappy. 731 Goebbels echoes this in his diaries. He writes that Hitler felt pushing Edward to sacrifice either Wallis Simpson or the throne showed Britain's "moral hypocrisy" and lack of nerve. 732 When the energetic young King became the Duke of Windsor, this only confirmed the Nazi belief that Britain had outlived its glory days. Hitler was sure elderly politicians had sapped the British Empire's strength and virility. The future of world domination, he argued, rested with "young nations" like his own. 733

730 Beckett, 140-1.
731 Barrow, 86. (Date 10 Dec 1936).
732 Goebbels, 9 vols. *Diaries, 5 and 6 Dec 1936.*
733 Strobl, 100, 102, 104, 118. In 1937, Edward (by then Duke of Windsor) visited Nazi Germany with his wife and met Hitler. He became supportive enough of the Nazism that the British government sent him to the Caribbean during the Second World War. There were also rumours that Wallis Simpson (then Duchess of Windsor) had conducted an affair with Ribbentrop in 1936, before her marriage to Edward.
Chapter Six

The Indelicates' “Unity Mitford:"
Arm in arm on the boulevard/ Speaking the language that only we know
I'll brush an eyelash from your cheek/ I know they'll write books about you
And oh the crowds and the joyful faces/ These people are just backdrop to us
You and I don't even think like they do
You and I we're like a different species.\textsuperscript{734}

Doing what few young, aristocratic women would have ever considered, Unity Mitford slowly started to establish an independent life for herself in Germany over the course of 1937. Although it quickly became notable for chaos in the Mitford family's personal lives, the Nazi regime Unity Mitford loved was notable for the appearance of grim stability that year. After a family Christmas at the Airlies' Scotland residence Downie Park, Unity, Decca, and Muv drove to Redesdale and Castle Howard. Unity did not return to Germany until late January. She and Diana spent time in Berlin together. British Secret Intelligence Service reports indicate Unity and Clementine also sat in the Reich Chancellery with Hitler's SS bodyguards as Hitler “was taking a salute from the troops during the march past. Her conduct on that occasion disgusted certain journalists, who were not easily shocked.”\textsuperscript{735} As the Nazi Party hosted the annual celebration of Hitler's coming to power on 30 January, there must have been a smug satisfaction at Germany's position. International press no longer focused quite so much on the Nazi government as a bizarre novelty. Those who had predicted a short stay in power felt surprised to see Nazi Germany “had [now] entered the ranks of stable governments...


\textsuperscript{735} KV2/882/211314, Security Service Personal Files, National Archives, 80; HO144/21627/211314, Home Office Files, National Archives, 44. The report says the group drank “German spirits,” but since Unity Mitford was well-known for not drinking, this may have been something she did not do along with the guard.
things that had been novelties in 1935 had become institutions by 1937.”\textsuperscript{736} The British abdication crisis and the Spanish Civil War raised more brows than Hitler’s regime during this time, and Germany remained relatively quiet about its desire for expansion.

Internal violence against Jewish Germans, Romani, differently-abled Germans, and critics of the regime drew less attention abroad than they had initially. According to Franklin Gannon, “As the brutalities of the Nazi movement and regime were either increasingly taken for granted or else attributed to extremists, its undoubted accomplishments (the virtual ending of unemployment, the fine new buildings and roads, and its seeming spiritual and physical regeneration of the German people) were most often commented upon, even in the anti-Nazi British papers.”\textsuperscript{737} Like the metaphor of the duck whose feet frantically paddle under the surface of the pond as it seems to glide serenely, however, the Nazi government’s financial wizards started to confront problems in 1937. To finance rearmament, military growth, and reemployment the government had relied on heavy deficit spending. For example, Götz Aly notes that “between 1933 and mid-1939, the Third Reich spent at the very least 45 billion marks on the military, an astronomical sum for the time and more than three times the amount of total state revenues for the fiscal year 1937.”\textsuperscript{738} While men like economic mastermind Hjalmar Schacht expressed concern, Hitler knew the heavy spending helped to generate his own popularity, and the Nazis did not want to jeopardize their success by raising taxes.\textsuperscript{739}

One of the financial tricks used to bolster the German economy during this time was stealing from the country’s Jewish residents. Discriminatory legislation took jobs and

\textsuperscript{736} Gannon, 106-7.
\textsuperscript{737} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{738} Aly, 39.
\textsuperscript{739} Ibid., 51.
businesses as the state “Aryanized” property and professions. Emigration taxes and severe restrictions on taking objects of value out of Germany took “currency, stocks, stamps, jewelry, gold, silver, precious stones, artworks, and antiques.”

Perhaps even worse than the theft was the deterrent effect the levies had on many Jews' decisions to leave Germany. While the Nazis aggressively encouraged Jews to leave the country, these restrictions ensured that leaving Germany meant financial hardship as well as emotional hardship. It is impossible to calculate how many more might have left in time to save their lives had these restrictions not existed. The financial incentive to embrace the dispossession of the German Jews came as “Aryan” Germans were able to slide into their jobs and buy their homes and businesses at bargain prices. This encouraged the greedy to embrace anti-Semitism.

Unlike brutal physical violence or sweeping legislation like the Nuremberg laws, Jewish dispossession drew relatively little media attention, and Unity Mitford's focus was on other places in early 1937. On 6 February, she went to dinner at the Reich Chancellery with her cousin Clementine Mitford. That night, Hitler told her of a “wonderfully funny joke” he had planned for Putzi. He would request Putzi go to the airport for a secret mission, and once the pilot took Putzi up in the air, he would open instructions to infiltrate Republican lines in Spain's civil war. After circling, the pilot would drop Putzi back in Munich. It was a cruel plan, but it seemed to amuse Unity that evening. Goebbels and Hitler had hatched the plan with Goebbels and other government leaders at an afternoon gathering in the Reich Chancellery some days.
earlier. On 11 February, Putzi boarded the plane for Hitler's “joke.” In his subsequent German and English language memoirs, he claimed that the plan was to actually drop him in Spain, almost ensuring certain death. Putzi wrote that he convinced the pilot to feign engine trouble and disembarked in a nearby field. He headed immediately for Switzerland, believing his life was at risk. He eventually migrated to Britain and then the United States. While he lingered in Britain, security documents suggest Putzi hoped Hitler would call him back or someone would apologize. Goering made noises to call him back, but Putzi never received sufficient reassurance to return to Germany.

Some months earlier, Unity Mitford had spent an afternoon rowing on the Starnberger See near Munich with Putzi Hanfstaengl and his son Egon. Out on the lake, Putzi criticized the Nazi regime. One account claims he stated that he wished the excitement of the early days of “struggle” was still taking place in Germany as it was in Spain. Another says he criticized Goebbels and Rosenberg for having a negative influence on Hitler. He could have said both, but whatever Putzi said seems to have struck Unity Mitford as deeply disloyal. Putzi was certain she repeated the remarks and her feelings about him to Hitler. While there is no documentation or mention of this in her papers, Unity could well have done this. Interestingly, Putzi writes in his memoirs that he often fed Unity information he hoped she might repeat to Hitler. This makes such

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743 Conradi, 202.
744 Ibid., 198-201.
745 KV/2/470/359097, Security Service Personal Files, National Archives. The same documents refer to conversation transcripts and a letter from Unity Mitford from 1938 calling Putzi back to Germany. References for the letter are below. The file also contains a letter of introduction from Unity to Putzi for a man writing a pro-Nazi book, mention of portfolio with correspondence from Unity in Putzi's possession on entering Britain, and notes about another letter of introduction to Putzi from Unity Mitford dated July 1938.
746 Conradi, 204; J & C Guinness, 390.
a slip in front of her odd, but Putzi also writes that he disliked her for her anti-Semitism. He also disliked women in politics.\textsuperscript{747} Evidence suggests, however, that Goebbels had been hoping to unseat Putzi for some time. As nominal foreign press chief, Putzi probably seemed like a threat to the man eager to control every element of press and propaganda.\textsuperscript{748} Diana believed he lost Hitler's favor because of his gossip about Nazi Party infighting, particularly between Goering and Goebbels.\textsuperscript{749} Putzi's sister Erna seemed to have a similar view-- in conversations with friends like anti-Nazi intellectual Friedrich Reck-Malleczewen she held Goebbels responsible for the stunt.\textsuperscript{750} Although Unity Mitford's comments probably acted as a catalyst, she “attempted to act as a final go-between” to encourage Putzi's return to Hitler's side.\textsuperscript{751} She wrote Putzi once he moved to Britain on several occasions. In February 1938, she wrote Putzi in Vienna. She told him to send his letters via her friends in the Burgenland as the German police would confiscate his letters if he sent them to Munich, and Unity told Putzi she would show his latest letter to Hitler as soon as she could meet with him alone.\textsuperscript{752} Correspondence with Diana even describes the meetings with Goering and a chance encounter near Nancy's house trying to reconcile Putzi to Hitler.\textsuperscript{753} While Putzi writes bitterly of Unity Mitford in his memoirs that he “did not know [when she attempted to intervene on his behalf with Hitler] that she had been the probably unwitting author of my misfortune,” it seems clear

\textsuperscript{747} Conradi, 176 & 203; Hanfstaengl, \textit{Missing Years}, 284-5; \textit{Ibid.}, \textit{Zwischen}, 307. He also claims Unity wanted to marry Hitler to compete with Diana's marriage to Mosley. While Unity probably would not have rejected a marriage proposal from Hitler, this is a bizarre comment.

\textsuperscript{748} Conradi, 202-3.

\textsuperscript{749} Lovell, 552. Chapter 11 footnote 24 cites letter from Diana to Lovell from Jan 2001.


\textsuperscript{751} Hanfstaengl, \textit{Missing Years}, 290.

\textsuperscript{752} Letter reproduced in National Archives file KV2/882/211314

\textsuperscript{753} J & C Guinness, 391-2.
that Unity Mitford did not have Putzi's death or exile as a goal.\textsuperscript{754}

While Unity Mitford supported brutal violence and terrible beliefs, she seems to have lacked the subtlety necessary for espionage. The other rumoured denunciation Unity Mitford made was Eva Baum, her former German tutor and partner in Hitler worship, but surviving letters to Diana suggest otherwise. Although Unity and Baum broke their friendship when Unity learned Baum had told SS officers Unity “was having a 'real affair' with Erich Widmann,” Unity wrote Diana several months later to tell her that she had heard shocking news of Baum from the Osteria Bavaria staff and her friend Stadelmann.\textsuperscript{755} She heard Baum learned she had Jewish ancestry, lost her job, and lost her membership in the Nazi Party. “I am really sorry for her, as the Partei & her hate for the Jews were really all she had.”\textsuperscript{756} Unity's opinions were the opposite of subtle, and even Hitler's security ultimately cleared her. As Albert Speer noted in his memoirs, Unity was the only foreigner to become a regular part of Hitler's circle.\textsuperscript{757} Many adjutants also recalled her as the only woman for whom Hitler broke his standard rule that politics were not for women.\textsuperscript{758} This and her unique status as an aristocratic young woman without a clear job or chaperone made Unity Mitford highly suspect to many high-ranking Nazis. It infuriated staff that she guessed his itinerary so accurately in the early years of her friendship with the dictator.\textsuperscript{759} Aides like Wilhelm Brückner and Gerhard Engel all fretted

\textsuperscript{754} Hanfstaengl, \textit{Missing Years}, 290.
\textsuperscript{755} Letter from Unity to Diana daed 23 Dec 1935, Charlotte Mosley, \textit{The Mitfords}, 69 footnote 2.
\textsuperscript{756} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{759} Otto Dietrich, 188. Henriette Hoffmann writes in \textit{Frauen} that she believed Unity learned his whereabouts through a combination of Osteria staff and her hairdresser, but Unity later told family it was easy to deduce when Hitler was in town based on the S.S. guards at his apartment and government sites (Example: letter from 31 March 1937, Redesdale MS,141.)
that Unity was an English spy.\textsuperscript{760} While Hitler maintained his instincts and knowledge of human nature would detect a spy instantly, Unity Mitford was at the very minimum under the surveillance of Goering's intelligence agency, the FA (\textit{Forschungsamt}).\textsuperscript{761} Many of Hitler's followers assumed he was feeding information back to England through her or gaining information, but as Diana writes in \textit{A Life of Contrasts}, this cannot have been the only motivation for his friendship with Unity Mitford.\textsuperscript{762} While Hitler would have been interested in her thoughts on England since he had so little knowledge of the place and its people, making Mitford his main source of information when he had so many others at his disposal as head of Nazi Germany would have been fairly ridiculous. The same is true about feeding information back to Britain-- Although he did have a disproportionate sense of the British aristocracy's power, Unity was not the only way he would have hoped to influence it. Mitford's vocal beliefs would have made her a terrible spy for any state.

International relations were far from Unity Mitford's mind in late February. On 7 February, Farve and Muv dropped Decca at the train station to join friends in Austria, but instead of going with friends, Decca eloped with distant cousin and fellow communist, Esmond Romilly. The pair waited in Bayonne for Decca's visa to Spain where Romilly had a job as war correspondent for the News Chronicle. Within two weeks, the Mitford parents pieced together what had happened and tried to get Decca back before she married. Nancy and her husband, Romilly's mother, family relative Winston Churchill, and Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden were all involved before a wedding in Bayonne on

\textsuperscript{760} Gun, 15; Gerhard Engel, \textit{Heeresadjutant bei Hitler 1938-1943} (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags- Anstalt, 1974), 56 (entry for 28 July 1939); Schaub, 205.
\textsuperscript{761} Petropoulos, \textit{Royals and the Reich}, 138-141.
Decca had long planned to run away, but before the elopement, she had met Romilly just once at a weekend party. The speed and secrecy meant even her siblings felt astonished to discover what had happened. Debo and Unity, Decca's closest sisters, were particularly hurt to be left out of her plans. Unity rushed home from Germany upon hearing the news. Her letter to Muv from 20 February shows her astonishment at the whole affair: “I had no idea Decca was in France. Oh dear, no one ever tells me anything. Who did she go with, and why, and where to, and is she back yet?”

In spite of her surprise, Unity rallied to Decca's support. Tom and Diana joined her, and the arguments at the Mitfords' Rutland Gate home were terrific. Press on Unity and Diana's fascist connection haunted Decca throughout her life, but at this moment, she distinguished herself from her sisters' politics for good. Because of the political differences, Esmond Romilly hated Decca's family. In February 1937, Decca wrote Muv that they worried Unity's political connections would be a problem in Spain. When the Mitford parents still opposed the match, Esmond himself wrote his mother, “Also I'm sure you'll impress on [Muv] the folly of doing anything to get [Decca] back, as (a) She will be my wife by Spanish law (b) You know all about her sister and Hitler and it wouldn't be a very nice thing to have that advertised...” Unity disregarded all of this and sent affectionate letters to her “Boud” in France and Spain. In the first, she

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763 The clearest account of Decca's elopement is in Mary Lovell's book pages 221-237.
764 Dalley, 236.
765 Letter to Muv from 20 Feb 1937, Redesdale MS, 138. Customs officers searched Unity and Clementine on 26 February 1937 as they returned from Germany via Ostend. Their report noted Nazi periodicals and books as well as pictures of Hitler. (KV2/882/211314, 81 & 79).
766 Lovell, 231.
767 Jessica Mitford, Conflict, 55 & 60; Ibid., Hons & Rebels, 159; Kevin Ingram, Rebel: The Short Life of Esmond Romilly (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985), 201-2.
768 Jessica Mitford, Hons and Rebels, 141; Letter from Decca to Muv from late Feb 1937 from Paris, Ibid., Decca, 23-4 letter from Decca to Muv late Feb 1937 from paris. Letter also cited in Ingram, 150.
769 Ingram, 153.
describes the somber mood at the Mitfords' ("It was really as if there had been a death in the family when I arrived-- it still is, people are always coming round to condole or sending flowers, the house is bower."), how much she misses Decca, and how no one should prevent her from marrying Romilly. "I am dying to see Esmond, & hear all about him, [cousin Clementine Mitford] knows him so I have heard some."  

She also writes that Hitler comforted her when she first panicked over Decca's whereabouts. Later letters from Germany describe how Unity sent gifts with Muv, the family reactions, how silly Nancy's husband had been as a family go-between, and how Hitler kept Decca's elopement out of the German papers, "which was nice of him wasn't it." Decca resented Unity's mention of Romilly wanting publicity in a letter, but Unity continued to ignore Decca's upset and Romilly's loathing. On 11 April, she wrote Decca:

About Esmond's feeling for fascists (actually I prefer to be called a National Socialist as you know) I will explain how I feel about it, & I don't really see why he should feel any different. I hate the communists just as much as he hated Nazis, as you know, and it naturally wouldn't occur to me, nor would I want, to make friends with a lot of communists, if I had no reason to. But I don't see why we shouldn't personally [sic] be quite good friends, though politically enemies. Of course one can't separate one's politics & one's private life, as you know Nazism is [sic] my life & I very much despise that democratic-liberal-conservative English idea of walking arm-in-arm with one's opponent in private life and looking upon politics as a business or hobby; but I do think that family ties ought to make a difference. After all, violent differences of opinion didn't prevent you & me from remaining good friends did they. My attitude to Esmond is as follows-- and I rather expect his to me to be the same. I naturally wouldn't hesitate to shoot him if it was necessary for my cause, and I should expect him to do the same to me. But in the meanwhile, as that isn't necessary, I don't see why we shouldn't be good friends, do you... As to me turning against my Boud as you say, how could you think I would. On the contrary I was one of the very [sic] few who

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770 Letter from Unity to Jessica dated 3 March 1937, Charlotte Mosley, *The Mitfords*, 81-2. Evidence of Unity's support for Decca during this time also comes up in letters from their cousin "Rudbin" (Robin Farrer, 1937, OSU box 213: folder 1712) and letters from Muv (best examples in March 1937 in OSU Box 211: folders 1697).


always was on your side, all through.\textsuperscript{773}

After discussing these hypothetical shootings, Unity Mitford launches into family and social gossip. The letter above is far from logical-- Unity separates private and public life, then conflates them, and then distinguishes family from friends and acquaintances. The only thing that remains clear is that she considered herself dedicated to Nazism and to her family. The two already had problems reconciling, but Unity Mitford could still force them to fit awkwardly in 1937. In May she sent gifts and congratulations to Decca on her marriage.\textsuperscript{774}

While Unity Mitford voiced her support for Decca, she did so from Germany after a month waiting in London with her family. As Muv wrote Decca on 24 March 1937, “Bobo [Unity] has arrived in her spiritual home, I have just had a postcard.”\textsuperscript{775} The letters from this period are the first in which Unity Mitford mentions her car, and it seems that she brought it from Britain via Brussels that March. She wrote her mother about her drive into Germany, “I drove altogether about 265 miles yesterday. I drove for 11 hours and only stopped once for 20 minutes in Mainz to have flags put on my car.”\textsuperscript{776} This image of Unity Mitford driving recklessly in her big black car with British and Nazi flags quickly became iconic for many of Hitler's circle.\textsuperscript{777} (Hitler later told Diana, “Last week I was driving in Munich and I saw a car coming the wrong way down a one-way street. I

\textsuperscript{773} Letter from Unity to Jessica dated 11 Apr 1937, Ibid., 90-1.
\textsuperscript{775} From Muv to Decca dated 24 March 1937, OSU (box 211: folder 1697).
\textsuperscript{776} Letter from Belgium dated 22 March 1937 and letter with quote from 24 March 1937, Redesdale MS, 139-140.
\textsuperscript{777} Heinrich Hoffmann memoir, for example.
told Kempka [his chauffeur] to slow down and I said, why, it's a woman driver! And then I saw, of course, it was *die* Unity!"\(^{778}\) With her car thus decorated, Unity Mitford headed through Nuremberg, where she spent two days as Streicher's guest. With the Gauleiter, his wife, and his son, Unity “[looked] round the new grounds for the Parteitag, [saw] *Die Fledermaus* and [sang] with the family.”\(^{779}\) The picture is oddly domestic for the notoriously vulgar anti-Semite, but Unity enjoyed the man even other Nazi leaders often shunned.

On her way to Nuremberg, Unity picked up two young hitchhikers. Both happened to be Catholic theological students, and she related her conversations with them in a letter back to Muv: “I had a terrific argument with the first one about National Socialism versus Christianity, and he told me all about the struggle between State and Church, which was interesting. He horrified me by asserting that the entire Catholic population of Germany was anti-Nazi, however the second one reassured me and said that only a tiny minority were anti, most were pro.”\(^{780}\) Unity had started to call fascism “her religion” among family by this time.\(^{781}\) Even for an individual without much knowledge or experience of Catholicism, Unity Mitford articulates the debates in the Catholic Church at that time about support for Hitler, the idea of a sacralization of politics mentioned above, and her own increasing radicalization as she moved towards the camp of Nazis that openly advocated the eradication of religion.

Coincidentally, it was at this time that Unity Mitford started to receive letters from

\(^{778}\) Diana Mitford Mosley, 154.
\(^{779}\) *J & C Guinness*, 390-1. Unity's letter to Muv from Nuremberg on 24 March 1937 (Redesdale, MS 140) notes that the hotel where she lodged had just been rebuilt for future rallies in the city and that she had just missed Hitler's stay there by a day.
Frank Buchman's Oxford Group. The Oxford Group (later called the Moral Rearmament Movement) was an evangelical Christian movement. The movement was very popular in Europe and the United States during the 1930s. As an opponent of communism, Buchman made a few statements in support of Hitler, but he then decided Hitler would need conversion. Unity notes an Easter lunch Erna Hanfstaengl hosted in Munich for Buchman, and Diana wrote back asking more about his personality. Diana soon had visits from a Munich friend involved with the group. Annemarie Oratus worked hard to convert her. Diana, however, felt unimpressed with their methods and their assertions that Frank Buchman had the best plan for world affairs: “I said in order to change anything properly in the modern world you had to have a political organization and several thousand people willing to give their lives and some machine guns. So then I said you will never get me for your sort of 'revolution' because I am a realist and we must have a framework first in England.” There would be no introductions to Hitler from the Mitford sisters.

Unity spent the last days of March and nearly all of April following Hitler in Munich. British tourists found her in his wake, and she became almost one of the sites at places like the Carlton Tea Rooms. With the new car, Unity could follow Hitler much more quickly. She writes about rushing after him, and when Hitler recognized her car, he invited her for tea on 30 March:

He wanted to hear all about Decca, and was so sweet about it all. He said he had

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782 Buchman later came to be an opponent of Nazism, but these statements remain controversial for obvious reasons. See also Redesdale MS, 145.
784 Diana to Unity from 3 August 1937, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 109-111.
practically sent the editor of one German paper to Oranienburg Concentration Camp for publishing the story after he (the Führer) had forbidden it. Apparently there was a most awful row about it, but in the end it was decided not to send him to Oranienburg. Wasn't it nice of the Führer to take so much trouble about it all.786

The nonchalance with which Unity discusses imprisoning an individual in a concentration camp is startling. It shows no qualms about imprisoning political opponents of Nazism or people who happened to displease Hitler. Unity experienced the Nazi police state herself. When Violet Hammersley (an old friend the Mitford sisters both loved and ridiculed for her dour outlook, calling her “Mrs. Ham” or “the Wid [ow]”) visited Unity in Munich, they attended a parade for Hitler's birthday. Unity took a photograph of several armored cars. Police responded immediately and took her with Mrs. Ham to the local Gestapo headquarters. The pair spent two hours in detention as the film developed, but Unity found the whole thing “wonderfully funny,” unlike the terrified Mrs. Ham.787 Unity either felt she was not at risk because of her friendship with Hitler and her Nazi beliefs, or she remained stubbornly blind to the violent nature of the Nazi state.

At the end of April, Unity Mitford returned to Britain for the 12 May coronation of George VI. As during her return in February, Customs officers in Ostend reported Nazi books and periodicals in her luggage to the Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police. They also noted her Nazi pin.788 Unity did not attract attention at the Coronation,

786 Letter to Muv from Unity 31 March 1937, Redesdale MS, 141. Unity's letter to Decca from 3 April 1937, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 84-6, gives a different account of the the same event. Around this same time, Hitler gave advice to Unity on renaming Mosley's Blackshirts, and Magda Goebbels sent a “sweet” letter to her about Decca's elopement. (Unity's letter to Diana from 8 April 1937, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 89).

787 Letter to Diana from Unity on 22 April 1937 replicated in J & C Guinness, 393. Incident also mentioned in letter from Muv to Decca in OSU box 211: folder 1697.

788 KV2/882/211314, National Archives, 82. Debo's letter to Decca from 21 April 1937 notes Unity's plans to come visit. (OSU box 197: folder 1559), and the day Unity landed (29 April 1937) the Times (London) notes that Unity sent a wedding gift with her parents to Mr. P. Oldfield and Lady Elisabeth Murray. (page
which she attended at Marlborough Club with Debo, but the Naval Review held in honor of the Coronation became a problem. Held at Spithead, this event attracted both Unity and Farve (although Farve refused to attend the actual coronation in the Abbey with Muv). Unity described her version of events in a letter to Decca on 22 May:

The Naval Review was heaven. [sic] Farve and I spent 2 nights on a liner for it, it did [sic] so remind me of the cruise only the ship was much bigger. We were guests of the Government, therefore not a penny to pay, and champagne flowed. It was one huge party on board as one knew a lot of the people, all the Lords and Commons were invited as well as Ambassadors, Ministers and Foreign Delegates, incl. Blomberg. The heavenly O'Connor was there & I fell madly in love with him & he is coming to visit me in Munich. The actual Review was heaven, and our ship was the only one to follow the Royal Yacht & the Enchantress along the lines of battleships, so we saw everything, and the illuminations in the evening were fairylike.

Since Unity's grand plan was for Britain to rule the seas and Germany to rule the European continent, this must have been a thrill to match the military parades she so enjoyed with Hitler. Regardless of her enjoyment, a letter came from her former visitor, the Earl of Airlie. He described this as affectionate advice, but Airlie discussed her relationship with Hitler and her appearance at the Review. While he wrote that he admired certain things about Hitler, Unity needed to make it clearer to the dictator that the people Britain did not agree with him on everything in order to create a true alliance between their two countries. More importantly, Airlie drew attention to Unity's growing notoriety:

I don't care if you don't care if you don't like it-- but I like you enough to tell you.

789 Letter from Muv to Decca dated 10 May 1937, OSU box 211: folder 1697.
790 From Unity to Decca from 22 May 1936 from OSU box 209: folder 1674. According to a letter from Muv to Decca, this was Terence O'Connor (Conservative MP and Solicitor General from 1936-1940, married to Cecil Cook, and follower of the same Heythrop hunt as Lord Redesdale. He was about 25 years older than Unity), and the ship was the “Strathmore.” (23 May 1937 Muv to Decca box 211: folder 1697. O'Connor notes see Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 103).
When you go to the Review of the British Fleet you do not, if you will be considered normal, wear a “Swastika”, more especially if you are still a British subject. If you like to in Germany, that is different. In the same way, if I visit Germany, I go willing to listen and learn from them and take away from them what I find to be good. What I do not like I leave and remain silent. Unless I am asked. Only by normality and tolerance can one achieve what must be the greatest aim of us all, who think at all-- the better understanding of all nations. Forgive this lecture.\textsuperscript{791}

This shift in attention from viewing Unity Mitford as a racist oddity to an unpatriotic one marked the changing mood among some Britons towards Germany, and it would become more and more problematic for someone whose goal was to unite the two “Aryan” countries.

Unity Mitford only became more determined to continue to express her beliefs in the face of criticism. She wrote Airlie back that she strove to be objective with Hitler about England, “but naturally what I tell him is rather coloured by my own ideas, one can't help that.”\textsuperscript{792} She also responded to the arguments about her swastika pin:

\begin{quote}
About wearing my Swastika Badge at the Review of the Fleet, you see I can't help feeling on an occasion like that, I am to a certain extent in an enemy camp. I don't mean the nice English people like you, but naturally among the Maiskys and Hore Belishas and Austrian Ministers and members of the English Government and other Jews and enemies of Germany, I like to show my convictions... You know if one is Nazi one really does feel slightly persecuted in England and the more persecuted one feels the more determined one is not to make concessions to the other side. I am sure you will understand that. After all National Socialism is my religion, not merely my political party.\textsuperscript{793}
\end{quote}

Unity follows up these extraordinary statements with a complaint that she “feels German” in spite of being a British subject. Throughout 1937 and 1938, she made several statements to this effect, but Unity Mitford never seriously pursued German citizenship.

\textsuperscript{791} Letter to Unity from Joe Airlie in June 1937 but otherwise undated reproduced, Redesdale MS, 141-3. 
\textsuperscript{792} Ibid., 144-5. 
\textsuperscript{793} Ibid.
in British fascism and her identity as a Briton to alter that. Her statements and actions, however, indicate that Mitford often enjoyed the attacks. These probably made her feel like the “Old Fighter” Nazis from the Party’s early days of “struggle” that she idolized, and her rebellious nature from childhood enjoyed irritating the British political establishment.

Unity scandalized British politicians in Germany just after scandalizing them in Britain. In May, Sir Nevile Henderson replaced Sir Eric Phipps as British ambassador to Nazi Germany. Ribbentrop had lobbied hard for this, and he believed Henderson would be more sympathetic to Nazi foreign policy aims. Henderson had connections with the Cliveden set and less experience than Phipps, who supported appeasement policies but considered Hitler dangerously crazy.794 Lady Phipps later described Unity as “a *Deutsches Mädchen* battleship of a woman,” an ideological extremist unlike “these sloppy English girls [who] were always having affairs with dreadful SS types” and coming to the ambassador to resolve things.795 In contrast, as the new ambassador, Henderson's first encounter with Unity Mitford was a shock. He prided himself on answering the Nazi salutes (right arm extended, bellowing “Heil Hitler”) with a smart salute from his right temple and “Rule Britannia.” As a sign of respect, however, most Germans did not use this greeting when addressing the British ambassador: “...nobody except an occasional cloakroom attendant and Miss Unity Mitford ever did greet me with 'Heil Hitler.' And when Miss Mitford did it, in the middle of a big crowd at Nuremberg, I was so surprised and dumbfounded that I forgot 'Rule Britannia' and said nothing at

794 Mowat, 593-4.
795 Interview with Lady Phipps, Pryce-Jones, 128.
Unity Mitford was busy doing more than startling the new British ambassador in spring and summer 1937. A 9 May photograph shows her with Bavarian Gauleiter Wagner observing a model for the development of the Prinzregentenstrasse in Munich. German author (and anti-Hitlerite) Friedrich Reck-Malleczewen met Unity at Erna Hanfstaengl's around the same time. He described her as “a type somewhere between archangel and model for a toilet-soap ad... Her purpose is to become Queen of Germany, with the aim of bringing about reconciliation between Germany and England... [a] forceful lady.” Unity had visitors in Munich by June. Unity's mother and Debo had toured Italy. Then they stayed with the Palffy-Erdödys at Kohfidisch, Janos and his wife at Bernstein, the Heskeths at Villa Starhemberg in Bad Ischl, and Unity and her Pension Doering in Munich. In letters to Decca, Muv described the Burgenland as “very lovely and romantic,” and she described touring Munich with Unity in some detail. There was a heatwave that June so they spent most of their time at local lakes outside the city. The group also went to tour Nymphenburg, which Unity seems to have favored as a spot to bring her guests, and one of the labor camps for German young men, which impressed Muv with the physical work and fresh air that fit her notions of health. Debo especially enjoyed Barnabas von Géczy's band at the Luitpold, but Unity's excitement came when Hitler invited the party to tea at his apartment. Muv entertained the sisters by asking...
Hitler about flour regulations in German bread and commenting later on his “very good manners.” Debo described the interaction between Hitler and Unity to Decca in a letter soon after: “The Hitler tea party was fascinating. Bobo was like someone transformed when she was with him & going upstairs she was shaking so much she could hardly walk. I think Hitler must be very fond of her, he never took his eyes off her.”

Seventy years later, Debo gave additional details to W magazine: The monogrammed towels impressed her, and she wondered at how many times he had to ring for servants, considering his obsessive security. When she left Munich with Muv, Unity raced up to Berlin to stay with her pregnant friend, Mary Ormsby-Gore.

Unity returned to Britain for a short time in July 1937, and she and Tom stayed at Swinbrook together. Muv's letters to Decca at the time describe a lull in the social whirl. Tom had to return to Sandhurst soon, and although Debo describes Unity going to Lords with her, life at home with her parents and younger sibling could not have been as exciting as an independent life in Munich. Debo loved the country life, and even she wrote that with most of the sisters away from home “...the boredom at Wycombe is absolutely unbelievable. One never dares ask any of one's friends for fear of the family taking against them & being fearfully rude 'like only Mitfords can.'”

Unity missed

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801 Debo regarding bands in letter to Decca from 13 June 1937, Charlotte Mosley, *The Mitfords*, 100-101. Decca from 12 and 16 June 1937, OSU box 211: folder 1697: Muv notes that they only met Hitler once because he was out of Munich the rest of their stay. Bread note in Debo to Decca from 20 June 1937, Charlotte Mosley, *The Mitfords*, 102-3.


804 Letter from Muv to Decca on 22 June 1937, OSU, box 211: folder 1697.

805 Letter from Debo to Decca dated 30 June 1937, Charlotte Mosley, *The Mitfords*, 104-6. Most amusing is Debo's portrait of her parents: “Everyone does the same old things here. Farve goes off to The Lady & the House of Lords & Muv paints chairs and reads books called things like 'Stalin: My Father' or 'Mussolini: The Man' or 'Hitler: My Brother's Uncle' or 'I Was In Spain' or 'The Jews-- By One Who Knows Them' etc etc etc.” Clearly, Muv was working to understand her children at all ends of the political spectrum....
Decca's lively presence in particular. By 12 July, Muv writes that Unity was taking her car back to Germany with her cousin Clementine. The pair planned to attend the opening of the *Haus der Kunst* in Munich [then called the *Haus der Deutschen Kunst* or House of German Art].

After several automobile breakdowns in Belgium, Unity and Clementine arrived in Munich just days before the town celebrated the new museum's opening. (Unity wrote Decca, “I fell in love with a wonderfully handsome Belgian mechanic who tried to mend [the car] but didn't, the only handsome Belgian I ever saw outside of the king & I've never seen him.”) As the city Hitler appointed “Capitol of the Movement,” Munich also quickly became “Capitol of German Art.” Hitler “was determined that Munich should again be the focal point of the German art world, the place to which people had to come to understand the aesthetic dimensions of the new order...” He believed in art's ideological power and importance, making this title no small thing, but Munich's real political power declined in relation to that of its northern rival, Berlin. Determined to live up to its new title and retain whatever influence it could, Munich lavishly celebrated its status in July 1937.

Munich threw the first Days of German Art festivities. (These happened again in 1938 and 1939 but ended with the start of the Second World War.) Unity was a privileged guest at the event. As soon as she arrived in Munich, she described the city’s...
preparations for the museum opening to Decca, “The atmosphere here is full of excitement and the town so beautifully decorated it looks like a fairy town, it certainly puts the poor old Coronation in the shade.”

For several days, there were concerts, theater performances, and folk dances like during the Fasching carnivals. The celebrations culminated with an enormous parade titled “2000 Years of German Culture.”

In his study of Munich under Nazi rule, David Clay Large describes the event in some detail:

The “2000 Years of German Culture” parade broke new ground in the field of Nazi kitsch, and that was no small feat. As its name suggests, it celebrated the high points of German creativity through the ages. Famous buildings, historical figures, and aesthetic ideals were represented via costumed marchers and giant models mounted on carts pulled by horses or grunting stormtroopers. There were, for example, floats depicting the Nuremberg Cathedral, Goethe's head, and the Cosmic Oak Tree wrapped in green foil. A buxom Amazon sitting on a clamshell topped by an eagle represented “The Germanic Ages.” The “Modern Era of National Socialism” was symbolized by three massive warrior statues bearing the designations “Sacrifice,” “Belief,” and “Loyalty.” Another float carried a replica of the House of German Art only slightly smaller than the real thing. Behind it marched men dressed as Charlemagne, Henry the Lion, and Frederick Barbarossa. There were also troops of Hitler Youth in period costumes and strapping Valkyries wearing iron bras. Ominously, the final entries were units of the Wehrmacht and the SS.

This was the warped Romanticism of Nazi Germany that Unity loved.

Hitler meant the Haus der Deutschen Kunst to be a showpiece of ideologically correct art. One of his favorite architects, Paul Ludwig Troost, designed the building, and it was classic Nazi monumentalism, the oddly angular interpretation of an ancient Greek

interested in art as she had been since childhood. (see Schaub, 203) Henriette von Schirach, Frauen, 85. Hoffmann also suggests she met Josef Thorak, one of Hitler's favorite sculptors, and she describes Benno von Arendt's decorations for the festivities.

Unity to Decca 16 July 1937, OSU box 209: folder 1674. Unity also mentions hearing the first rumors of Mussolini's visit that coming September. She spent time with Clementine and her friend Max Ettlinger listening to Géczy's band once again.

Large, Munich, 261.
Inside, at the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* [Great German Art Exhibit], carefully selected art showcased “Aryan beauty,” “German valor,” or the nineteenth-century Romantic landscapes Hitler adored. Nearby, another state-sponsored exhibit existed to provide a deliberate contrast to such art. This second exhibit was the infamous *Austellung Entarteter Kunst* [Exhibition of Degenerate Art]. A run-down building housed more than six hundred works by modern artists such as Klee, Kandinsky, Kokoschka, Grosz, Ernst, Barlach, and Beckmann. Hitler believed their avant-garde and often abstract works perverted viewers' minds. Organizers hung the paintings at odd angles or without frames, and the only order came from “categories like 'Anarchist-Bolshevist Art,' 'Negro-Inspired Art,' 'Jewish Art,' and 'Total Madness.'... Some [paintings] also bore helpful explanatory notes like 'Thus do sick minds view nature!'; 'German peasants perceived in the Yiddish manner'; 'The N***** as racial ideal'; 'Degeneration of the German Woman as cretin & whore.'” While Hitler intended the exhibit as a way to reinforce how the House of German Art's Great German Art Exhibit marked his “redemption” of aesthetics, the Degenerate Art Exhibit was wildly popular because the works were an exceptional array of modern German talent that disappeared after the Exhibit closed. Unity writes of attending the exhibit with Erna Hanfstaengl, who sold prints of modern works like the ones on display. Erna was ecstatic at the collection's treasures, and Unity seems to stray from ideological correctness, saying “I feel I learnt quite a lot by it.”

Hitler and his Party had culled these works from German museums, I bb., 259. Troost also designed the renovations at the Nazi Brown House in Munich. Although he died before the building's completion, his wife and others helped realize his plans for the building of the museum. I bb., 264. Also see Lynn Nichols' *Rape of Europa* and the documentary based on the book for more information on Hitler's artistic beliefs. I bb., 265.

Unity never seemed to fully embrace Hitler's hatred for modern art. This letter is from Unity to Diana (4
and their disappearance through sales abroad and even outright destruction still shows in
some of Germany's museums that have not recovered their modern collections.

The same year that Unity attended this first House of German Art opening, her
picture featured in a book entitled *Nordische Schönheit* [Nordic Beauty]. The author was
Nazi artist and art theorist Paul Schultze-Naumburg. His body of written work included
several other books-- all of which were either deeply nationalist examinations of German
art history or detailed pseudo-scholarship focused on race in art. In *Nordische Schönheit*,
Schultze-Naumburg argued that all the glories of Classical and Renaissance art came
from “Aryan” or “Teutonic” models and artists. He compares contemporary photographs
of men and women with works of art in elaborate and bizarre detail. Friedelind Wagner
gives an indication of how at least some Germans could not take such “scholarship”
seriously in her memoir of Bayreuth. She details how her two brothers quizzed Schultze-
Naumburg about the distinctions he makes in one of his books between Nordic and non-
Nordic breasts.\footnote{August 1937, Charlotte Mosley, *The Mitfords*, 111-2) but incomplete.}

In Nazi anthropological and art history texts, famous Britons often
supplemented famous Germans to illustrate arguments about “genetic continuity” among
“Aryan” or “Nordic” peoples. As Strobl describes one author's work, “Elizabethan
sonnets extolling the beauty of fair maidens jostled with contemporary impressions about
the number of blondes at a first night in a West End theatre.”\footnote{F. Wagner, 142.}

Unity Mitford and her
sister Diana featured as such contemporary examples of “Nordic” beauty in *Nordische
Schönheit*. Under two images of Diana the caption reads: “An English woman with the
“Botticelli face” which can be found repeatedly in England.” Unity Mitford's image has

\footnote{Strobl, 57-8.}
the caption: “English woman, likewise a Botticelli-type, sister of #16, without the fashionable stress, would go into action still more strongly.” The captions do not give their names, and it is unclear if either sister knew her photo was in the book or consented to its use. What is clear is that Schultze-Naumburg saw Unity and her sister as evidence of “Nordic superiority” that could be used to “regenerate” German art and the “German Spirit.” The text from 1937 is evidence of the sort of privilege Unity enjoyed simply because of her genetics in Nazi Germany.

Unity continued her constant travel after the Munich art exhibits. She spent late July as Hitler's guest once again at the Bayreuth Festival. Her cousin Clementine came along, and other Nazi guests marveled at how Unity's friendly sister they had met in Munich could be a communist. After Bayreuth, Unity may have traveled through Berlin and visited her parents in Britain before returning to Munich. A letter from the period describes attending La Scala's performance of *Aida* in Berlin with Hitler and visiting Mary Ormsby-Gore, but the time line does not quite fit with the dates of other letters. This could be mislabeled and from her trip in June. Unity's few letters from this period describe pleas from the Oxford Group for Nuremberg tickets. She also received a message from Indian socialite Bapsybanoo Pavry and her father, asking to be introduced...

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821 Muv to Decca from 24 July 1937, OSU box 211: folder 1697. Muv writes that “Bobo has gone to Bayreuth, she didn't think she'd be going and was invited only last week.” Info on gossip about Decca from Unity to Decca, 10 August 1937, Charlotte Mosley, *The Mitfords*, 113-4.

822 Letter from 31 July 1937 from Unity to Decca, OSU box 209: folder 1674. Clementine returned to Britain around this time after the Bayreuth Festival. The *Aida* performance may be the one referenced as the source of a spat between Goebbels and Goering in the *Royal Family of Bayreuth*, but this is uncertain. (see F. Wagner, 120-1).
to Hitler, and she facilitated their trip to Berchtesgaden.\footnote{Letters from 9, 14, and 25 August 1937 from Unity to Muv, Redesdale MS, 147-8.} The only other descriptions are of lazy summer days during the heat wave. She hit a manure cart with her car one day. (Hitler teased that “Goering will put me in prison for sabotaging the 4 year plan by destroying manure supplies.”)\footnote{Letter from 25 August 1937 from Unity to Muv, Redesdale MS, 148.} Another day, she decided to sunbathe in the nude. She wrote Decca:

The other day when it was boiling hot I found a secluded spot in the Englischer Garten where I took off all my clothes & sunbathed, luckily no-one came along. While I was lying in the sun I suddenly wondered whether Muv knew I was sunbathing naked, like when she knew that you were bathing naked, & I laughed till I ached, if anyone had come along they would have thought me mad as well as indecent.\footnote{Letter from Unity to Decca from 10 August 1937, Charlotte Mosley, \textit{The Mitfords}, 113-4.}

(This was a popular fad in some Nazi health circles, but Unity may have just enjoyed feeling scandalous and rebellious.) Later in August, Unity went to visit her friends in the Burgenland with Tom. Diana was in Berlin part of that summer, and the three siblings went with Janos to the Nuremberg Parteitag in early September.\footnote{Letter from Muv to Decca 17 Aug 1937, OSU box 211: folder 1697; letter from Diana to Unity from 14 August 1937, Charlotte Mosley, \textit{The Mitfords}, 114-6.} Diana noted that the rally had more foreign guests and international press than previous years. (This was her last rally because of pregnancy in 1938 and then the beginning of the Second World War.) She wrote in her memoirs, “Tom and Janos were very impressed, not only by the extraordinary beauty and clockwork precision of the parades but by the speeches giving details of progress in every sphere of the economy. England seemed stagnant by comparison...”\footnote{Diana Mitford Mosley, 144.} Several individuals noted the small group at the rallies. A Mitford cousin and close friend of Tom, Randolph Churchill was there for his column in the
Evening Standard, “Londoner's Diary.” He disapproved of the family fascination with Hitler and wrote in his column, “The Mitford family have, as usual, sent a powerful delegation to the Nazi Congress in Nuremberg. Three of Lord Redesdale's children are attending this year, as the personal guests of the Führer-- Miss Unity Mitford, who spends a large part of the year in Munich and who is a personal friend of Herr Hitler, Mrs. Bryan Guinness and Mr. T.D. Mitford...” He went on to discuss Jessica's ardent communism, stating, “Not all members of the Mitford family are as well disposed to the Nazi regime as the contingent who are now in Nuremberg.” Socialite Bella Fromm heard about Unity at the Nuremberg rallies “from Louis P. Lochner and the others”: “Unity Freeman-Mitford, in her usual ecstasy, dogged Hitler's heels, as last year and the year before, the party badge tossing stormily on her heaving sweater... Unity is heartily unpopular with most Nazis. Ribbentrop dislikes her. Hess is jealous and suspicious.... But Hitler seems to like her, and that's all anyone needs around here.” As Fromm notes, Unity's party badge was not just scandalous in Britain. In Germany, she was possibly the only foreigner permitted to wear this mark of German ultra-nationalism. Only German citizens could be Nazi Party members, and Unity's initial badge (round and red with NSDAP on it) attracted negative attention in crowds. After telling Hitler about the harassment others gave her as a British woman wearing the pin, he gave a new badge with his signature engraved on the back. He claimed the sight of his signature would show anyone complaining to her that he meant for her to wear it. The most important person to

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828 Winston Churchill, His Father's Son, 151.
829 Ibid.
830 Bella Fromm, Blood and Banquets: A Berlin Social Diary (New York: Geoffrey Bles, 1943; Birch Lane Press of Carol Publishing Group, 1990). Fromm edited these diaries with the benefit of hindsight, and it's not certain that she really knew about Eva Braun at this time. (see entry for Sept 16, 1937 on page 255).
831 Diana Mitford Mosley, 152-3.
notice Unity, one whom Unity noticed in return, at the rallies was Hitler's secret mistress, Eva Braun. A photograph from the grandstand for honored guests at Nuremberg in 1937 shows Unity Mitford seated near Braun and Erna Hoffmann. Diana writes that Unity quickly guessed who she was and “thought her pretty and charming.” As mentioned above, Unity's relationship with Hitler was never sexual, and she does not seem to have been jealous. Instead, as someone with a background in Britain's aristocracy, she must have been well aware of powerful men having mistresses. In spite of this, some Nazi insiders felt Braun was jealous of the public attention Unity Mitford received as Hitler's friend.

Attention in Germany focused on Hitler's political “friends” in September 1937 as the country prepared for Italian dictator Benito Mussolini's state visit. Unity wrote Muv, “The town [Munich] is being decorated in un-heard of fashion for Musso, to my disgust. The station for instance is being entirely lined with red bunting and gold. He arrives a week to-day. It is all very sad, and all the fault of the idiotic English government.” While Unity had once admired Mussolini's fascist government, she loathed the man by 1937. She certainly complained about Mussolini in conversations with Hitler and his circle. A letter to Diana relates:

I had lunch with the Führer in the Ost the day before the Duce came, & said goodbye to him as I shan't see him again [during Musso's visit]. We had a rather stormy scene as all of them, except the Führer, set on me because I said I didn't like Musso, & bullied me till I was almost in tears, it was dreadful. I thought I wouldn't be able to prevent myself from crying. However the Führer took my part

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832 Joachimsthaler, 449.
833 Diana Mitford Mosley, 154.
834 Gun, 154-5. Baldur von Schirach, 197. Eva Braun's secrecy and isolation must have contributed to any insecurities, but as mentioned earlier, Braun's character remains elusive. The most recent biography of Braun suggests a stronger personality than previously thought, one less plagued by insecurities and paranoia.
835 Letter from Unity to Muv from 18 Sept 1937, Redesdale MS, 148.
(without of course saying anything against Musso) & he was perfectly sweet. Of course the one that led the attack was Dr. Brandt. [Karl Brandt, one of Hitler's doctors]\(^{\text{836}}\)

Goebbels relates something similar in a diary entry: “The Mitford participates in lunch. She grumbles completely uninhibitedly on Mussolini. But I answer her. I cannot understand that the Führer can be pleased. He expresses himself very sharply against Eden [British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden].”\(^{\text{837}}\) Unity does not give detailed reasons for her dislike of Mussolini in her letters, but the statements she and Goebbels made indicate that at least some Nazis believed the German courtship of Mussolini as an ally during this trip took place because Britain had not responded to Hitler's overtures for an alliance as he would have wished. With the historian's benefit of hindsight, it is easy to see that Hitler's idea of an “Aryan” alliance with Britain could not have lasted, but Unity Mitford, who saw this as her greatest desire, seemed to see Mussolini's Italy as Britain's rival.

During Mussolini's visit, Unity was active in her self-appointed role as ambassadress. Although her brother Tom had left Munich, her cousin Randolph Churchill and her friend Ward Price were both journalists covering the event. Unity enjoyed showing them around Munich and attending special events with them, but she and Randolph harassed each other over their different views. Unity wrote that he “never stopped complaining about me not getting him an interview with the Führer and a thousand other things, but he is so good-natured about it all that one can't mind very

\(^{\text{836}}\) Letter from 1 Sept 1937 from Unity to Diana, Charlotte Mosley, *The Mitfords*, 117-8. The same letter describes how much Unity has enjoyed reading *Gone With The Wind*. The date on this letter seems to be off since it describes the day before Mussolini's visit, which took place the 25-28 September.

Only German and Italian press received invitations to the military maneuvers arranged for Mussolini's visit. Unity helped Ward Price obtain special permission to attend because of his sympathy for Hitler, but Randolph Churchill felt furious when she did not manage the same for him. In spite of their clashes, Churchill sent a lovely note of thanks soon after returning to Britain. Unity herself wrote that she “unwillingly” enjoyed Mussolini's speech. "Altogether, the three days were great fun & I adored it in spite of the misery of Musso coming."

More interesting than these anecdotes about Unity as a means of access for journalists are the papers from British Consul General in Munich David St. Clair-Gainer. His report to the British Embassy in Berlin describes meeting Unity Mitford at the Munich train station. She told St. Clair-Gainer that Hitler did not share other Nazis' enthusiasm for Mussolini and personally disliked the Italian dictator. Unity reported that Hitler “had said that he did not intend to run Mussolini's errands in the Mediterranean or elsewhere but that the visit was useful as showing 'certain other countries' the strength of the Berlin-Rome axis.” The Consul was at the train station to greet the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, who were visiting Germany. (This German visit by the former King Edward VIII later became famous for having helped persuade him to support Hitler.) Unity told St. Clair-Gainer that Hitler believed he could have received the Duke and Duchess as King and Queen instead of Mussolini if not for Stanley Baldwin's political maneuvering during the Abdication Crisis. The Consul's comments beneath his

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838 Letter to Muv from Unity 26 Sept 1937 quoted (Redesdale MS, 149) but also echoes information in 1 Sept 1937 Unity to Diana (poss misdated) in Charlotte Mosley, *The Mitfords*, 116-7.
839 Thank you note and quote about Musso speech from 30 Sept 1937 letter to Muv and note reprinted both in Charlotte Mosley, *The Mitfords*, 149.
841 FO371/21176, National Archives, letter dated 27 Sept 1937 [part of report 6687/200/22 re: Italy from Ogilvie-Forbes].
description of the conversation, Ogilvie-Forbes' comments to Anthony Eden on the cover sheet, and various handwritten remarks on the bound report's cover sheet indicate that the British Embassy and the Foreign Office understood both the benefits and limitations of Unity's information. They comment on her unique access but also on how her viewpoints may have colored the information she gave. Ogilvie-Forbes notes that Hitler meant the visit to convince Germans of the alliance with Italy as well as Mussolini. In Munich especially, there were grudges about previous Italian conquests of the Tyrol. Ogilvie-Forbes also reports the rumors echoing Unity's sentiment that Hitler kept a distance from Mussolini. He writes:

> The fact that Herr Hitler elected throughout the visit to travel in a separate train and saw as little of his guest as was consistent with politeness aroused some comment. It may well be that Herr Hitler, whose demeanor in public is modest and dignified, resents the somewhat bombastic manner of the Duce. However this may be, the Chancellor was careful in public to treat his guest with due cordiality, and it seems unlikely that he will allow any personal antipathy he may feel to stand in the way of his policy.  

The ultimate verdict on the information seems to be what Ogilvie-Forbes wrote, but it is an impressively perceptive observation by the British Foreign Office.

Unity returned to Britain some time after this. By early November, Decca was living in London with her husband and pregnant. Unity was a devoted aunt. Almost all her letters to Diana ask after the children, and letters to Decca before November are full of excited references to the baby due that December. While Decca's husband Esmond hated most of the Mitford family and Decca herself broke off her relationship with Diana because of politics, the two “Bouds” stayed close. Decca writes that she wishes Esmond

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842 FO 371/21176, National Archives, letter to Anthony Eden from Ogilvie-Forbes from 6 Oct 1937 [no. 889 in report on Italy R 6687/200/22].
could have met her family and understood their quirks, particularly Unity, but his “extraordinary single-mindedness and direct purpose would have rendered all this impossible. He regarded my family as the enemy, and discouraged all discussion of them.”

To circumvent arguments with Decca's husband, the two sisters started to meet in secret. Jonathan and Catherine Guinness indicate that Unity's diary entries suggest she served as Decca's secret chauffeur. The pair would shop for baby clothes, and Unity bought Decca a coat and other necessities. Sometimes they would meet at Nancy's house or a cousin's and sneak away to films.

The very thing that could have made these two sisters enemies, their political radicalism, was the evidence of the similarity at the heart of their bond. They were extreme. Decca's political and personal past are not the subject of this study (Mary Lovell's study in her examination of the six sisters is excellent), but in comparing her to the liberal Bonham-Carter sisters, Philip Toynbee best described Decca: “They were as different from Decca as a Christian Socialist is from a nihilist with a bomb...”

Between excursions with Decca, Unity Mitford created controversy in Britain once again before the end of 1937. She appeared in both the *Yorkshire Post* and the *Daily Telegraph & Morning Post* on 13 November. Unity had been a member of the Emergency Service, “an organization which had as its object the training of women for service in war-time as officers in women's corps providing supplementary labour to the fighting Services.”

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843 Jessica Mitford, *H & R*, 141. Unity met one of Decca and Esmond's closet friends, Philip Toynbee, at a dinner party in summer 1938. She told him, “We don't mind talking to you... because we, after all, are on the winning side.” (Toynbee, 132).


845 Toynbee, 121.

846 “Future of Miss Unity Mitford: Leaving Emergency Service,” *Yorkshire Post*, 13 Nov 1937 page 11,
council, however, had asked Unity to resign from the group, and word leaked to the press somehow. Unity gave statements to both papers that explained the decision came from rumours she would adopt German citizenship. In these statements, she seems both upset that the group questioned her loyalty to Britain and determined not to refute Germany as the organization wished when Gwynne-Vaughan met with her. Unity told the *Daily Telegraph*, “I told Dame Helen that, although it was true that I had contemplated becoming a German citizen, I had as yet taken no steps in the matter, and until I had done so I regarded myself as an ordinary Englishwoman.”

Her statement to the *Yorkshire Post* was more detailed: “I left the organization because I was asked by its chairman. . . . Of course, had I become a German, I would naturally have resigned, but so far I haven't taken any steps to adopt German nationality. In fact, I haven't been worrying about it. There is plenty of time.” Unity added that she spent time in both Germany and Britain, ending, “I did not wish the incident to become public, and now that it has, I have given the facts exactly as I know them.”

Unity's statement that she wished to keep the Emergency Services dismissal quiet is unusual for her. Calling attention to herself seldom bothered Mitford. In fact, she frequently seemed to exalt in it, but such a blatant attack on her patriotism and loyalty can only have rubbed her fascist beliefs the wrong way. In her memoir of her daughter's life, Lady Redesdale (“Muv”) writes, “In 1938 Unity grew up. She became more serious and more discreet.”

The discretion is debatable. Unity would engage in several of her

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848 “Future,” *Yorkshire Post*.

849 Ibid.

850 Redesdale MS, 151.
most public political actions over the course of 1938, but she did start to show a new deliberation in her actions. As she moved from twenty-three years old to twenty-four, Unity started to think of herself much more seriously. She became less rebellious and more determined in her beliefs.

Unity arrived back in Germany on 9 January. This time she brought her dog in tow, a large, black Great Dane she called “Rebel.” (Like most of the Mitford sisters and many other aristocrats, Unity retained a love of animals after growing up in the English countryside.) This image of Unity zipping across Europe in a big, black car with a big, black dog and Nazi flags streaming appears in many of the Nazi memoirs that mention her. Hitler himself met the dog soon after the arrival in Munich: “[Hitler] was very amazed to see me. Rebel was rather a problem, he had to be tied up in the kitchen [of the Osteria] but the Führer loved him, and he said if only he had known I liked big dogs he would have given me a Deutsche Dogge. Rebel was furious.”

During January, Unity met the dictator for lunches at the Osteria and searched for an apartment in the area. Few letters exist from this period. An interview with former British debutante Diana Quilter by Anne de Courcy sheds a little light on Unity's activities during this time. Quilter stayed with Unity when her friend Anna Montgelas ran out of room for guests during Munich's busy winter sports season:

Unity was enormous fun, very generous and extremely nice to me. On one occasion I had lent her a book and she was returning it to me on the way to where the winter games were being held. Anna and I were at breakfast and she dashed in.

“Do hurry!” she said. “I've got the whole German Government with me.” Outside were streams of black Mercedes-- she was in the front one, sitting with the Goebbelses. She talked a lot about these members of the German Government. I saw Hitler often. Music was what I was chiefly studying and I went to the opera

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851 Letter from January (9?) 1938 to Muv, Ibid., 153.
a great deal. We'd find ourselves in seats with Hitler sitting just behind us.852

Quilter also noted that while her father worried about war with Germany at some point, she felt the whole thing simply “exciting.” She even failed to notice the anti-Semitism until she looked back with hindsight. This was a relatively quiet time in Nazi Germany. Hitler did not make his usual speech at the anniversary of his ascension to power at the end of January. As Franklin Gannon notes, “He had not made a public address since Mussolini's visit to Berlin in September 1937, and there had been little news from Germany in the New Year apart from Hitler's 'peace address' to the Diplomatic Corps on 11 January.”853 A few of the more prescient worried Hitler leaned more and more towards Ribbentrop and other anti-British Nazis, but few believed Hitler had every intention of expanding as aggressively as he had once claimed.854

Unity spent most of February in Vienna. For a week she toured the city and boarded with a doctor's family there. During this time, Austria was a political hot spot. Kurt Schuschnigg, Austria's Chancellor since 1934, legalized the Nazi Party in the country in 1936 and attempted to negotiate with Hitler for an independent Austria, but there were elements of the nation interested in creating a “Greater Germany” now that Austria lacked the vast empire and political clout it had before World War One. Others looked enviously at Germany's apparent economic revival, but there were also Austrians devoted to that nation's autonomy, to socialism, or to remaining free of the Nazi oppression they observed. Hitler and Schuschnigg met at Berchtesgaden that February to discuss relations between the two nations. It was clear to the more perceptive Europeans

852 DeCourcy, Debs, 56-7.
853 Gannon, 138.
854 Ibid., 126.
that Hitler was increasing pressure on his Austrian counterpart to permit a Nazi union of Germany and Austria. Unity's letters from Vienna contain gossip from the city's streets, but only gossip favorable to Hitler and annexation to Germany. On 4 February, she wrote her mother, "It is pathetic how the people here long for news of the Reich. If they hear one has lately been in the Reich they gather round and want to hear everything. They talk of 'draussen im Reich'-- 'out there in the Reich' as though they talk of Heaven. The people in the Garage where my car is are tremendous Nazis and several have been to prison for it."\footnote{Letter to Muv from Unity from 4 Feb 1938, Redesdale MS, 154-5.} Unity also claimed her hosts were avid Nazis.

Unity Mitford loved the excitement from all the political tension, and she enjoyed the city's artistic heritage. She spent nights at the opera, days at museums or parks with her dog. Towards the end of her stay, Unity met up with Diana's acquaintance Heinrich Bleckmann. The two went skiing on the Rax with the dog in their wake. They also went to several fasching balls, including the Jäger Ball (Hunters Ball). A Habsburg archduke opened the event, and Unity bought a dirndl since traditional clothes were mandatory.\footnote{Letter to Muv from Unity from 4 and 8 Feb 1938, Ibid., 154-7.}

After Vienna, she made a quick trip to the Palffy-Erdödy estate in the Burgenland. While there, Unity wrote Diana:

Of course hopes are high here about the Reichstagsrede [Hitler's upcoming speech to the Reichstag]; and the evening on which it came out that Schuschnigg was with the Führer, Vienna was in an uproar. No-one could think of anything else, & the first thing everyone-- taxi-men, shop assistants, or friends-- said to one was 'Haben Sie gehört? Der Schuschnigg ist beim Führer!' [Have you heard? Schuschnigg is with the Führer!] I do hope the result won't be a disappointment. Poor Austria is such a tragic country, & the people here really such heroes, I had never realized how really heroic the Kampf here is until my time in Vienna. I have never met such fanatics in Germany as I have here. Several times young men have come up to me & said, 'May I kiss the hand the Führer has touched?'-- not at all in a gallant or complimentary way, but merely because they really do worship him,
rather like a Christian might kiss a bit of wood which Christ had touched.\textsuperscript{857}

She met Diana in Berlin for Hitler's 20 February Reichstag speech. In it, he spoke publicly of his desire to gather all German speakers in to the Third Reich. Unity returned to England around 4 March, but Hitler had set the stage for his first foreign conquest.

On 12 March 1938, German troops entered Austria and began the \textit{Anschluss} (Austria's annexation to Germany). Schuschnigg had attempted a plebiscite, but pressure from Germany grew so overwhelming that he resigned. It was shortly after his resignation that German troops came. There was a new plebiscite with dubious results announcing roughly ninety-nine percent of Austrians wished to join with Germany. The ensuing \textit{Anschluss} was rapid. Historians still debate how many Austrians supported the annexation, if this was invasion by force or by invitation, but Unity Mitford had no such concerns. She rushed back to Vienna in time to see Hitler enter the city. Randolph Churchill wrote in his \textit{Evening Standard} column on 14 March: “When Herr Hitler arrives in Vienna this evening his most ardent English admirer will be there to greet him. Miss Unity Mitford, Lord Redesdale's Nordic-looking daughter, had a special pass valid for two persons, given to her yesterday by the wish of the Führer and she and Mrs. Victor Cochran Baillie left for Vienna last night…”\textsuperscript{858} Unity herself told a journalist with the \textit{Daily Express}, “I was heartbroken that I did not see him when he arrived near his birthplace at Linz... Another English friend, a man who was with him then, said it was the most wonderful experience of his life. But I saw his entry into Vienna, and perhaps after all that was the best. Afterwards I saw him for a few minutes in his hotel. He was tired,

\textsuperscript{857} Letter from Unity to Diana from 16 Feb 1938, Charlotte Mosley, \textit{The Mitfords}, 122, and translation of German from CM's footnotes. Italics in original.
\textsuperscript{858} Winston Churchill, \textit{His Father's Son}, 156-7. Further rumors of her presence noted in Barrow, 92.
but seemed very moved by it all. I think it was wonderful.”

One of the great difficulties in gauging the Austrian mood at the Anschluss has been that the response to Hitler and German troops was so effusive on their entry to the country. Avid supporters, naïve optimists, and curious onlookers flooded the streets as Nazis paraded. Austrian enthusiasts and Nazi propagandists combined to create what Goebbels quickly coined the “Blumenkrieg” [flower war] “because the populace met the German army with flowers instead of weapons.” German aristocrats celebrated achieving a dream leftover from German unification in the nineteenth century as Austria and Germany united for the first time since the Holy Roman Empire. Reactions across Europe were mild. Mussolini had agreed to back down from his earlier insistence on Austrian independence, despite its border with Italy, after the visit to Germany in fall 1937. Few in European politics cared for Schuschnigg. Right wing politicians across Europe sympathized with German-speaking nationalism in Austria, and left wing politicians “had little sympathy for the Austrian dictatorship which had smashed the Socialists in the brief but bloody civil war of February 1934.”

Regrets about the nature of the Versailles and St. Germain Treaties prevented intervention as well as reluctance to go to war when few knew how many Austrians would fight for union with Germany and how many would fight for independence. Hitler himself joked to Unity, “They said England would be there to stop me, but the only English person I saw was on my side!” Still, the Times heading proclaimed “The Rape of Austria,” and even before

860 Gannon, 136.
861 Sinclair, 82.
862 Ibid., 82.
863 Gannon, 14-15.
864 Redesdale MS, 166.
German troops removed the bar marking the border crossing, Winston Churchill wrote an article in the *Evening Standard* condemning Hitler's "brutal bullying" of Schuschnigg and claiming two-thirds of the country supported Schuschnigg's efforts to maintain an independent Austria.\textsuperscript{865} Unity Mitford wrote him a letter in response:

Dear Cousin Winston,
I read your article in the 'Evening Standard', and I was particularly interested in the part about Austria. I really do think that you, in common with most English people, are very misinformed about Austrian affairs, which are consistently misrepresented in the British press. I know Austria fairly well, and have been there a lot in recent years; and I was lucky enough to be there when the Hitler-Schuschnigg meeting took place, and for a week or so after. The jubilation which broke out among all classes of the population must have been one of the most tremendous demonstrations of belief the world has ever seen.... In Graz, Linz and Vienna I witnessed demonstrations in which the population went mad with joy and one could not move in the streets for people shouting 'Heil Hitler! Anschluss' & waving Swastika flags. By night, the hills around Vienna were ablaze with bonfires in the shape of Swastikas....

….Of course, you undoubtedly know that Anschluss with the Reich was the great wish of the entire German population of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, long before the war & long before Hitler was even born, though the English press would make one believe that it was the Führer who invented the idea. Altogether, the idea of Germany trying to 'eat up poor little Austria who is struggling for her independence', seems unbelievably ridiculous to all Austrians except the aristocracy, who cling to the idea of a restoration for selfish motives, and the Reds, who are obviously against Anschluss with Nazi Germany. Most Austrians have no doubt at all that a free plebiscite would result in at least 80% for the Nazis....

….You probably won't bother to read this letter, for I know you are very busy but I hope you will because I am sure you are not a person who would consciously misrepresent the facts in order to prove your case, and I wish you would visit Austria yourself, and see how happy the recent events have made a whole people.

Yours,

Unity Mitford\textsuperscript{866}


Churchill wrote Georg von und zu Franckenstein (an Austrian ambassador to Britain until
the Anschluss) and sent along a copy of the letter for advice on how best to respond to
Unity. Franckenstein wrote back that Unity seemed to believe the Nazi hype and
propaganda. While there was celebration at the Anschluss, he was adamant that
Schuschnigg's speeches promoting independence garnered at least as much celebration.\footnote{Franckenstein to Churchill (in Churchill papers as 2/328) from 9 March 1938, \textit{Ibid.}, 927-9.}
A week after her letter arrived and as German troops crossed into Austria, Churchill
wrote Unity Mitford a terse reply: “There can be no doubt that a fair plebiscite would
have shown that a large majority of the people of Austria loathe the idea of coming under
Nazi rule. It was because Herr Hitler feared the free expression of opinion that we are
compelled to witness the present dastardly outrage.”\footnote{Winston to Unity from 12 March 1938 (in Churchill papers 2/328 \textit{Ibid.}, 934.}
Because there is still fierce
debate over the degree of Austrian support for Schuschnigg, Hitler, and other parties, the
argument between Unity Mitford and Winston Churchill remains oddly unresolved. What
is tragic is that neither stopped to mention the human cost of the \textit{Anschluss}. Widespread
arrests, beatings, and murders of the Austrian Nazis' political opponents took place
almost immediately. Austria also became the testing ground for more extreme anti-
Semitic brutality than Germany had yet seen. Infamous photographs show angry mobs
forcing Jewish men to clean city streets and sidewalks with their beards. Rapid
confiscation of Jewish property also took place.\footnote{Aly, 41-3.}
Refugees out of Austria had few
countries willing to take them, and the violence only increased.

Unity soon returned from Vienna to London, but she quickly made newspapers
once again. On 10 April 1938, Unity and her brother took a walk in Hyde Park. After
separating from her brother, Unity wandered over to a Labour demonstration focused on the Spanish Civil War. A fight broke out between several ardent communists and agitators from the Imperial Fascist League in the middle of a speech by Sir Stafford Cripps (Labour politician later famous for work with Churchill's coalition government during World War Two and Attlee's government after the war). A member of the crowd saw Unity's habitual swastika and tore it off. She responded by hitting him in the face. She hit a second individual in the crowd who shouted a remark about Hitler, and soon shopkeeper Joe Allen and a police officer had to restrain an angry crowd pelting her with rocks and threatening to dunk her in the Serpentine. Allen recalled, “I was very concerned for her safety. People were just beginning to think they didn't like Herr Hitler much.” More police and a press photographer/ fellow BUF member in the crowd named Edward Warburton finally bundled Unity onto a passing bus near Marble Arch. They rode the bus down Oxford Street until they could no longer see the crowd pursuing them. The event quickly made tabloids. The *Daily Sketch* boasted brief interviews with Unity and Warburton. Unity “who walked with a limp and admitted she was bruised” told the reporter: “I was kicked on the legs, but not badly hurt.... I was not really frightened, just very excited.” The paper claimed police had made three arrests. The paper's headline read “Peer's Daughter Attacked by Angry Mob,” which ignores Unity's claims in the actual article to have punched several individuals. David Low's “Topic Budget” comic in the *Evening Standard* introduced its new character “Miss Fatuity.”

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870 Lovell, 265, based on a letter from observer Joe Allen to Lovell.
871 Ibid.
872 Warburton, *Mosley's Blackshirts*, 51-3. Warburton's testimonial is one of several in the pamphlet, and he writes that he quickly guessed what was happening to Unity when he decided to intervene and help the fellow fascist. He also notes that the Redesdales had him to tea to thank him for his help.
873 “Peer's Daughter Attacked by Angry Mob,” *Daily Sketch* (London), 11 April 1938, page 2. See also Barrow, 93.
Low's cartoon showed a curvy blonde with a swastika flag clutched in her hands and her mouth wide open as two men carried her off. The caption reads: “Topical Budget's special Society nuisance who nearly started a revolution in Hyde Park by saying Hitler was nice, snapped just before she was thrown into the Serpentine. 'I was not frightened,' she said when interviewed later, 'I was going to jump in anyway!'” While this amused the family, Randolph Churchill's “Londoner's Diary” in the *Evening Standard* also covered the event. Churchill added to the details, “[Unity Mitford] hopes that Herr Hitler will give her another Nazi party badge to replace the one she lost in yesterday's scrimmage.”\(^{874}\) He went on to describe Unity's special badge from Hitler that had been lost. Unlike Low's comics, Churchill's frequent reporting on his cousins' antics led to several confrontations with Lord Redesdale. Farve also issued public denials that Unity would marry Hitler around this time, which Churchill wrote “will carry connection to all who know the Führer. He is not the marrying type.”\(^{875}\)

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\(^{875}\) *Ibid.*, 157. Unity also received “fan mail” after the attack from as far away as the United States. One of the Nazi “Old Fighters,” Unity's acquaintance Franz von Pfeffer, wrote, “I heard about the fight you had in Hyde Park, and since I, naturally, assume that you acquitted yourself with honour, this is to wish you well. Heil Hitler!” Hitler also replaced her lost pin with two more just like it. (J & C Guinness, 416).
Chapter Seven

*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix:*

And Harry remembered: He had seen Bellatrix Lestrange inside Dumbledore’s Pensieve, the strange device in which thoughts and memories could be stored: a tall dark woman with heavy-lidded eyes, who had stood at her trial and proclaimed her continuing allegiance to Lord Voldemort, her pride that she had tried to find him after his downfall and her conviction that she would one day be rewarded for her loyalty.876

Although few Europeans openly predicted war in 1938, Unity Mitford would act as one of those most resistant to the idea of a second world war. She refused to believe that her goal of an alliance between Britain and Germany could fail. In late April, Unity drove back to Germany. She and Muv searched for apartments in Munich. They lunched with Hitler at the Osteria and accepted invitations to tea in his apartment.877 They had little success with their hunt for a flat, but Muv returned to Britain before May. Around that time, Unity drove out to her friends in the Burgenland. From the Palffy-Erdödy home, she observed the effects of the *Anschluss* on the area she knew so well: “All is very much changed here and everyone very enthusiastic... [sic ellipsis] The gardeners and village people no longer greet one with 'Küss die Hand' but with 'Heil Hitler' and never get tired of saying it. The whole village is covered with flags.”878 Unity also reported back on the Autobahn's extension into the area and how Janos had just returned from Egypt full of interesting stories. When she returned to Munich Unity lunched with Hitler, Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess, head of the German Labour Front Robert Ley, and Austrian Reichsstatthalter Arthur Seyss-Inquart (one of the leaders of the Austrian Nazi Party

877 Redesdale MS, 168.
instrumental in the Anschluss & later Commissioner for the Occupied Netherlands). The latter was a “charming” new acquaintance, and he invited her to Reichs-Theatre week in Vienna. (She declined because of prior plans to be back in Britain by then.)\footnote{Letter to Muv from 25 May 1938, Ibid., 169. Goebbels' adjutant Wilfred von Oven notes in his memoir that the Nazis were aware of the Hyde Park incident, and he describes Unity as “daring” and “unintimidated” by the large crowds of communists. (Mit Goebbels bis zum Ende, Vol. 1. (Buenos Aires: Durer-Verlag, 1949), 185.)} In keeping with her increased militancy and seriousness evident as of 1938, Unity also bought a gun at this time. She wrote her mother, “At last I have got my licence to carry a gun. It is almost unknown for a woman to get one here, but Gauleiter Wagner said I was to have it. I was so pleased to be able to get the gun out of the shop, it is a dear little one, looks almost like a toy.”\footnote{Ibid. Italics in original. Note in cm ms that close family member mentions Unity displayed her gun to Decca on occasion. Also, note that Charlotte Mosley asked Diana, and Diana confirmed that the gun was not a gift from Hitler as some sources have implied. Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, interview with author, October 29, 2008.} Unity's fascination with fascist violence was increasing, and she clearly continued to defy norms for female behavior. Her self-image as a warrior grew more and more dangerous.

When Unity and Diana went to tea with Hitler in late May 1938, the topic of conversation was Czechoslovakia, and it would remain the focal point of interest for the rest of the year.\footnote{Ibid.} After Austria, the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia was Hitler's next territorial demand. German-speakers in the western part of the country had an active Nazi Party, and their dubious claims of oppression backed Hitler's increasingly vocal irredentism. Czechoslovakia was a new country created in the wake of the First World War, and its multinational mix and relatively short history left it vulnerable to Hitler's sly maneuvering. Gannon's description of British press around the nation accurately reflects observers' ideas of it: “Depending upon the political complexion of the [news]paper,
Czechoslovakia was viewed as democracy's bastion in Central Europe or as an indefensible amalgamation of races under Czech domination in patent contravention of the principle of self-determination. From 19-22 May, the “Week-end Crisis” held Europe's attention. Czechoslovakian leader Edvard Beneš began a partial mobilization of his country's military after unrest in the Sudetenland and rumors of German troop movements along the two countries' border. Britain and France warned Germany not to move on its neighbor. In the end, German troops did not confront Czechoslovakian troops. British media downplayed the crisis with a “measured” and “moderate” response, but historians still debate whether or not the rumors were a false alarm. In the immediate wake of the crisis and in an atmosphere rife with tension, Unity Mitford decided to visit Prague.

On 25 May, Unity left Munich to investigate the political hotspot. Her companions were British fascist and fellow Munich resident Philip Spranklin and visiting American Bill Rueff. They spent a night in Eger (its Czech name today is Cheb), a town just over the border from Germany in Czechoslovakia. While the town had some interesting architecture, Unity Mitford spent her time there touring with a representative from the local Sudeten Deutsche Party, which had close links with the Nazis and wanted to reunite with Germany. (Coincidentally, their guide had once met Unity’s grandfather, the first Lord Redesdale, at nearby Marienbad.) The group next moved on to Karlsbad

882 Gannon, 16. See also Gannon, 14-16 and Sinclair, 64 & 66-7.
883 Ibid., 167 and 170.
884 J & C Guinness, 416. Pryce- Jones interview with Elsbeth Seifert Sakalarides, 242. In her letter to her mother, Unity wrote, “...the American is nice but never speaks and the English one is terribly on my nerves.” (see letter from Unity to Muv dated 28 May 1938, Redesdale MS, 171.) In spite of this, Unity wrote that she paid for both young men throughout the trip because they did not bring any appropriate currency for travel in Czechoslovakia. (172, same letter).
885 Letter to Muv from 28 May 1938, Redesdale MS, 170.
(its Czech name today is Karlovy Vary). Spranklin knew a Sudeten senator from the area, Georg Wollner. Their first night in town Wollner invited the group to an election meeting he planned to address. Unity wrote her mother, “We were guests of honour and sat on the platform and were cheered for at least ten minutes by the audience. The speech was wonderful and most of the audience cried, and after the meeting we had an escort of twenty-four Storm troopers on motor bikes to escort us home.” She wrote in a similar vein to Diana that “[Wollner is] a perfectly heavenly man, rather like the Leader to look at, only huger... He is a wonderful speaker, one of the best I ever heard, most of the audience cried, and I must say I did almost.”

In the middle of Sudeten Germans’ propaganda about Czech maltreatment, Unity ardently adopted their stance.

Unity explored the area around the spa city of Karlsbad with her two companions and Senator Wollner. Her friend, Daily Mail correspondent G. Ward Price, may also have accompanied them. (She had run into him in the city the day before and shared a subsequent dinner with Price.) Their trip into the countryside still showed the “state of war” from that May. She described the tense atmosphere in her letter home, calling the preparations for war “thrilling:”

…it was gloriously hot and we had the car open and the landscape is heavenly. It was a most exciting drive. The Czech’s [sic] plan to abandon that particular part of Sudeten-deutschland when war comes, and have withdrawn all their line of defence to a line well the other side of Karlsbad; in preparation they have mined every bridge and every important building in the abandoned part, so that they will leave nothing but ruins behind them when they retreat to their line of defence. Every bridge and railway is patrolled, and one can quite clearly see the dynamite packed underneath and the

886 Ibid. Wollner later went with Unity and Hitler to Breslau. After the war started, he remained involved in Nazi occupation of the area as a Gauinspekteur for the Sudetenland and later Nazi Party Kreisleiter in Pilsen.

887 J & C Guinness, 416. Letter excerpts from Unity to Diana from 29 may reprinted in the text. Italics= sic.

888 Letter to Muv from 28 May 1938, Redesdale MS, 170.
fuses sticking out ready to be lit. We went to a brewery which is occupied by Czech soldiers, and saw where it was mined, also a hotel. There are barricades all along the roads, every two miles or so, with just room for one vehicle to pass, but shutable at any minute. When we came to the line of defence there were camouflaged tanks in the road and machine guns on every hillock. We were stopped and searched numberless times. At last we came to a barbed wire entanglement and could go no further.

In every village there was a notice to say, among other things, that everyone must be indoors by 8 p.m., that more than two people may not carry on a conversation, and that anyone who goes into the woods will be shot. The people are completely terrorized and haven’t slept for a week and are terribly on edge, but they all say ‘We can endure it because we know our Führer will not forsake us.’ But as a looker-on one can hardly bear the injustice and cruelty, and the idea that England might side with the Czechs is too loathsome for words. Of course one must put the English attitude down to ignorance, for I am sure that they would not knowingly condone such terrible injustice. I must admit that before coming here I myself had no idea of the situation. I would like every Englishman to do the drive I did yesterday, and to talk to the people I talked to. While the atmosphere would be chilling for anyone, Unity’s naivete and Manichean worldview show clearly in this letter. The restrictions described are fairly standard curfew procedure in an area ripe with rebellion and eager to join a neighboring country that threatens invasion, yet Unity considers them unbearably cruel. Her statements on Britain’s “ignorance” are equally revealing. Because she believes Britain is a “good” nation, it could not possibly condone anything “bad,” regardless of political interest.

After exploring Karlsbad and its surrounds, Unity and the two men left for Prague. They departed Karlsbad in the evening, and guards searched the car at each town on their route. Unity explained, “Of course they are even more strict at night, and we were even warned at the British Consulate not to drive by night as they are apt to take pot shots at people for fun.” Wollner and Ward Price met them once again in the

889 *Ibid.*, 170-1

890 *Ibid*. An enquiry from a gentleman to the Foreign Office on the advisability of travelling to Czechoslovakia in late July and early August exists in the department’s files. The letter dates from late May/early June (the same time Unity Mitford was in Prague), and it says there is no reason not to travel to the country. Unity Mitford, however, would have been a traveller with a more provocative notoriety than Mr. H. W. Hobbs. (FO 371/21581, National Archives, 220-2 [Registry number C 5263/5263/12]).
Czechoslovakian capitol. Unity spent her time in Prague visiting with Price, British writer and military veteran Francis Yeats-Brown, French correspondent Jules Sauerwein, and other friends from Britain. After one tea with the journalists and other observers, she wrote, “They are all convinced there is to be a war, and have arrived like vultures from all quarters.” Since Unity fervently believed a war would not take place, she clearly did not count herself among such voyeurs.

While Unity’s image of herself in her letters shows an innocently curious traveller, her presence in Czechoslovakia was undoubtedly provocative. She wore her swastika pin through the streets of Prague even as its citizens prepared for war. When Unity left Prague to return to Karlsbad on 31 May, she had Spranklin, Rueff, and Senator Wollner in her car. In Kamenné Žehrovice, gendarmes at one of the area’s many military checkpoints searched the car and luggage as they had on many other occasions. This time, however, they also detained the entire party for questioning. As Jonathan and Catherine Guinness note in *House of Mitford*, Wollner’s presence made the group more interesting to authorities. It is also important to note that Unity Mitford had attracted more attention in Prague, where press noted her swastika badge, than in any of the small towns she travelled through on the way to the city. In fact, the British legation in the area later noted in a report to the Foreign Office that they had “endeavored without success to get

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893 J & C Guinness, 418. (The town of Kamenné Žehrovice is less than an hour west of Prague. Unity Mitford had initially discussed visiting the Riesengebirge—the mountains are called Krkonoše in Czech—but perhaps cancelled this trip after the arrest. (Letter to Muv from 25 May 1938, Redesdale MS, 169))
into touch with her while she was in Prague in order to give her warning” that wearing her swastika pin in the city was “a clearly provocative act at this juncture.” Over four and a half hours, gendarmes questioned the group. In a separate room, a female officer searched Unity Mitford’s clothes. The officers sent for additional officials from Prague and confiscated papers, film, and a camera from Unity. They sent the papers to “military authorities at Kladno” for further investigation, but eventually allowed Unity to phone the British Legation and released the group shortly afterwards. In her call to the legation, Unity complained that she did not know the reason for the arrest, and that the gendarmes had confiscated many of her belongings. Significantly, she did not mention Wollner travelled with her—only her other two companions. The legation only determined Wollner’s presence from the Czech authorities.

The media response was fast and furious. A short article inside the Times noted the event with some discretion on page fourteen, but the tabloids seized on it. The Daily Mirror headlines blared, “Stay at Home, There’s a Good Girl.” Low’s Topical Budget comic strip showed two policemen carrying off an upside down blonde in high heels. She has a swastika stamped on her derriere and a swastika flag in one hand. Her legs and arms appear widespread as if she is fighting the police restraining her. The caption reads, “Hon. Miss Fatuity at it again: Tours European hot-spots waving swastika and wearing Hitler moustache.—“Go on, insult me!” she pipes. “Democracy don’t know how to treat a lady.” While clever and amusing, the cartoon bears suggestive references to Unity’s

894 FO 371/21581, National Archives, pages 223-4 [registry number C 5291/5291/12].
896 FO 371/21581, National Archives, pages 223-4 [registry number C 5291/5291/12].
897 “Czech Tavern Brawl” (under this column describing other news from the area), The Times (London), 2 June 1938, page 14/ Issue 48010, column f; Lovell, 266. (see footnote #10 page 554 although the year is misprinted re: Daily Mirror).
gender again and again. Her sex is at least as important as her politics to Low and the Daily Mirror writers. Instead of openly criticizing her politics seriously (and her politics are obvious and hideous), they objectify her sex. Even the Foreign Office bureaucrats responding to her telephone call and later issuing her written complaint bring up her age and gender. On the cover of the report, one official noted, “She was probably asking for trouble.” Another added, “And deserved what she got.” A third replied, “Far more.” The officials also refer to her “parading” around Prague. While her act was provocative, such a verb indicates a level of disdain for her that probably had more to do with a young woman doing such things than the actual political act in the first place. In its letter to the Czech Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the British legation sounds slightly embarrassed. The comments on that report quip, “The Czechs should have little difficulty in producing a good reply.” British author and literary critic Frank Laurence Lucas also noted the incident in his diary: “June 2nd. Miss Unity Mitford has now been travelling about Czechoslovakia with a German and an English passport, a Swastika, and a photograph of Herr Hitler.” (He published the diary in 1938 as a statement against Nazism, among other things.)

The public reaction to Unity’s arrest in Germany was more sympathetic and more detailed, but private reactions seem like they were as gendered as those in Britain. A German language paper in Paris, Pariser Tageszeitung, noted that Unity’s arrest took place in spite of both German and English travel passes. They also reported that the

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899 FO 371/21581 [registry number C 5291/5291/12], pages 223-4.
900 Ibid., 225-7. In fact, the Czechs responded that Unity Mitford’s political views and choice to ignore sign posts advising that the area was patrolled warranted her detention. They also noted that they had returned her belongings and permitted her to phone the British Legation. (Ibid., pages 228-231).
Czech authorities found Nazi propaganda, a large picture of Hitler, and a forty-five centimeter dagger inscribed with a swastika and the words “Ewige Treue” (Eternal loyalty). When Unity, Spranklin, and Rueff stopped in Nuremberg on their return from Czechoslovakia, there was a large photo of the group with Streicher in the Fränkische Tageszeitung. The paper lauded her bravery and loyalty to Nazism in the face of the attack in Hyde Park and the recent arrest. Unlike the British papers, it focused more on the political implications of her presence in the country, and it also mentioned that Unity had been travelling with a Sudeten German politician at the time of the arrest. Despite the public focus on political action, Unity’s detention drew much more gendered attention in private musings. Goebbels wrote in his diary: “Unity Mitford is insulted in the Czech and stripped to the skin. Well, this raises a ruckus. The Führer welcomes that. This Unity will have saturated herself with hate.” The mention comes in the context of descriptions of plans to provoke the Czechs into war and Hitler’s growing support for the Sudeten Germans. It is intriguing to see that Hitler welcomed the publicity, but even more intriguing is the brief detail about Unity’s search. Even her diary excerpts provided in the book by Jonathan and Catherine Guinness lack that sort of specificity. It seems more suspect in the light of memoirs written by Goebbels’ press adjutant, Wilfred von Oven, after the end of the Second World War. In it he writes that the Czech incident stemmed from Unity’s habit of always carrying a large photo of Hitler in a leather case, which she allegedly hid in her lingerie at the Czech security points. Von Oven’s account argues that

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902 Pariser Tageszeitung, 3 Juni 1938. 3.Jahrgang—Verlag. Paris, Front page, Issue Number 702. The dagger’s inscription bears a chilling resemblance to the SS motto: Meine Ehre heisst Treue. (My honour is loyalty.)
903 Fränkische Tageszeitung, 3 J 1938.
904 Goebbels, 9 vols. Diaries, 3 Juni 1938.
the embarrassment of the arrest was that the gendarmes found Hitler’s picture hidden among Unity’s “whisper-thin panties and camisoles.” Von Oven expresses clear admiration for Unity’s loyalty to Hitler and her “berserker rage in the battle for victory,” but the strange version of the story (presumably a rumour repeated in print) and the graphic details of her undergarments seem unusually lurid. The quality of Unity Mitford’s underwear can only have been speculation, and the sexual undertones show the familiar preoccupation with Unity’s gender that the German papers avoided in public forums. Shortly after this, Unity’s sexual status came up in a meeting between Hitler and Leni Riefenstahl. The film director asked him outright about his relationship with Unity, and Hitler replied that he was too patriotic to ever wed anyone but a German woman. He also explained that his work made him “completely unsuitable for marriage.”

Unity nearly left such speculation behind when she went for a month in Britain on 8 June. “Baby” Erdödy accompanied her, but Unity did more than tour happily with her Austrian friend. She hoped to console Decca on the loss of her infant daughter, but Decca had left for Corsica with Esmond. Unity’s letter to her sister details how much she missed her and envied her time in the Mediterranean climate. Small details of the visit emerge when she described going to a play with Baby and her Aunt Frances. Jokes about Mrs. Hammersley (“the Wid”) and a possible trip to Totland Bay on the Isle of

905 von Oven, 186-7.
906 Ibid.
908 Redesdale MS, 172. In a letter to her mother on 25 March, Unity write that she hopes her recent letters to Decca will not cause too much trouble at home for her sister. Decca’s daughter died on May 28, and as a devoted aunt, Unity probably wrote for news of the baby. (Ibid., 169).
Wight hinted at a pleasant time. While this seems like a relatively quiet time with friends and family, Unity Mitford appears in British politician Harold Nicholson’s detailed diary on 30 June. He had dined with her cousin Clementine and Clementine’s suitor, fellow politician Robert Bernays. By this time, Clementine Mitford had quarreled with Unity over her support for the Nazis. She would not agree with her cousin over the ideology’s anti-Semitism. In his summation of the evening, Nicholson notes: “Dine with Rob Bernays and Miss Mitford, Unity’s cousin. She says that Unity does not hope to marry Hitler. It is merely adoration. Hitler likes her because of her fanaticism. She wants the Jews to be made to eat grass. Miss Mitford herself is not in favour of the Jews eating grass.” The graphic image of anti-Semitic violence indicates not just the sort of prejudice Unity endorsed that alienated her cousin, but Nicholson’s comments also indicate how notorious Unity had become in British society.

As Unity Mitford’s notoriety grew, so did her cachet as a guide for British tourists in Nazi Germany. Her political perspective colored the experience, but viewers seemed to enjoy the possibility of seeing Hitler and other head Nazis in person. When Unity returned to Munich in July 1938, she hosted Mark Howard. Together with Diana, Unity

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909 Letter from Unity to Decca from 26 June 1938, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 124-5.
912 Earlier in her memoir (135-6), Lady Redesdale mentioned that the family spent Christmas 1936 between Downie Park and Castle Howard. Mark Howard was the second of four brothers and one sister in the Howard family living at the castle. Orphans, the children more or less raised themselves as the oldest brother (Christian) was eighteen. Mark was the “male head of household” in that he set the rules for the younger three siblings to follow, but he died on D-Day in the Second World War.
and Howard attended the Tag der Kunst. (Hitler requested his ordnance officer, S.S. Obersturmführer Max Wünsche, obtain these Day of Art tickets for Unity Mitford on 10 July.)\textsuperscript{913} The two women pointed out each of the famous Nazis to Howard at the festival’s performance of Wagner’s Lohengrin, but they left him for lunch with Hitler at the Osteria Bavaria the day of the art parade. Unity related what followed in a letter home to her mother:

Diana and I lunched with the Führer in the Osteria and stayed almost until the procession was due to begin, as of course the Führer was not due to arrive till the last moment; so he gave us one of his men as escort, otherwise we wouldn’t have got to our places. We had to walk the entire length of the Ludwigstrasse (nearly a mile) in the empty street, between the lines of men who were keeping the crowd back, and be hooted by the crowd! Our polite young man pretended that the crowd was admiring us, but we knew they were hooting our lipstick and so did he really. However he was very brave, and every time we were stopped by officers yelling at us to get behind the S.S. men [holding back the crowd], our escort said in a loud voice “It’s the Führer’s orders” which impressed them tremendously.\textsuperscript{914}

It seems clear that Unity’s position as an outsider in deeply nationalist Nazi Germany continued to provoke outrage at least as intense as that provoked in Britain by her foreign sympathies, and that gender factored heavily in the resentment. Unity, however, continued to seem oblivious to the conflicting loyalties that crowds in both countries saw as obvious. In the fraught environment, she remained obstinate. When news came at this time that the government had imprisoned her friend Stadelmann in Dachau’s concentration camp, she briefly described the incident as “very sad,” but she never questioned the government’s decision.\textsuperscript{915} Danger never fazed Unity Mitford. She simply ignored it or thrilled to it. The evening of the incident above, she brought Mark Howard

\textsuperscript{913} NS 10/125: Tägliche Aufzeichnungen von Max Wünsche, Bundesarchiv.  
\textsuperscript{914} Letter from Unity to Muv from 12 July 1938, Redesdale MS, 173.  
\textsuperscript{915} Letter from Unity to Muv from 18 July 1938, Ibid., 174.
to Hitler’s reception for the Day of Art, which included a ballet and dancing with Géczy’s band.\textsuperscript{916} The pair went to lunch with the Baroness Laroche, an exhibition of Renaissance artist Albert Altdorfer, and another Géczy performance.\textsuperscript{917}

Before the annual sojourn at Bayreuth, Unity Mitford received her first invitation to Obersalzberg. Unity lunched with Hitler, Gauleiter Wagner, and an architect named Gablonsky at the Osteria on 17 July.\textsuperscript{918} When a patron at the restaurant exclaimed that the food was just like the food in Italy “only cleaner,” Unity and Hitler laughed uncontrolably. They often laughed at her distaste for Italy. That afternoon, the dictator invited her to the Berghof for tea later in the week, and over the telephone that evening, they settled on the 19 July.\textsuperscript{919} This was a bizarre milestone in Unity’s friendship with Hitler. Eva Braun spent most of her time at the Berghof retreat at Obersalzberg, and while he invited foreign dignitaries like Chamberlain out to visit, its seclusion kept it a relatively private place for Hitler. This was the first of a handful of times Unity would visit there for tea or lunch.\textsuperscript{920} Max Wünsche scrupulously noted Hitler’s entire itinerary that day. Unity had tea with Hitler at 16,35 in the afternoon.\textsuperscript{921} Gauleiter Wagner and Julius Schaub accompanied them, and the view from the giant motorized window impressed Unity. After tea, she toured the house with her host before conversation out on the terrace. Mercedes Director Werlin, Otto Dietrich, and Dietrich’s young daughter

\textsuperscript{916} Letter from Unity to Muv from 12 July 1938, Ibid., 173.. In the same letter, Unity makes an interesting mention of an exhibit of 20\textsuperscript{th} century German art that her mother may have attended in London. She assumes it would have been full of humour, as Hitler had ridiculed its contents to her. This is an interesting contrast with her earlier attitude towards artists like Brancusi, and it shows her increasing willingness to change her beliefs to better fit Hitler’s.

\textsuperscript{917} Letter from Unity to Muv dated 22 July 1938, Ibid., 174. Unity notes that she wanted Howard to come with her to Bayreuth, but he had to get back to Britain for the races at Goodwood Festival of Speed.

\textsuperscript{918} NS 10/125: \textit{Tägliche Aufzeichnungen von Max Wünsche}, Bundesarchiv.

\textsuperscript{919} Letter from Unity to Diana dated 18 July 1938, Charlotte Mosley, \textit{The Mitfords}, 125-8.

\textsuperscript{920} Diana Mitford Mosley, 154.

\textsuperscript{921} NS 10/125: \textit{Tägliche Aufzeichnungen von Max Wünsche}, Bundesarchiv.
joined the party, and just before a walk, Hitler’s newest Mercedes arrived from the
factory.  Wünsche records the car’s arrival with Hitler’s chauffeur Kempka at 17:45.
As the party finished admiring the car, Hauptmann Wiedemann announced his return
from a mission to Britain. To his adjutant’s disgust, Hitler spent the next two hours on
a walk with Unity Mitford and the rest of the party. It was not until nearly eight o’clock
in the evening that Hitler returned from his stroll to the Berghof’s new tea house.
Unity later wrote her sister Diana, “…we started on our walk, which turned out to be a
pretty long one: he & I in front, & the others following us a good way behind. We walked
down the mountains, quite slowly, & the view was too lovely for words.” She described
the tea house as “too pretty for words inside,” and the party discussed politics over tea for
some time before walking back. Unity drove back to Munich after their return. Hitler,
however, met with Wiedemann. The adjutant’s trip to Britain was to investigate that
nation’s response to German demands on Czechoslovakia and whether a personal visit
from Goering would encourage British neutrality. Wiedemann expressed anger that after
such an important mission Hitler “had a bare five minutes time for me” and had already
made a decision about Britain and Czechoslovakia based on information from Foreign
Minister Ribbentrop. In contrast, Hitler had spent three and a half hours with Unity
Mitford.

923 NS 10/125: Tägliche Aufzeichnungen von Max Wünsche, Bundesarchiv.
924 See Ibid. and Fritz Wiedemann, Der Mann, der Feldherr werden wollte: Erlebnisse und Erfahrungen
des Vorgesehenen Hitlers im 1. Weltkrieg und seines späteren persönlichen Adjutanten (Velbert: Blick und
925 Letter from Unity to Diana dated 18 July 1938, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 125-8, Addendum. That
evening, according to Wünsche, Hitler ordered a car for Unity’s use in Nuremberg. ( NS 10/125: Tägliche
Aufzeichnungen von Max Wünsche, Bundesarchiv.).
926 See “Crisis in the spring and summer of 1938,” Appendix III, Documents on German Foreign policy
from the Archives of the Former German Foreign Ministry, Vol.6 (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1949),
633. The same story appears in Wiedemann’s memoirs (165-6). His meetings were largely with Halifax.
The annual trip to Bayreuth quickly followed Unity’s trip to Obersalzberg. According to Friedelind Wagner, Hitler’s attendance marked the festival atmosphere more and more each year. By 1938, several performances included many ticket holders from Strength Through Joy, a Nazi government-sponsored leisure program for workers. Crowds shouted “Heil” outside the opera house, and the troops, adjutants, and higher-ups surrounding the dictator created greater chaos than traditional Wagner fans had previously experienced. Unity Mitford’s first account of the madness dates from 26 July. She describes that summer’s unusual heat, how she joins Hitler for dinner after each day’s performance, and which days had no opera. (She skipped a second performance of Tristan und Isolde.) She also describes a day trip from Bayreuth to Eger (now Cheb) in Czechoslovakia. Unity drove to Hitler’s opening of the town’s Schiller Festival, where she saw her acquaintance Senator Wollner and briefly met Sudeten German leader Konrad Henlein. The event quickly became a propaganda opportunity for the German Nazis to demonstrate the alleged oppression of German speakers in that region of Czechoslovakia. In this first letter to her mother, Unity details how Sudetenland politics started to infect Bayreuth:

Eger is about 45 miles from here, and every day thousands of Sudeten deutsche make pilgrimages by car, bicycle and on foot to Bayreuth to see the Führer. Great crowds gather round the Opera and in the intervals they shout without stopping “Egerland greets the Führer.” “Sudetendeutschland wants to see its Führer!” “We

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927 F. Wagner, 183. On page 185, Friedelind Wagner suggests that Unity spent less time with Hitler at the 1938 festival than during previous years’ festivals, but this doesn’t seem to be the case based on all the events Unity attended and noted in her letters to family members.

928 Letter from Unity to Muv dated 26 July 1938, Redesdale MS, 174-5.

929 Ibid. Konrad Henlein was an avid Nazi sympathizer and founder of the Sudeten Deutsche Partei. The Nazi government labeled him Gauleiter of Czechoslovakia as early as 1938 and placed him at the head of the region’s civil government after 1939. He reached the rank of SS-Obergruppenführer in 1943. (Stackelberg, Routledge Companion, 206.) Unity describes the same event with less emotional detail but more detail on the mayor’s attendance in a letter to Diana on 28 July 1938 (Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 128-9).
want to see our Führer!” until he comes out on the balcony, when of course there is a deafening roar of heils, and then they sing there songs which are forbidden by the vile Czechs. On Sunday, in the interval, he had three children from Karlsbad brought up to him, two girls and a boy whom he had noticed from the balcony. All the time he was talking to them tears were streaming down their cheeks and they were trembling all over and one of the girls was quite overcome, so was the boy by the end, and he kept saying “When are you coming to us? When are you coming?” The Führer was very moved and after they had gone he sat for a long time silent with tears in his eyes and then suddenly he burst out in a terrific speech about the Czechs, so that by the end I felt I’d almost rather be a Jew than a Czech. He glared into the air when he spoke of English and French diplomats who think they can defy nature and keep a great people apart. “They might as well try and prevent the sun from shining” he said. I must say I wished English politicians could have seen the crowd of Sudetendeutsche and the way they looked at the Führer when he showed himself on the balcony. The trouble is, they will [sic] interfere in affairs which they know less than nothing about. I am sure you agree with me that they ought to keep out of these quarrels. Particularly as they can’t hope for anything but failure if they try going against the wishes of the Führer; so that the only result is bad feeling between the two countries. It’s really too despairing.\footnote{Ibid. Note Ward Price letter on 176-7 in Redesdale MS that came for Unity to England at that time noting their mutual hope for peace between England and Nazi Germany.}

The penultimate line about Hitler’s wishes is especially chilling, but the theme of English politicians not understanding German policies as well as Unity Mitford is a familiar one.

She accepts the emotional pageantry without question as the only truth. In a letter to Diana describing the same event, Unity transitions from describing the cheering crowds in Eger to a story of Hitler raging at his chef and Reich Minister of Justice Franz Gürtner. She moves from Hitler as savior to Hitler as tyrant without noticing any discrepancies in the two roles. Hitler shouts that he will put Gürtner in front of machine guns in a concentration camp, and Unity breathlessly writes, “He got angrier & angrier, & at last thundered—you know how he can—like a machine gun... It was wonderful. Everyone was silent for quite a time after that.”\footnote{Letter from Unity to Diana dated 28 July 1938, Charlotte Mosley, \textit{The Mitfords}, 128-9.} The extreme emotions of terror, awe, wonder,
and exhilaration are apparently indivisible for the committed fascist.

Unity Mitford's commitment led her on a weekend trip from Bayreuth to Breslau on 30 July. She considered the invitation to accompany Hitler on his private train a signal honor because she was the only guest other than government leaders. (Hitler even asked one of his female secretaries to act as chaperone for propriety's sake.) This meant that although she had been quite ill since the previous day's performance of *Walküre*, Unity did her best to hide this from Hitler for fear he would revoke her invitation. She spent the day in bed before boarding the train Saturday evening. Unity spent the evening meal talking with the dictator and Reichsärzteführer Gerhardt Wagner. She wrote her mother in alt that Hitler had told their companion that Unity was “'not in years but in Weltanschauung one of the Old Guard of National Socialism.'” On arrival in Breslau Sunday morning, Hitler and his party attended a meeting of Sudeten German gymnastics groups co-organized by the Reich Sports Leader Hans von Tschammer und Osten. A gathering of Sudeten German choral groups in folk costume followed later that day. Unity impressed Senator Wollner by arriving as Hitler's special guest, and she sat with Wollner in the area just behind Hitler's box. As the athletes marched past, the women's group came last. They broke ranks as they passed Hitler. Soon a mad rush of sobbing.

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932 Letter from Unity to Muv dated 1 August 1938, Redesdale MS, 178-181. Info largely repeated in letter to Diana from Unity dated 4 August 1938 in Charlotte Mosley, *The Mitfords*, 130-133. Unity writes in the letter to her mother that one evening in Bayreuth Hitler loaned her his tattered mack to wear home from dinner. She also writes that Hitler walks Magda Goebbels in to dinner so that Unity went in with Goebbels, and she laughs at what a pair she makes with the Propaganda Minister's diminutive stature and her own roughly six foot height. (180). The details show not just the importance attached to her in the Nazi circle as someone given Hitler's coat or Goebbels' arm, but they also hint at the Nazis' notions of “Lady Mitford's" rank. Note also that Breslau is today in the Czech Republic.

933 *Ibid.* is source of quote. Info about Wagner comes from letter to Diana from Unity dated 4 August 1938 in Charlotte Mosley, *The Mitfords*, 130-133. Charlotte Mosley notes that Wagner was the Reich Medical Leader notorious for promoting the Nuremberg Laws and later euthanasia as government policy.

934 Hamann, 293.
Sudetens, swelled by numbers from other groups and the crowd, surrounded Hitler, chanting “When will you come to us?” and similar slogans. Hitler stood in the middle of the emotional crowd and touched hands until the SS regained control. Unity took all this as further proof that warranted a German invasion of Czechoslovakia.

On returning from Breslau to Bayreuth, Unity Mitford's illness had only increased. Hitler's party made this leg of the trip by airplane instead of by train, and Unity worried her illness might infect the dictator so she decided to sit with other government officials in a second plane. Her fever grew along with her discomfort until she had to remain in bed. She declined the car Hitler sent for dinner Sunday evening, and she missed the performance of Götterdämmerung as well. Hitler sent roses to her sickbed on 1 August. He left for Berlin, however, the next day. Before his departure, Hitler instructed Winifred Wagner to look after Unity Mitford and to send him the bills for her care. Wagner came with a large bouquet 3 August. More flowers came from the Lord Mayor of Bayreuth while Wollner paid a visit. Concerned letters came from her parents and her sisters. Unity shared her mother's suspicion of modern medicine and threw out her prescription, but her illness worsened to pneumonia until she went to a Dr. Treuter's clinic on 6 August. Her mother flew out to see her the next day.

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935 Letter from Unity to Muv dated 1 August 1938, Redesdale MS, 178-181; letter to Diana from Unity dated 4 August 1938 in Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 130-133
936 Ibid. (Unity had already missed Siegfried in the Ring cycle when she joined Hitler in Breslau. The cycle was at the big opera at the festival with Parsifal and Tristan that year.)
937 Letter from Unity to Muv dated 3 August 1938, Redesdale MS, 181-2; letter to Diana from Unity dated 4 August 1938 in Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 130-133. Apparently, the mayor's flowers had large ribbons with swastikas attached to them. Letters to/ from sisters about the illness are in Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 133-5 including one from Nancy to Unity dated 9 August, Unity to Diana from 14 August (mentioning Morrell's bizarre treatment), and a final letter from Diana to Unity from 18 August. Nancy also wrote Robert Byron on 13 August 1938 that she was staying with Debo while her parents looked after Unity's health in Germany. (Nancy Mitford, Love from Nancy, 76-7).
938 Letter from Unity to Muv dated 3 August 1938, Redesdale MS, 181-2. Unity writes that she had improved enough not to take the doctor's medicine, but this seems to have been only a temporary recovery. In Friedelind Wagner's memoir, she writes that Unity was caught pouring her medicine out a
mother arrived at the same time Hitler sent his personal doctor Theodor Morell to
examine the patient. Morell treated Unity with “ten or fifteen injections in a day” just as
he treated Hitler with his mysterious injections, and Unity accepted the treatment because
it came with a telegram from Hitler which asked her to follow Morell's instructions.
Hitler sent more flowers and telephoned several times to check on her recovery. The
news media in both Britain and Germany picked up the illness as a minor story: Lucas'
journal notes the illness on 26 August and a page in the London Times notes it on 19
August. Unity Mitford's bout with pneumonia ended shortly after her father arrived on
19 August. Muv went back to Britain, Morell went back to Berlin, and Unity and her
father slowly made their way back to Munich. Although Hitler paid the bills in
Bayreuth and even “sent autographed pictures of himself for [Unity] to give to the
nurses,” Lord Redesdale later insisted on paying Hitler back the exact amount to avoid
any idea of impropriety.

Farve stayed with Unity Mitford through the Parteitag in early September. Muv
returned to Germany from Britain. (Bormman’s notebook notes that Unity Mitford joined
Hitler for lunch at the Osteria Bavaria along with Professor Brinkmann on 8 August.
Later that day, she and her parents joined Hitler, Bormann, Brinkmann, and Otto Dietrich
for coffee at the House of German Art.) Family friend, vocal anti-Nazi, and author

939 Redesdale MS, 183-6 (text, not a letter). Diana writes that Unity later teased Hitler about how she
mistook Morell for the Aga Khan in her muddled sickbed mind. She also writes that at this time Unity
decided suicide would be her only option in the event of a war between Britain and Germany. (Diana
Mitford Mosley, 154-5) Morell's reception at Bayreuth is detailed in Hamann's biography of Winifred
Wagner (293-4).
940 Lucas, 238-9; Times (London), 19 August 1938, section 15g.
941 Redesdale MS, 186-7, (narrative and not letter).
942 Ibid.
943 Page 150 for Diensttagsbuch-Notizen: Teilnahme Bormanns am Abend- (29.8) und Mittagessen Hitler in...
(Regest 12951). [29.-30.8.38 Adj. d. F] in Nationalsozialismus database. Brinkmann may be architect,
Robert Byron also joined the small group as they made their way through the festivities. Byron later published his account of the trip in the *Spectator*. It provides interesting details and insight into the annual rallies. On 5 September, Byron arrived in Munich. Unity met him at the train station and took Byron with her parents on the standard Mitford tour of the city: They saw the cafe at the new House of German Art, the Amalienburg at Nymphenburg, dinner at the Platzl with its yodelling, a quick peek in the Hofbräuhaus, and an Altdorfer exhibit. When Unity took Byron to the Pinakothek, she passed Hitler's apartment to see if he was in town. (Byron noted her method of looking for a guard in front of the building.) They also went to lunch at the Osteria Bavaria, the Glyptothek, and tea in the English Garden before leaving for Nuremberg. The conversation Unity and Byron shared at the garden's Chinese Tower tea house is revealing of how Unity seemed to be leaning more and more towards Germany as Germany and England's interests clashed in the foreign policy debates of the time. When Byron argued Germany provoked England, Unity told him there would be “no general war” and that Britain only misjudged Germany's position. She blamed Jewish propaganda designed to promote war between the two countries and the British Conservative Party for “creating a war feeling in order to get re-armament.” Byron notes the differences in their desired way of ridding England of its Conservative Party:

> We agree (though for different reasons) on subject of present government: though whereas I say I should be glad to press a button and feel they had vanished, but

designer, and Nazi favorite Woldemar Brinkmann.

944 Robert Byron, in *Articles of War: The Spectator Book of World War II*, Fiona Glass and Philip Marsden-Smedley, eds. (London: Grafton Books, 1989), 4-8. Two other incidents Byron notes are of particular interest. First, he explains that Unity told him of her role in the Putzi Hanfstaengl “prank.” She maintains it was all a joke. She also harasses Muv for attending church in Munich, and is “disgusted-- but confident that she will not behave in such a way after the Parteitag.” (6).

945 *Ibid.*, 6. (same page in which Byron writes hat peg story of meeting Hitler at Osteria-- story that appears in Cowles account is untrue).
not actually shoot them myself, Bobo wants to shoot them personally. She now has a gun which she keeps by her bed loaded and when she was in hospital the other day, they were all frightened lest she should get delirious and fire it off-- she wants to shoot a man. I said I thought she should shoot a woman first, so as not to be accused of being a feminist-- then she said she would be accused of being a lesbian.946

The incident is a typical mix of the sort of uncertainty Unity's statements provoke. She certainly had a handgun, but the bit about her waving it around a hospital is untrue. In fact, she was reading in bed with a parent beside her. She enjoyed shocking at least as much as she had a genuine fascination with violence. Unity grew more serious as she told Byron that the “Führer may be risking a few years' temporary estrangement with England by doing what he knows to be right over Austria and Czechoslovakia, but alliance will come in the end, the whole racial doctrine postulates it, and anyhow Germany will now be so powerful that England will sue for an alliance.”947 The note the pair found on Unity's car after their tea, one complaining of German swastika flags on an English car, showed the bitterness Unity's sentiments aroused in people other than her friends and family.948

This was the last Nuremberg festival. The extravagant rallies would end with the declaration of war, but this final year their opulence was particularly extravagant. The entire event lasted eight days as “the magic of the flags, banners and torches, of the mass

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946 Ibid., 6-7. Italics in original.
947 Ibid. Italics in original.
948 Ibid.,8. On page ten of Articles of War, Byron also notes, “The poverty of women's clothes most [sic italics] noticeable. The general crowd in this town is uglier than anything I have ever seen, even in Russia. It makes Altdorfer, Bosch, and Breughel seem quite photographic. Everyone stares with horror, envy and resentment at Bobo's really very mildly painted face.” Interestingly, on 7 September, Nancy wrote Debo about how Lady Redesdale had written a letter on Unity’s behalf objecting to a statement in the Daily Express that “those members of Britain’s governing class whose Aryanism has been okayed by Unity Mitford are packing their bags for Nuremberg.” ( letter from Nancy to Debo dated 7 Sept 1938, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 136—notes article is from 2 Sept 1938). The letter had Unity’s signature, but the text was in Lady Redesdale’s handwriting.
rituals and the Führer-cult, the transfiguration of death and the oath of allegiance numbed
the senses and satisfied 'the age-old lust for horror' as much as the desire for sensation
and the need for community.”

Unity's friend journalist Ward Price wrote that there
were between one and two hundred foreign visitors from outside Germany in 1938. In
spite of (or perhaps because of) the building tension over Czechoslovakia, the Nazi
government worked to be impressive hosts. They reserved a new wing in the local Grand
Hotel for such guests. Price also noted that “they are provided with guardians and guides
recruited from younger members of the German Diplomatic and kindred Services, all
speaking foreign languages well, who do everything in their power to make the stay of
the Führer's guests agreeable. A fleet of motor-buses takes them daily to the different
manifestations on the programme.” Unity had tickets reserved for five, and although
Hitler had meant them for her family members, she fit Byron into this category. The
group attended the speeches and marches, occasionally with front row seats. Another
friend of Unity's brother Tom came in the form of Virginia Cowles, a journalist with the
Sunday Times. Cowles seemed especially struck by Unity's familiarity with Hitler. She
observed both how attendants came with invitations to converse with Hitler and described
Unity as “rather embarrassed” by the Nazi officials “who kissed her hand and bowed and
scraped” only to jealousy complain of her once she left. Cowles, Byron, and Mitford

949 Hans-Ulrich Thamer, “The Orchestration of the National Community: The Nuremberg Party Rallies of
the NSDAP,” in Fascism and Theatre: Comparative Studies of the Aesthetics and Politics of
176.
951 Ticket bookings in NS database. Note about covering Byron under family tickets on page 8 of Articles
of War, and he adds that Unity had been too ill to reserve tickets for the performance of the
Meistersinger. Note that both Byron (Articles, 8) and Ward Price (242 in Year of Reckoning) record the
same other British guests: Lord and Lady Stamp, Lord McGowan, Lord Brocket, Viscount Clive, and
several minor Members of Parliament. Price also notes Lord and Lady Hollenden.
952 See Byron, Articles, 12; Virginia Cowles, Looking For Trouble, 4th ed. (New York: Harper and
all went to dinner late one night, and Unity arranged an SS car to speed them through the crowded streets to a restaurant. Cowles' most detailed observations of Unity's ideas and personality come from that evening. Interestingly, unlike many of the men who observed Unity's behavior, Cowles found her modest, friendly, and funny. They chatted about Hitler's sense of humour, while Unity explained that he enjoyed the street gossip she shared, something none of his adjutants thought to discuss. Cowles decided Unity saw National Socialism as a revolution and Hitler as "the champion of the downtrodden masses."  

As Cowles and Byron observed Unity Mitford and the flags, torches, marching masses, and rituals of Nuremberg, the overall tone of that year's Parteitag seemed more and more electric. It became clear from speech after speech that Nazi Germany would not step back on the issue of Czechoslovakia. Hitler cared less about Britain's good opinion after Ribbentrop's disastrous term as ambassador, but the sense of strength Germany felt after the Anschluss with Austria was even more responsible for Hitler's decision to begin unmasking his foreign policy goals. On 10 September, Unity and her parents went to a reception at Hitler's hotel, and Hitler invited them to converse afterward. These marks of favor only encouraged the requests Byron notes from Ward Price, members of the Oxford Group, and others who wanted to use Unity as access to Hitler. She denied them all this time. On 12 September, Hitler stood before the crowds in Nuremberg’s Congress Hall.

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953 Brothers, 1941), 148-152.
954 Cowles, 152-3.
955 Strobl, 97. Byron (Articles), Cowles, and Lady Redesdale in their memoirs all note again and again that foreign journalists expressed a growing sense of unease as the rallies continued. Redesdale MS, 193-4; Byron, Articles, 16-18. This could have been the party British spy Winterbotham saw Unity Mitford at (F.W. Winterbotham, The Nazi Connection (New York: Dell Books, 1978), 77-8). Winterbotham described Unity as a “glamour-seeker” (82). Similarly, Nevile Henderson's note (621/25/38) from 13 September 1938 to Viscount Halifax, then Secretary of State, describes meeting "the notorious Unity Mitford" for the first time at Himmler's party at Nuremberg and the incident
In a furious crescendo, he raged about the treatment of Sudeten Germans. His listeners all wondered if this would mean war, and when Unity Mitford joined Robert Byron for dinner that evening, he wrote that her “confidence [was] all gone—for the first time, she admitted to the possibility, indeed the probability of war—and wondered what to do with herself—she can’t come back to England, yet would be an enemy alien in Germany.”

Byron left for Frankfurt and then England that night, too chilled by his experience to linger in Germany. Before he left, “Unity sent her love to her family, and seems to contemplate a time of unhappiness, though bravely keeping up her spirits by saying she would be in Prague for the Einmarsch.”

Tucked in the Foreign Office papers at the National Archives, there is a brief note from Munich Consul David St. Clair Gainer, relating the details of Unity Mitford’s visit to his office just after Nuremberg. She told him that she was leaving Munich to visit friends in the Burgenland, but that she had met with Hitler privately after the 12 September speech at the Parteitag. He had warned her there would almost certainly be war. Hitler suggested she return to Britain, and Mitford told St. Clair Gainer he had changed his opinion since then. She also explained that if war came to pass, she did not need notice from the consulate. She planned to stay in Germany. On the coversheet, a handwritten note reads, “Good riddance.”

Unity Mitford seemed to be making a decision. Her loyalty would be with Germany and Hitler.

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956 Bit about speech from Redesdale MS, 196 (narrative text and not a letter). Rest and quote are from Byron, Articles, 20.

957 Byron, Articles, 20, and more on departure in Robert Byron, Robert Byron: Letters Home, edited by Lucy Butler (London: John Murray Publishers Ltd., 1991), 291-2. Note that Unity convinced her father to send a Japanese bronze eagle (probably a souvenir of her grandfather’s time as ambassador) to Hitler shortly after the Parteitag. (Diana Mitford Mosley, 144-5).

Although the Munich Conference at the end of September achieved greater fame, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's first flight to Germany on 15 September struck many anxious Europeans in 1938 as the first significant step down from a second war with Germany. Unity wrote home on 17 September, "What a relief that there will be no war after all. I could hardly believe it when I heard that Chamberlain was coming. What an experience for him-- to fly for the first time and to meet the Führer for the first time, all in one day. I should think he will return a different man." Unity had driven out to the Burgenland with her dog, and she split her time between Janos Almasy and an Egyptian friend named Viktor at Bernstein and the Erdödy sisters at Kohfidisch. Almasy's friend entertained them all with the latest dances like the Big Apple and the Lambeth Walk from jazz clubs, and Unity wrote Tom that everyone was jubilant: "It seems so wonderful that there is to be no war, that we are all in the best moods I have ever seen us in." Viktor made a couple with Baby Erdödy, and the pair drove with Unity and Janos to Venice in early October. They all considered the trip a "celebration of the Peace." Unity's letters to her mother often fret over finances, but she writes on 8 October that they splurged horribly in Venice out of sheer excitement. The four took a suite of rooms overlooking the Grand Canal, ate at "that famous Taverna Fenice restaurant," "spent all day in gondolas," and "even went up the Campanile." Unity's only disappointment was at missing Hitler's entry into the Sudetenland, which the group heard of with relief.

She starts her letter with the thought that, "Things like trenches and guns in Hyde Park,

959 Letter to Muv from Unity dated 17 Sept 1938, Redesdale MS, 200. In this same letter she notes that she arrived at 2 am because the village inns were too crowded to admit her.
960 Letter from Unity to Tom dated 23 Sept 1938, Ibid., 200-1.
961 Letter to Muv from Unity dated 8 October 1938, Ibid., 201-2. Several members of Unity's family believe from her diary entries that she had a brief affair with Janos during this time. (J & C Guinness, 373; Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, interview with author, October 29, 2008; Bierman, 124-9).
and loud speakers in Rutland Gate [the street of the Mitfords' London home] do bring it all home to one much more than the big news. It seems too good to be true that it is all over.”  

She ends the letter eager for her brother Tom's arrival in the Burgenland, exclaiming, “I must say that during those awful two weeks I was certain I would never see any of you again, as of course it would have been impossible for me to go on living if there had been a war.”  

While Unity was in the Burgenland, Chamberlain had landed in Britain with his famous piece of paper that would bring “peace in our time.” Although Germany and Britain celebrated the Munich Agreement, cynics soon wrote openly in British papers that appeasement had reached both its peak and its end that September. Britain hastened its rearmament and waited for Germany's next move. By contrast, in Germany, Hitler's popularity only soared because of his successes in Austria and the Sudetenland.

Unity left Germany in late October. When she and Tom drove from the Burgenland back to Munich, a punctured tire and lunch with Janos in Vienna delayed their trip so that they came through Linz in the evening. By sheer chance, there they came across the long column of black Mercedes that always signified the Nazi hierarchy on the move. Unity braved wild crowds of Hitler-admirers until she reached his hotel with a lost heel and torn stocking. She phoned Brückner, one of the dictator's adjutants, and Hitler quickly summoned her up to his rooms. The Oberbürgermeister of Linz went with Unity to fetch Tom, the dog, and their car through the crowds. Tom and Unity then spent the evening chatting. After Hitler left for a dinner with government officials, he returned to

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962 Underlining= sic. Letter to Muv from Unity dated 8 October 1938, Redesdale MS, 201-2.
963 Ibid.
964 Gannon, 136-7.
them for coffee. The siblings and the dictator sat up until one in the morning, joking with Martin Bormann, “Old Fighter” Hermann Esser, and Austrian _Reichsstatthalter_ Arthur Seyss-Inquart.  

Hitler was en route to the Sudetenland, but he issued an invitation to Tom and Unity for tea at the Berghof the following Saturday. Unity described Hitler's impressive new tea house on the Kehlstein in a letter to Diana. She also mentioned not only chatting with the Luftwaffe's Karl-Heinrich Bodenschatz, Magda Goebbels, and even “Fräulein Braun.”  

(This reinforces the idea that Unity Mitford was aware of Braun and her special role in Hitler's life.) Shortly after this, Unity returned to London.

Unity was not in Germany during the terrible Kristallnacht on 9-10 November, but she cannot have been unaware of what happened. The year had included an overall increase in anti-Semitic violence not seen since before the Nuremberg Laws. Verbal and physical attacks came with the “destruction of [Jewish] property, public humiliations and arrests followed by incarcerations in concentration camps, [which] characterized [1938],” according to Daniel Goldhagen.  

Friedelind Wagner's memoirs describe cruel graffiti on Jewish shops near Bayreuth that surprised her when she came to Germany from London for that year's festival. The attacks on Jewish individuals, businesses, homes, and synagogues during Kristallnacht took place after a young Jewish man shot Ernst von Rath at the German Foreign Ministry office in Paris on 7 November. When von Rath died of his wounds on 9 November, the Nazi elite were in Munich to celebrate the annual commemoration of the Beer Hall Putsch. Goebbels raged against Jews at Munich's Old Town Hall that day and predicted “‘spontaneous anti-Jewish riots,’” which he implied  

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966 From Unity to Diana from 23 October 1938, Chatsworth House Trust.  
967 Ibid.  
968 Goldhagen, 98.  
969 F. Wagner, 177.
were “only to be expected.”

Munich and its Gauleiter, Unity's friend Adolf Wagner, took the statement to heart, and that night Nazi stormtroopers disguised in civilian clothes poured into the city streets. “In addition to smashing forty-six Jewish shops and beating to death one elderly Jewish shopowner, the roving SA bands set fire to Munich's Orthodox synagogue in the Herzog-Rudolf-Strasse. The fire department rushed to the scene, but only to prevent the flames from spreading to neighboring buildings.”

The Gestapo arrested several hundred Jews and sent them to Dachau's concentration camp for several days. Historian David Clay Large notes that most Germans criticized “the methods employed in the pogroms, rather than the principles and policies that lay behind it.”

Many of Munich's citizens felt more resentment at the chaos and destruction than the actual prejudice behind it. Similar scenes took place in cities across Germany and Austria. Unity Mitford followed German news too closely not to have known what had happened, and the international press expressed some of the first significant disapproval of Nazi anti-Semitism in the event's wake.

While the rest of the world recoiled from the brutality of Kristallnacht, Unity Mitford remained busy in London during the first part of November. News broke of her sister Diana's 1936 marriage to Sir Oswald Mosley. Articles in every tabloid meant the Mitford family faced scandal once again, and even Mosley's children from his first marriage had not known of the secret wedding. Diana was giving birth to her first son with Mosley, Alexander, and the couple eventually admitted that the ceremony had

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970 Large, Munich, 305.
971 Ibid., 306-7.
972 Ibid. Italics=sic.
973 Barrow, 96; News Chronicle (London), front page, no. 28,884, 28 November 1938.
indeed taken place. Excitement also came from Unity's participation in a debate at the South Kensington Conservatives' headquarters on 17 November. With help from both Mosley and Sigismund Fitzrandolph from the German Embassy, she composed a rebuttal to Vice-Admiral Usborne's motion that “while National Socialism has been advantageous to Germany it represents a danger to world peace.” The event attracted both media and a crowd of over 181 spectators. Headlines like the News Chronicle's “They Laughed at Miss Mitford” indicate the sort of reception Unity received. Unity Mitford responded with typical fascist rhetoric to Usborne's belief that Germany should have waited for the international community to redress its grievances from the Treaty of Versailles: “Human nature, being what it is, those who do not stick up for their own rights get trampled on. The man with a strong character will be respectfully treated. Likewise the man with a strong body. Such a man is potentially a force for peace and order. This is what National Socialism has done for Germany-- made her into a great force for peace and order in the world.” Unity went on to argue that aggressive foreign policy was not unique to Germany, using American and British examples of force, and she ended her rebuttal by arguing that Britain and Germany were natural allies. Beyond the “Nordic racial” bond she said the two countries shared, Unity Mitford made the case that as strong partners they could secure world peace. She believed war with England would jeopardize Germany's social programs and construction projects, the most notable advantages Usborne had argued were products of National Socialism. Ian Campbell and Wing-Commander Wynn (R.A.F., Retired) were Usborne and Mitford's respective seconds.

974 Nicholas Mosley, Beyond the Pale, 409-411.
They concluded the evening's debate before the vote. Only nine voters sided with Unity Mitford.

Unity kept out of the limelight after her debate. In late November, she travelled to the Inner Hebrides in Scotland with her mother. They examined and ultimately purchased the small island of Inch Kenneth for the Mitford family.977 The only other record of Unity's activities in late 1938 comes from a small photograph of an Anglo-German Fellowship Christmas Party in Bloomsbury. She sits discreetly with her parents, Sigismund Fitzrandolph, and plate of sausages.978 Unity was in Germany just briefly in January. She flew from Britain to Amsterdam and then on to Berlin, where she stayed at the Kaiserhof Hotel. A letter to her mother describes Unity going to tea with Hitler, touring the new Reichskanzlei with the dictator, and lunching with Magda Goebbels. She also acquired a ticket for the annual Reichstag speech on the anniversary of Hitler's accession to power.979 The 1939 speech drew even more attention than previous years' speeches. Franklin Gannon notes that after the Munich Conference, “an atmosphere of suspicion and foreboding pervaded all the British Press; Hitler had gone to the limits of his 'justifiable' territorial claims. The worry of those who had counseled acquiescence until now was that Hitler would prove their critics right by some precipitate action.”980 They dissected the speech in some detail, and most decided with a sigh of relief that Hitler had been “polemical but not more so than usual.”981 Unity flew back to Britain late on 30 January. The ensuing February was a comparatively quiet month for Nazi

977 L Redesdale MS (not letter but narrative), 203-204.
978 Barrow, 96; Lovell, 270.
979 Letter from Unity to Muv from 29 Jan 1939, Redesdale MS, 205.
980 Gannon 229.
981 Ibid., 232.
Germany and Unity Mitford. The greatest excitement came when Decca and her husband Esmond moved from London to New York in mid-February.  

In March 1939, Unity returned to Munich, where she stayed with Erna Hanfstaengl as she searched for a flat in the city. Not only does her stay with Hanfstaengl reinforce the idea that Putzi's family did not hold her responsible for his downfall in 1937, but Unity's hunt for an apartment during this time suggests she was planning a new level of permanency and independence in her stays in Germany. During her stay, German troops took Prague. For the first time, Neville Chamberlain made a statement to his cabinet a few days later on 18 March that he was essentially giving up on appeasement of Hitler. That same day, the *Daily Mirror* published an article with the title “What Miss Mitford Would Like To See.” Editors surrounded her article by comments in bold print like “WE don't agree with her. And the Editor asks what you think!” and “The 'Daily Mirror' has given her a free hand to express her views to-day. Would she get the same freedom for unpopular views in Germany? We say NO!” There is even a picture of Hitler with the caption: “She wants us to be friends with this man... the man who just pounced on and ravished an innocent land!” Unity Mitford's argument is similar to the one she offered at the South Kensington Debating Society meet. She begins by citing the 1935 naval pact between Britain and Germany as evidence that Germany was willing to limit its naval power to avoid another war with Britain. The next section states that an Anglo-German alliance is the one dream Hitler has not yet fulfilled, and Unity explains

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982 Ibid., 233; Letter from Unity to Muv from 29 Jan 1939, Redesdale MS, 205; Lovell, 279. Decca and Esmond had spent a period of time in Corsica after the death of their infant daughter Julia in May 1938, but before the move to America, they had returned to London.

983 Letter to Muv from 23 March 1939 and 2 March 1939, 205-6. Rudy von Simolin also stayed with Erna Hanfstaengl during this time, and Unity became friends with her. (Redesdale MS, 208.)

her vision of a strong German army on land in Europe and a strong British navy maintaining an empire overseas. Before ending her article with quotes from Hitler's January Reichstag speech and an image of “the German Army, the British Navy and the two Air Forces [combining to] police the world and keep ‘peace in our time,’” Unity argues that it is fundamental misunderstanding of German National Socialism that keeps Britons from accepting an alliance with Germany. She restates her view that propaganda [Mitford does not state that this is Jewish propaganda here, but she did to many friends and family] has prevented a “natural friendship” between the two countries. Because National Socialism is a “faith” and not just a “political creed” for Germans, Unity argues that they believe in the Nordic bond between Britain and Germany as very real and necessary for success.\textsuperscript{985} Her belief in a racial hierarchy as the groundwork for international diplomacy is not only chilling but a persistent reminder of how entirely Unity Mitford embraced the doctrine of National Socialism. This was the other side of the coin that bore her ruthless anti-Semitism. Her belief in this alleged Nordic racial bond even kept Mitford clinging to her hope that there would be no second world war. She believed Hitler and his followers shared her ultimate faith in this bond and failed to understand that as much as many believed in it theoretically, their deep Nationalism would not allow them to compromise to Britain. Because she misunderstood Germany's self-interest, Unity blamed the British when an alliance failed to materialize. On 23 March she wrote her mother about the British reaction to Hitler's further invasion of Czechoslovakia:

\[\text{I simply cannot imagine what the English are getting so excited about. As for Mr.}\]

\textsuperscript{985} \textit{Ibid.}
Chamberlain's bleating at Birmingham, which I listened to, I never heard anything so ridiculous in my life. Really one would almost think that even he must see how ridiculous he makes himself. It really does look as if the English government were only trying to gain time at Munich, doesn't it. And, apart from the fact that England had already broken the spirit of the Munich pact, it was only to apply to questions in which both countries were interested. And I fail to see in what way England is interested in Bohemia or Moravia. I do hope the English people will come to their senses before it's too late and find a government capable of seeing what's really going on, and capable of realizing that we are at a big turning-point in world history. Not all the power in the world can stop what's happening or alter it after it's happened. There are only two possibilities, to go against the tide, in which case they will be swallowed up, or to go with it and be swept along to a better future. I fear Mr. Chamberlain and his friends fail to see the wood for the trees.

It must be very difficult for you and Forgy [Lord Redesdale], I am sorry, but one can be certain it will come all right in the end.

And one can be quite certain that what the Führer does is right; he sees further than all the other statesmen in the world put together.986

Unity Mitford shows again and again the same confidence in her assumption no Britons understood Germany as well as she did, but her confidence was both misplaced and not enough to prevent the tide of war. By the end of March, Hitler was making public statements that he intended to seize the Danzig Corridor from Poland. The Paris Peace Conference had given Poland the strip of land to guarantee the state's access to the sea for trade and defense purposes, but the area had been part of Germany before World War One. It both contained a large number of German-speakers (ethnic Germans Nazis described as Volksdeutsche) and separated the German territory of Eastern Prussia from the rest of Germany. In response to Hitler, Chamberlain issued a guarantee to Poland on 30 March. He vowed that Britain would stand beside Poland and declare war in the event of a German invasion of that country. In spite of the escalating tension, Unity wrote her sister Diana on 29 March that at lunch with Hitler, “...he held my hand most of the time

986 Letter to Muv from Unity from 23 March 1939, Redesdale, MS, 205-6.
& looked sweet & said 'Kind [child]'! In his sympathetic way because he was so sorry about England & Germany being such enemies. However he said nothing but wonderful things about England & he completely gave me faith again that it will all come right in the end."  

She shared this view with the new British Consul in Munich as well as her belief that England and Germany were more “natural allies” than Germany and Italy. While Carvell dutifully reported this back to Ogilvie-Forbes in Berlin, he seemed more impressed by Unity's “veneration” of Hitler than her idea of his stance on Britain, and indeed, Hitler hosted Italy's Count Ciano in Berlin to sign the Pact of Steel between Germany and Italy by 22 May.

In April, events continued to move gradually towards conflict. Hitler gave a speech at Wilhelmshaven on 1 April which introduced Germany's new propaganda tack: He said Germany was only confronting “the threat of 'encirclement' by the Western Powers” in its aggressive foreign policy actions. Unity took another trip to the Burgenland, where she visited the Erdödy sisters at Kohfidisch. Her health had been suffering, and she had visited several doctors as well as implementing a new regime of diet and exercise. This may have been the effect of depression and stress over the politics she followed so obsessively. The time in Austria seemed to help, however, and she was back in Munich by 24 April. Unity Mitford and Erna Hanfstaengl were in Berlin for Hitler's important 28 April speech to the Reichstag. During this speech, Hitler spoke

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987 Letter from Unity to Diana from 29 March 1939, Charlotte Mosley, *The Mitfords*, 137.
988 FO 371/22989 from Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes, dated 5 April 1939, pages 33-7 [registry number c 4935/16/18]. Gannon (267) notes that when Italy invaded Albania in early April 1939, this pushed it closer to alliance with Germany, but few in the British press noticed the invasion.
989 Gannon, 266.
990 Redesdale MS, 209 narrative and letter to Muv from Unity dated 24 April 1939 (209-210). Page 210 of Redesdale MS also has letter from Unity to Farve dated 2 May 1939.
out against the 1935 Naval Agreement between Britain and Germany, but he never extended the wrath he expressed towards Poland to Britain. Instead, he lamented the estrangement of Britain and Germany, arguing that any war between them would be tragic and destructive. Because Hitler attacked the British press as the cause of Britain's alienation from Germany, the press was especially careful to show a certain amount of sympathy towards the dictator to counter his accusations. Franklin Gannon also notes that the German government was careful to provide an accurate translation for British press agencies, “special measures” indicating that they “expected this speech to have a strong effect of British opinion.”

Unity, who had come at Hitler's invitation to enjoy tea and an examination of his birthday presents the day before, described it as “one of his best speeches, if not his very best.” While the British press had been unusually sympathetic, few back in Britain shared her opinion, and Hitler himself had already started making plans with his armed forces for the invasion of Poland come September.

Unity spent the month of May in happy oblivion. She lunched with Hitler in the Osteria and continued her plans for settling into Munich more permanently. Hitler told her one day: “For long years you and I have had an unchangeable friendship. And we will always keep up Anglo German friendship, whatever the English Government may do.” Daily exercise at the gym accompanied massages for her health there, and she took singing lessons from “a Spanish refugee” with the goal of learning to sing Wagner. Unity also took lessons in mathematics. Her approach to the lessons was rather like her approach to life. As she wrote her father: “I went to the dear old head Maths professor at

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991 Gannon, 269-270.
992 Letter from Unity to Farve from 2 May 1939, Redesdale MS, 210.
993 Letters to Muv from 3 and 8 May 1939, Ibid., 211.
the University to ask him if he could find me a teacher. He was horrified at my wanting to learn mathematics, he obviously though that I believed I could learn it all in a few months and didn't know how hard it is. I visited him twice, and up till the last moment he tried to dissuade me, but all the same he found me a young professor to teach me. He even wrote me to try to put me off.”

Unity clearly still refused to accept limits rooted in other peoples' expectations of a woman of her age, class, reputation, and education. While Unity refused to conform to expectations, it created an increasingly dangerous sentiment around her back in Britain. An article came out in the *Daily Express*, which stated Unity had stayed overnight for a weekend at the Berghof. The implication of sexual activity was obvious to her family, and she wrote that the rumor was false (a statement validated by her diary entries as noted in *House of Mitford* by Jonathan and Catherine Guinness). Unity asked Decca's brother-in-law Giles Romilly to deny the rumor for her by telephone.

Unity found her flat with Hitler's help by 25 May 1939, but this would prove to be one of her most unforgivable expressions of anti-Semitism. The apartment had two rooms and a large balcony, and Unity loved its location in Munich's Schwabing district near the university. Hitler had demanded Gauleiter Wagner assist her in the search, and “a young man from the Ministerium” took her to several before she finally selected the one on the *Agnesstrasse*. She met the owners and described them to Diana as “a young Jewish couple who are going abroad,” but as Mary Lovell writes, it is impossible to believe

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994 Letter to Farve from Unity dated 15 May 1939, *Ibid.*, 212-3. In a subsequent letter to Farve dated 23 March 1939 (MS, 213), Unity wrote that she would do anything in her power to facilitate the Duke of Buccleuch's visit to Germany, but she seems not to have had much role in the final visit, although it did convince many Germans of a softening of the British attitude towards Germany. Note regarding Wagner goal is from letter to Muv from Unity dated 25 May 1939, MS, 213.

995 J& C Guinness, 373; Barrow, 98; Letter to Muv from Unity dated 8 May 1939, MS, 211.
Unity did not know what was meant by a Jewish couple “going abroad” at this time. The requisitioned apartment and the reasons Jews fled the increasingly violent anti-Semitism of Nazi Germany would have been familiar to Unity Mitford, and it seems unlikely she would not have supported the very prejudice that expelled the apartment's owners. Certainly, she never mentioned the cruelty of the situation or, as Lovell points out, let it dampen her enthusiasm. Around this time, Unity stopped socializing with Erna Hanfstaengl at Hitler's request. She had passed along a letter from Erna asking for her exiled brother's back pay, and Hitler's subsequent rage at the Hanfstaengls and statement forbidding her to see them caused Unity to cut off contact so completely that she immediately moved into a hotel and sent Janos for her luggage rather than return to Erna's house. Dropping a friend so quickly and completely was another reminder of the lengths Unity would go in her loyalty to Hitler.

Early summer 1939 was the calm before the storm in many ways. In the British Press and Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax's speeches, the British stated that, although they would stand by their guarantee to Poland, they had not yet ruled out negotiating with Germany. In the lull, Low's cartoon at the *Evening Standard* joked that the artist's new plan was to sneak in to see Hitler “disguised as a Mitford.” Unity was in Britain from 12 June to 5 July. She met with the Duke of Buccleuch, who hoped to use her as an influence for peace, but despite her own desire to avoid a war, Unity would not have

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996 Letter from Unity to Diana on 5 July 1939 cited in Lovell, 286, and also used Lovell's own text from 286-7. The address was Agnesstrasse 26, Number 4.

997 As late as 4 June, Unity was still planning to bring Erna to London for a holiday so the break must have happened after this point. See letters from 31 May 1939 and 4 June 1939 (to Muv and Farve, respectively) on Redesdale MS, 214-5 as well as Lovell, 285.

998 Gannon, 277-8, 265.

accepted any suggestion that Germany should back down over Poland or been successful in additional pleading with Hitler for peace. Unity also travelled with her mother to the Conservative College at Ashridge in late June. She was too controversial, however, for them to linger there more than a night.\textsuperscript{1000} When Unity drove back to Germany, she brought a small trailer of furniture for her new flat. She met Hitler for lunch, met Rudi von Simolin for fresh strawberries and cream, and corresponded with Diana over their recent invitation to Bayreuth. Her father arranged to have the British newspapers sent to her in Germany since she could no longer buy them as easily in the shops.\textsuperscript{1001} She then settled into a period of depression and loneliness at the Pension Doering. Without as many British visitors, Erna Hanfstaengl, the Baroness (who she had often visited since moving out, but had died several months ago), or Hitler's circle in town, Unity felt isolated. The occasional lunch with Hitler when he came to Munich, furniture and painting preparations for the move to the flat, and novels took up most of her time. The letters to Diana and Muv are a strange mix of bleak solitude and expectation of further excitement.\textsuperscript{1002} Hitler sent tickets in mid-July for the Day of German Art celebrations, but Unity felt nervous going alone. She invited two friends, but complained to Diana that she wished she had been there for the Empfang at the House of German Art, Tannhäuser at the Festauflührung, and the Merry Widow performance the next night. Despite rain during the elaborate German Culture parade, Unity enjoyed the parties and productions.

She socialized with the Italian Ambassadress and Sudeten Deutsch leader Konrad

\textsuperscript{1000} Redesdale MS, 216. Text and letter reprinted from the Duke to Unity dated 18 June 1939. Their visit was 20 June 1939.
\textsuperscript{1001} Letter to Diana dated 9 July 1939, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 137-9; Letter to Muv on same date, MS, 217-8; Letter from Unity to Farve from 10 July 1939, MS, 218.
\textsuperscript{1002} Letter from Unity to Diana on 11 July 1939, letter from Unity to Muv on 13 July 1939, and letter to Diana from 15 July 1939, Redesdale MS 218-221.
Henlein as well as her two guests. After the celebrations, however, Unity Mitford returned to spending her time alone with newspapers and visions of her new apartment. Loneliness fills her letters once again.

As Hitler continued to call for Danzig, the RAF prepared for war, and London prepared for trial blackouts, Unity Mitford left for Bayreuth. Unity enjoyed the first part of the Ring cycle and the chance to socialize with company. Diana came after the first three operas, and Lord Kemsley and his family sat near Unity during Parsifal (although she thought the opera’s length overwhelmed the newcomers to the festival). Unity and Diana joined Hitler for dinner each evening, but when they accepted an invitation to lunch at Wahnfried the last day of the festival, Hitler told them he believed war between Britain and Germany was becoming inevitable. Diana told him Mosley would work for peace, but Hitler predicted this would fail. This may be the conversation from July 28 recorded by Hitler’s adjutant Gerhard Engel. Engel notes that Winifred Wagner, Diana, and Unity discussed the possibility of war with Hitler that day. He records Unity commenting that London had too few anti-aircraft guns to be seriously prepared for war. Diana disapproved of such a disloyal statement and did not take it seriously, but Hitler’s adjutants wondered if this was some indication Unity was a spy sent to mislead Hitler.

Diana writes that at Götterdämmerung that night, “Never had the glorious music seemed

\[1003\] Ibid., Letter to Muv from 28 July 1939, MS, 222-3. Also see description of the parade in Large, Munich, 309.
\[1004\] Letter to Muv from 18 July 1939, letter to Diana from 18 July 1939, letter to Diana from 20 July 1939, letter to Diana from 20 July 1939, letter to Muv from 21 July 1939, MS, 222-6.
\[1005\] Letter to Muv from Unity from 28 July 1939 and letters to Farve from 26 July and 3 August, Redesdale MS, 226-8.
\[1006\] Diana Mitford Mosley, 159-160.
\[1007\] Engel, 56; Lovell, 288-9 (based on letter from Diana Mosley to Lovell on 11 November 2000); Hugh Trevor-Roper, ed., Hitler's Table Talk, 1941-1944 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1953), 477 (This conversation is recalled in 16 August 1942).
to me so doom-laden. I had a strong feeling, almost a conviction, that I should never see Hitler again, that a whole world was crumbling, that the future held only tragedy and war. Unity had told her that day how she would not live to see a war. Diana adds, “I knew well what Unity, sitting beside me, was thinking. I left her next day, death in my heart.”

German demands for the Polish Danzig Corridor continued as the summer passed, but Unity returned from Bayreuth to decorate her Munich flat. She lunched with Hitler on 4 August and again the next day. Her letters are full of plans for furniture, but a growing tension creeps in among her cheery gossip. Unity wrote her mother, “The Führer was very sweet to us at Bayreuth and I had a chat with him alone. I can’t very well write what he said in a letter but I will tell you when I see you. It is all so terrible and miserable and so mad. What a wicked world it must be.” While it remains unclear what news this was, Hitler had warned her at least once before of the possibility of war. In the same letter, Unity also describes attacks in the British media on the ultra-right wing group, the Link, for its pro-Hitler stance, and she mentions having insufficient gas for her car to pick up friends in Salzburg, even after Werlin got her “one fill up” during the rationing. Signs of war became clearer in all the European countries. More and more letters about the new flat follow until Unity writes on 12 August that as she left the opera with Janos and Rudi one night she saw “an S.S. man selling papers and shouting ‘Special Edition. Danzig’s reply to Poland.’” The contrast between the happy Merry Widow

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1008 Diana Mitford Mosley, 160.
1009 Ibid.
1010 Letter to Muv from Unity from 5 August 1939, MS, 229-230. Underlining= sic.
1011 Ibid. Ration cards for other items such as lard had been in place since early 1937, however (Large, Munich, 300).
1012 Letter to Muv from 12 August 1939, MS, 231. Note that Unity used Adolf Wagner’s box that evening.
performance and the grim situation shook her badly.

Constant ups and downs came again and again in the anxious month of August. Unity Mitford made plans for the Parteitag with Diana (it would never take place again because of the war), and her friends the Wrede sisters visited on their way to Switzerland. On 22 August, she had tea with Joseph Kennedy, Jr., the twenty-four year old son of Joseph Kennedy, Sr., American Ambassador to the United Kingdom. While Unity found him “extremely intelligent and nice” and even predicted a “brilliant career” for him, his letter back to his father did not reflect anything so complimentary:

[Munich] is terribly calm and no one would think there was a prospect of war. The people looked very serious but there was no feeling as there was in London and in Paris during the last crisis. At noon over the radio came the announcement that Ribbentrop was going to Moscow to conclude the terms of the Russian non-aggression pact. Everyone smiled knowingly and it could be seen that they attached a great deal of importance to it.

Unity Mitford is one of the most unusual women I have ever met. She is not at all pretty, with very bad teeth and terribly fat, however with a certain fine Aryan look. She doesn’t impress you with personality but rather seems to be in a state of high nervous tension in which she has no great interest in other things but thinks only of the Führer and his work. She never refers to him as Hitler but always as the Führer and looked at me rather funnily when I called him Hitler as if I was taking his name in vain. She says that the international situation was the result of a complete misunderstanding. She said that Hitler had tremendous admiration and fondness for the British and would do them no harm unless they forced his hand. I asked why and she said on the purely racial question, the only reason they are playing ball with the Italians is because the English won’t try to play ball with them. She says he hates the Japanese and is afraid they might dominate the world. She hadn’t heard about the Russian agreement but was delighted for now she said the Poles and the English won’t fight. She thought that the situation with England and the United States was due mainly to Jewish propaganda and the only way to clear it up was to throw them out. Of course she felt sorry for them but you had to get rid of them. When I asked her about marching into Czech she said that the Führer had to do it. Of course he had provided not to but conditions had changed so much that he had to do it. The important thing was race and the Poles and the Czechs are not a great race and unfortunately they must be under the

1013 Letter to Diana from 14 August 1939, Chatsworth House Trust Papers.
domination of the others. Anyway, she said they will be better off under Germany, maybe not now but you will see in a few years.

She believes Hitler to be more than a genius; those who know him well consider him as a God. He can make no mistake and has made none. He spends as much time in looking after detail as he does on great things. He picked out all the pictures for this exhibition. He can work for a week without sleep and not show it. Why should England want Eastern Europe? It is rightly German and they should have it. England can have its empire. Even though England got beaten in battle the Germans would give England its empire for they could not run the world by themselves. The English could teach the Germans how to live. It would be much better if the English got defeated. She has been afraid to go to England lately for fear there would be a war and that she would be caught there. She said the feeling at home is very strong against her.

She is the most fervent Nazi imaginable, and is probably in love with Hitler.\textsuperscript{1014} From Kennedy’s letter, it is clear that Unity was desperately clinging to her plan of a world ruled by Germany’s army and Britain’s navy. Blaming the Jews' alleged propaganda for the two countries’ collisions, instead of questioning her devout faith in Hitler, pushed her further into fanaticism. Hitler was too busy in Berlin to visit Munich. Unity speculated on the non-aggression pact between Moscow and Berlin like any other European. Many Britons felt the pact might represent the sort of treaties Stalin had been building with other nations or a pressure tactic meant to influence the state’s negotiations with Britain and France.\textsuperscript{1015} Amid more plans for a Parteitag that would never happen, Unity wrote Diana on 24 August, “I wish I could make out what is really happening and whether there is going to be a war or not. When I heard about the pact with Russia, I thought not. However now it looks worse than ever.”\textsuperscript{1016} That evening, Unity went with the Wrede sisters to visit friends living on a lake near Munich. After dinner, they crowded around the radio to listen to the English news and a speech by Lord Halifax,


\textsuperscript{1015} Gannon 279-280. Note that the Pact of Steel signed between Italy and Germany in Berlin that May had not attracted much attention, according to Franklin Gannon (271-2).

\textsuperscript{1016} Letter to Diana from Unity from 24 Aug 1939, MS, 232. Underlining= sic.
British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.\textsuperscript{1017} That day Parliament had passed an Emergency Powers bill, and Chamberlain announced that Britain would not back down over Poland. Halifax reiterated this in his speech over the radio broadcast, adding that this would be “‘not so much for Poland as for the freedom and security of the peoples of the world.’”\textsuperscript{1018}

After the speech by Halifax, Unity became increasingly isolated. The Wredes went to Berlin in case the government called them up as nurses. Other German friends left for military training. She wrote her father, “Wherever one goes—in shops etc—one hears people saying to each other ‘Herr so- and-so has been fetched to the war.’”\textsuperscript{1019} Hitler remained in Berlin, and Britain recommended its citizens leave Germany. Journalists started to depart as well. Several British Consuls in Germany closed.\textsuperscript{1020}

Unity went for a long talk with the British consul in Munich, but refused to leave. Favors still came from German friends, even as war between Germany and England drew near: She received butter from Max Ettlinger before he was called up and met Gauleiter Wagner for tea at the House of German Art café. An officer passing her on a road outside Munich even saluted her car with its English plates, but Unity wrote Diana and her parents of disappearing into the mountains of the Tyrol in the event of war. The letter to Diana also hints at suicide.\textsuperscript{1021} Her letters describe sitting anxiously by the radio for news

\textsuperscript{1017}Letter to Farve from Unity from 25 August 1939, MS, 233-4.

\textsuperscript{1018}Mowat, 646.

\textsuperscript{1019}Letter to Farve from Unity from 25 August 1939, MS, 233-4.

\textsuperscript{1020}FO 369/2534 from National Archives. Foreign Office minutes from 30-1 August. Pages 181-5 from K11021/11021/218 (registry number).

\textsuperscript{1021}Letter to Farve from Unity from 25 August 1939, MS, 233-4; letter to Muv from 27 August, letter to Diana from 27 August, letter to Diana from 1 Sept 1939, MS, 234-7. In Half-Term Report, William Douglas Home writes that the Germans were still very friendly to British travellers in August 1939 and that they did not seem to anticipate a war with Britain over Poland (Half-Term Report, Quality Books ed. (London: Quality Book Club with Longmans, Green and Co Ltd 1955), 117).
and picturing her family doing the same things in England, but Unity still chose not to leave. Every page contains worries the borders might close before mail can get through to Britain. Unity filled out a ration card on 28 August. Even as she wrote her father of how “the catastrophe seems to loom nearer and nearer it’s a frightful nightmare and one can think of nothing else can one,” she added that she longed to see Hitler in person again.1022

The next day Hitler issued a list of demands to Poland and insisted a Polish plenipotentiary come to him. Nevile Henderson and Joachim von Ribbentrop met fruitlessly in the following days.1023 When the German attack on Poland started, 1 September 1939, Unity wrote Diana about how Hitler’s speech had been “his greatest speech ever” and how sure she was that he must look “wonderful in Feldgrau [field gray]” uniform even if she could not picture it yet.1024 Her faith in Hitler unshaken, Unity put black paper over her windows for the first blackouts that night. Optimistic letters to Muv that “perhaps this awful crisis won’t go on for much longer—perhaps we shall know soon whether it is to be war or peace” now that “Danzig has returned to the Reich” ring hollow when her letters to Diana are much darker. On 2 September Unity writes, “I fear I shan’t see the Führer again. Nardy if anything should happen to me, & the English press try to make some untrue story out of it against W[olf], you will see to it that the truth is known won’t you.”1025 Between September 1-3, Britain and France requested Germany withdraw its troops from Poland under threat of war. Germany refused, and on 3 September, Britain declared war against Germany. Instead of rallying to the war,

1022 Letter from Unity to Farve from 28 August 1939, MS, 235-6.
1023 Gannon, 284-6; Mowat, 647.
1024 Letter to Diana from Unity on 1 Sept 1939, MS, 237.
1025 Letter from Unity to Diana from 2 Sept 1939, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 138-9. Nardy was Diana’s nickname, and Wolf is their nickname for Hitler.
Munich’s citizens were silent and shocked. Newspapers reported an eerie stillness in the city.  

On the morning of 3 September, Unity Mitford went to the British Consul in Munich and confirmed the declaration of war. She left a letter there for her parents, sending special love to Decca, Tom, and Nanny Blor. She included the lines: “Perhaps when this war is over everyone will be friends again, and there will be the friendship between Germany and England which we have so hoped for. I hope you will see the Führer often when it is over.” Unity phoned Rudi von Simolin and abruptly ended the conversation, then visited Gauleiter Wagner to ensure she did not face internment as an enemy alien. He reassured her. Then, after a quick visit to her singing teacher’s wife, Unity returned to Wagner. She left an envelope with him. She went from there to the Englischer Garten. In the park, Unity Mitford put her gun to her right temple and fired.  

1026 Mowat, 648; Large, Munich, 312.
1027 Letter to Muv and Farve from 3 Sept 1939, MS, 239-240.
1028 Lovell, 296-7; J & C Guinness, 434.
Conclusion

Sheer Torture:

Aunt Kate, as ever, was square, gruff and ludicrous, but now she had—perhaps regained from her childhood, and the result of last year’s breakdown—a dreadfully hockey-stick schoolgirl roguishness peering through the heartiness. I never could actually dislike my Aunt Kate, but she exasperated me thoroughly: plenty of people were silly enough to admire Hitler before 1939, but to persist in that admiration forty years later seemed to call for a superhuman kind of silliness that was all but repellent.1029

When Gauleiter Wagner opened the envelope Unity Mitford had left him, he panicked. He knew that the swastika badge engraved with Hitler's signature and her framed photo of Hitler were too important for her to casually leave with him.1030

Concern and uncertainty plagued both officials like Wagner in Germany and Unity's family back in Britain. Anxious letters flew between the other Mitford sisters, Tom, and cousins. In the United States, the press hounded Decca for information she did not have.1031 Unity had been on lists compiled by the British Foreign Consuls in Germany of foreign subjects whose whereabouts were unknown. Working through the American Ambassador, who had remained in Germany after Britain's left since the United States was not yet at war with Hitler, the British Foreign Office recorded that Unity's parents contacted them with their concerns. Rumours of a hospital stay came in early September, and the US Ambassador was able to confirm this as well as the attempted suicide by 9-10

1029 Barnard, 19.
1030 Lovell, 296-7.
1031 Letters to Violet Hammersley from 15 Sept 1939 and 30 Oct 1939/ Letter to Decca from 25 Oct 1939, Nancy Mitford, Love From Nancy, 83, 89, 87; Cousin Rudbin to Decca 3 undated letters from 1939 describing uncertainty and press around Unity (OSU Box 213: Folder 1712); Jessica Mitford, H & R, 198; Jessica Mitford, Decca, 32-9 (letters to Muv and Tom worrying over Boud's health in Germany and her safety on the outbreak of war); Pam to Decca letter from 30 Sept 1939 (OSU Box 208: Folder 1651); Tom to Decca on 6 Oct 1939 re: Teddy's news (OSU Box 209: Folder 1673); Letters from Nancy to Debo and Decca from 20-21 September speculate on Unity's fate (Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 150-1). See also Lovell, 312-313.
November. \textsuperscript{1032} Almasy's brother Laszlo (known to the family as “Teddy” and later famous as a character in Michael Ondaatje's \textit{English Patient}) wrote a letter and later wired them from neutral Budapest with news of her improving health. \textsuperscript{1033} Police interviews in the Bayerische Hauptstaatsarchiv indicate that the shots had taken place near a \textit{Luftgaukommando} (air district command) post. Obergefreiter Erwin Wincenty, Landesschützenkomp Flieger Michael Pallauf, and a tourist named Emil Knobloch all described their involvement in the aftermath. Wincenty helped state police secure the scene and knew the young woman had gone in an ambulance, but little else. Pallauf heard the shots but remained at his post. Knobloch helped police search for the cartridges and recorded that they found just two. \textsuperscript{1034}

Although Unity Mitford's decision to end her life in 1939 did not succeed, it deserves further examination. Relatives attributed the suicide to her feeling of being torn between two nations: Britain and Germany. \textsuperscript{1035} This is a reminder of Unity's devotion to Britain and her sympathy for British ultra-nationalist fascism in spite of all her obsessive love for Nazi Germany. The performance of her actions, however, is at least as important as the reason for them. The bullet in her right temple was a gesture characteristic of the warrior woman persona she had adopted during her interactions with Nazi Germany.

Women often attempt suicide with poison, but Unity Mitford chose a method that was
decidedly masculine and violent. In 1945, as the Third Reich fell to Allied Forces, many devout Nazis would take the same path. Christian Goeschels has studied the wave of suicides in those years, and he has found several reasons for the Nazis' particular affinity for suicide in the face of defeat. The Nazi language of heroic self-sacrifice, the inability to face a “complete breakdown of [the] norms and social values” Hitler and Nazism had inculcated in them since 1933, the notion articulated later by Magda Goebbels that “the world that will come after the Führer and National Socialism will not be worth living in” or was unimaginable, and the idea that suicide somehow provided an honorable alternative to admitting defeat that put power back in one's hands. Hitler himself took this route and tried to bring all of Germany with him in April 1945. His goal was to recreate total destruction as in Wagner's Götterdämmerung. Even as it suffered a mortal blow, Nazism did not relinquish its obsession with the power of aesthetics.

Just as some of Hitler's henchmen forestalled his final attempt at destroying the German nation, the men who found Unity Mitford in Munich's Englischer Garten prevented her death. Few expected her to live when she arrived at the clinic under Professor Magnus and his staff, but the internationally renowned medical professionals associated with the university in Munich lived up to their prestigious reputation. The surgeons cleaned the bullet wound, but otherwise treated her “conservatively.” Magnus felt removing the bullet still left in Mitford's brain was too risky. The bullet and bone fragments left from its entry were left in situ. Wagner's frantic search connected him

\[^{1036}\text{Christian Goeschel, } \textit{Suicide in Nazi Germany} \text{ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 170, 165-6, 154-5, 163, 149, and footnote 205.} \]

\[^{1037}\text{“Conclusion,” } \textit{Wagnerism in Europe}, 299.\]

\[^{1038}\text{Untitled article by Julius Schaub reproduced in Redesdale MS, 244. Pryce-Jones, 296-9. Quote from interview with Allan Sherwin interview. Sherwin also explained that even with today's technology, few neurosurgeons would risk the potential damage to the brain by extracting a bullet lodged there. See also Schaub biography gathered by Olaf Rose.} \]
with the unknown patient within twenty-four hours of her suicide attempt. He called Hitler on the frontlines of the Nazi invasion of Polish, and amid the chaos of war, the dictator took time to arrange her treatment.\footnote{Speer, \textit{Spandau}, 331. Diary entry from 1 January 1959. Albert Speer relates that even in Spandau, so many years after 1939, Hess was able to remember with him how Hitler interrupted work on the invasion to look after Unity Mitford.} Julius Schaub's wife came to watch over her, and Hitler visited the clinic several times. Unity Mitford was able to recognize the dictator, Gauleiter Wagner, and Julius Schaub and his wife only after some weeks. She had partial paralysis, vertigo, limited speech, and motor aphasia during this time. Eventually, she recovered enough to attempt suicide a second time by swallowing her newly returned swastika badge.\footnote{Lovell, 299.} When that failed, Unity Mitford and Hitler decided she should return to her family in Britain. Before she left, he personally paid all her hospital bills, which still reside in the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz.\footnote{Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, NS 10/38 Bl. 164-7; Pryce-Jones, 301. Rudi von Simolin, the friend who packed many of Unity's clothes and books that were sent with her to Switzerland, notes that Hitler also paid to store Unity's furniture until the end of the war, and Janos von Almasy kept her diaries. Biographer Nerin Gun writes that Hitler asked Eva Braun to purchase Unity's linen, “essential toilet articles,” flowers, and other items, but I was unable to find additional evidence to substantiate this. (Gun, 164).} Hitler sent her in a special ambulance train with medical personnel and Janos von Almasy to Bern, Switzerland. Unity phoned home to her family, and Debo and Muv made a difficult trek through France and Switzerland as the world waited for Britain and Germany's “Phoney War” to become real.\footnote{Lovell, 304-5.}

The trip from Switzerland to the family home in Britain was one long nightmare. When her family arrived, Unity still could not walk, and she had lost significant weight. The extreme sensitivity of her head meant she had refused to allow anyone to wash her hair or teeth. In an interview with author Mary Lovell, Debo explained that besides her
physical deterioration, “‘She had an odd vacant expression... she was a completely changed person, like somebody who has had a stroke... Her memory was very jagged and she could remember some things and not others. She recognized us though.’”

Travelling on the train jolted Unity's head wound, causing agony, but her mother managed to tidy her appearance. She could just walk a little when she landed at Folkestone in Britain. There had been press surrounding them at Calais, but they were nothing compared to the hordes of photographers and news reporters that swarmed at Folkestone. During this “Phoney War” that the Germans labelled the “Sitzkrieg,” there was very little military action to report. Some strikes at British shipping took place, but otherwise, the people of Britain and their press had no news to interrupt the tense, expectant environment. In the absence of war news, the story of Unity Mitford's return attracted more attention than it might have at another time. Her parents had received telephone calls from reporters eager for headlines before even they knew what had happened. Speculation had only grown. Irene Ravensdale recalls in her memoirs the rumours of suicide, and a Sunday Dispatch article blared, “‘Unity Mitford Shot Herself When War Was Declared,' Alleges Russian Prince.” The Times had carried confirmation that Unity was in a German hospital as early as October, but the rumours continued to spread. Even a respected intellectual like C.S. Lewis made crude jokes about

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1043 Ibid., 306 quoted from Debo interview with the Lovell at Chatsworth, 4 May 2000.
1044 Ibid., 307-8.
1045 Redesdale MS, 249-259.
1046 Curzon, 222. See Dispatch from 5 November 1939 (7) for an interview with Russian Prince Orloff via Belgrade. Rumours had indeed spread in Germany as well as in Britain. Reck-Malleczewen's diary notes the event in January 1940 and records that he is glad she has left (98-9). Nerin Gun's biography records that Eva Braun was similarly delighted at the removal of someone she considered a potential rival for Hitler's esteem (168). Goebbels remarked on the negative press around Unity's return in Britain in his diary on 7 February and 13 July 1940 (Goebbels Diaries: 1939-1941, translated by Fred Taylor, edited by Fred Taylor, 1st American ed. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1983).
Unity. In a letter to his brother on 19 November 1939, he writes, “I forgot to mention in my last letter that Unity Mitford wired her father Lord Redesdale ‘Don't worry about Hitler's secret weapon... know from personal inspection that it is N.B.G. ['no bloody good'] But perhaps this is already stale.”

That same month politician Duff Cooper's wife, Lady Diana Cooper, recorded, “The Daily Mail had a competition on 'What part of the war do you mind the most?' To my surprise 'Women in uniform' came first and 'Black-out' second or third. Some people simply put 'Unity Mitford.'”

The eager news crews at Folkestone for Unity's return got their chance when the ambulance Farve procured broke down. Three brief articles in the Times and front page photo spreads in the Daily Mirror, the Daily Express, and the News Chronicle followed. Many angrily questioned why a woman with known allegiance to an enemy country was allowed to return, how ill she truly was, and why guards seemed to protect her from press on her landing.

Two film clips by Pathé appeared in cinemas. One simply showed her landing. The second

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joked that, in response to pamphlets dropped over Germany by British pilots, Nazi Germany had sent home Unity Mitford.

Uncertainty surrounded Unity Mitford's brain injury. In the year after her return to Britain, Unity Mitford received the best possible care. Professor Cairns, the famous neurologist, conducted x-rays to ensure the bullet and bone fragments had not moved. She also recuperated at the Radcliffe Infirmary near Oxford, and a professor at Lord Nuffield's clinic visited to help her learn to read and write again.\textsuperscript{1050} These skills came back only slowly. The damage to the brain and the foreign objects left in situ helped to prevent full recovery, and her family described her as "child-like." Periods of clarity came and went. An interview with Allan Sherwin, Professor Emeritus of Neurology at McGill University, M.D., Ph.D., F.R.C.P.C., examined medical evidence from family descriptions in memoirs and letters as well as Cairns' descriptions in letters kept in the National Archives Home Office records and the letter to Dr. Crawford reprinted after Unity Mitford's death in the Pryce-Jones biography. Combining this evidence with Professor Sherwin's extensive knowledge and experience, Unity's symptoms seem consistent with those from other brain injuries of this type. She could walk and talk, but had problems with dressing apraxia, impulse control, facial swelling, memory, and incontinence at times. Writing full-length letters remained difficult as did carrying on stable conversation. Sherwin describes this as "evidence of frontal lobe dysfunction."\textsuperscript{1051}

\textsuperscript{1050}Pryce-Jones, 324-6; Redesdale MS, 260. See also Times 30 January 1940 "Miss Unity Mitford" statement issued regarding Unity Mitford's wounds treated by her doctors at Oxford. Letters to Decca from OSU Box 209: Folder 1674 show Unity's deteriorated handwriting and her exaggerated enthusiasm for child-like pleasures: "What heaven thing yous must be! I do hope you make a Grand Success of it. Oh, Boud, I have a Goat!" (one excerpt from 20 February 1940).

\textsuperscript{1051}Allan Sherwin interview 28 Feb. 2008-Professor Emeritus of Neurology at McGill University, M.D., Ph.D., F.R.C.P.C. See all letters after 1939 in Charlotte Mosley's The Mitfords for evidence of Unity's condition (starting on page154); Pryce-Jones, 324-6.
He also notes, “There is a high incidence of severe epilepsy after such trauma. She may have had occasional seizures,” but despite social embarrassment around the condition, if Unity did struggle with epilepsy, there were a few useful drugs that could have helped reduce seizures available by the Second World War.\footnote{1052}

Unity Mitford lived in Old Mill Cottage in High Wycombe with her mother. Muv became her primary caregiver with little outside help. Farve felt unable to cope with his daughter’s condition, and Unity's parents separated in large part because of this. He moved to another home and lived with a former servant as his mistress.\footnote{1053} The Mitford children strongly disapproved of his abandonment of their mother, and they worried about her constantly. Pam and Nancy both watched over Unity for brief spells so that their mother could take some small amount of time to herself.\footnote{1054} Besides her physical and mental health challenges, Unity went through periods of depression and moodiness that worried her family.\footnote{1055} She took an inexplicable dislike to her younger sister, Debo. As the only other sister still living at home, this made life incredibly uncomfortable.\footnote{1056}

\footnote{1052}{\textit{Ibid.}}

\footnote{1053}{Jessica Mitford, \textit{Conflict}, 154; Murphy, 110. Rift with parents, see: J & C Guinness, 443, and Charlotte Mosley, \textit{The Mitfords}, Debo to Diana from 19 August 1944, 202-3. In a BBC World War II archive piece entitled “Burford; My Very Favourite Place” recalled how one individual was billeted in Burford and Swinbrook during the evacuation of children from London. She/ he remembered “seeing the Mitford girls riding along in a pony and trap.” Betty (née Foord) Pemble, “Burford; My Very Favourite Place.” \textit{WW2 People’s War: An Archive of World War Two Memories}. BBC, April 28, 2005. Accessed 16 September 2007. \url{http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/57/a5613257}}

\footnote{1054}{Charlotte Mosley, \textit{The Mitfords}: Pam to Diana 27 Feb 1941(169-170) and Pam to Decca 8 June 1941 (176-7); Nancy (177-182 and 187-192)to Jessica 4 July 1941 and 17 October 1941; Pam to Diana 24 Dec 1941, Nancy to Diana on both 1 August 1942 and 28 November 1942; (218-9, 230-3, and 245) Debo to Diana 4 Oct 1945, Nancy to Diana 2 October 1946, and Nancy to Diana 2 Feb 1947, and Diana to Nancy 2 May 1948. Tom was also good at keeping Unity busy and happy. (For example, see James Lees-Milne, \textit{Diaries, 1942-1945}: Ancestral Voices and Prophesying Peace. 2nd ed. London: Chatto and Windus, 1975 & 1977; John Murray Publishers Ltd., 1998, entry for 27 Dec 1944 page 176, entry for 23 and 27 Dec 1944 in 394-5). Tom died in Burma in April 1945.}

\footnote{1055}{Charlotte Mosley, \textit{The Mitfords},154-9 (Letters from Debo to Jessica from Spring 1940) & 165-6 (Debo to Diana 4 October 1940).}

\footnote{1056}{Debo to Decca and Diana both letters from 24 June 1941, Charlotte Mosley, \textit{The Mitfords}, 177-182.}
fascination with Christian Scientists. Unity’s fascination with fascism wound up replaced by a fanatic obsession with religion. “Her great amusement during those years was to go from one Christian sect to another, from church to chapel, striking up acquaintances among Catholic priests, Protestant clergymen, Christian Science Readers and so forth, half promising her adherence to each and every one in turn.” Diana believed “[Unity] was genuinely seeking something or other.” This is not unusual for patients suffering brain trauma, but it could take a morbid tone. Several years later, she would plan and re-plan her future funeral service or hold eerie faux religious ceremonies in ruins on the family's Scottish island. Unity Mitford also asked family members and visitors to her home probing questions about whether or not suicide was sinful. This took the form of a fight with the local church when Unity wanted her dog buried in the churchyard with the inscription, “Blessed are the pure of heart.” Enlightening incidents include Mrs. Margaret Budd's memory of sitting at the restaurant in Harvey Nichols with Pam when Unity Mitford shocked them both by wandering in with her swastika pins on in the middle of the war. On another occasion, Charles Ritchie, then Second Secretary at the Canadian High Commission in London, met Unity at one of Nancy Mitford's parties:

She started the conversation by saying, 'I have just hit my left breast against a lamp-post as I was bicycling here.' She said, 'I tried to commit suicide when I was in Germany but now I am a Christian Scientist-- not that I believe a word of it, but

1057 Diana Mitford Mosley, 215-216.
1058 Ibid.
1059 See Allan Sherwin interview re: religiosity. Letter from Unity to Diana 29 Dec 1940,Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 169-170 [see also OSU box 209: folder 1674 Unity to Decca 7 October 1940]; Redesdale MS, 261. Also, interview with CM whose husband recalls going to these bizarre ceremonies as a child when he visited his grandmother and Unity; J & C Guinness, 610. Interestingly, while memories of her suicide often provoked confusion in her, Unity was able to still speak Boudledidge after her suicide attempt and did so for nephews on occasion. (J & C Guinness, 289; example of suicide confusion as well in Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 211/ 174-5/ Letter from Unity to Decca 10 May 1941).
1060 Interview with family member; Diana Mitford Mosley, 201.
1061 Margaret Budd, interview.
they saved my life so I feel I owe it to them to be one.' 'I hate the Czechs,' she said suddenly in a loud, emphatic voice, 'but that is natural-- they tried to arrest me and I had not done anything. I did not even have a Führer's picture in my suitcase as they said I had.' She has just recently [this was in late 1942] returned to England where her role as Hitler's English friend does not make her popular. I must say I liked her better than anyone else at the party. She has something hoydenish and rustic about her.  

At another of Nancy's parties, Unity randomly appeared and was wearing a moth-eaten dress backwards. Nancy felt more concern than embarrassment because her sister was ‘...very happy to be back, keeps on saying ‘I thought you all hated me but I don’t remember why.’ She said to me You are not one of those who would be cruel to somebody are you? So I said I was very much against that.’

Close friends and family understood that Unity Mitford's health and personality had altered irrevocably, but casual observers unfamiliar with her former self only saw her walking through Oxfordshire or London looking surprisingly fit on the surface. This led to serious questions from an anxious war-time population. Debate raged within the British government over whether Unity Mitford was genuinely hurt or she belonged in prison as a traitor to her country. In his diary entries in January and March 1940, future MI5 Deputy-Director General Guy Liddell expressed real skepticism about her head wound and believed the government ought to detain Unity. The film taken at Unity's landing attracted public criticism of a different sort. In an editorial in the Times, film agent Raymond Savage complained that the scenes of Unity and her grieved parents at Folkestone were inappropriate and cruel material for joking as the media had.

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1063 Nancy Mitford, Love from Nancy, 93, 118.

1064 KV/4/185, Guy Liddell's diary for 1-3 January 1940 (pages 233-240), 8 January 1940 (pages 248-250), and 29 January 1940 (pages 285-9). Also, KV/4/186 for diary from 2 March 1940 pages 353-4.
their showing an “abuse of freedom” and re-stated his opinion in a follow-up editorial
nine days later.\textsuperscript{1065} Parliament's House of Commons took up the subject around the time
of the second editorial. They asked difficult questions of Sir Oliver Stanley, then the
newly appointed Secretary of State for War. On 23-5 January, Members of Parliament
demanded to know how many guards protected Unity Mitford at Folkestone, how much
her return cost, what precautions the government took on her arrival in Britain, what steps
the government may have taken to facilitate her return, and whether Unity Mitford was to
remain in hospital until her presumed detention as a traitor.\textsuperscript{1066} The National Archives at
Kew contain related depositions from the security control officer at Folkestone trying to
establish that no special treatment had been issued in the form of unusual guards to
protect Unity Mitford from the press.\textsuperscript{1067} The House of Lords, in contrast to its
counterpart in Parliament at that time, debated the propriety of the film reels shown of
Unity Mitford's return.\textsuperscript{1068} The Lords ultimately condemned the film on the same grounds
as Savage's editorial, but the \textit{Times} both recorded this under the title “Film Censorship”
and featured a reply to Savage's letter defending the films in its issue on 25 January
1940.\textsuperscript{1069} Low's \textit{Evening Standard} cartoon for 27 January ridiculed the Lords marching in
their robes to defend Unity Mitford's honour, and Neville Chamberlain despaired that the

\textsuperscript{1065} "Abuse of Freedom," letter to the editor by Raymond Savage, \textit{Times} (London), 13 Jan 1940. Follow up
on 22 Jan 1940

\textsuperscript{1066} Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 23-5 Jan 1940. Info on Stanley from biographical appendix entry in
Cowling, 417 and Mowat, footnote 2 on page 347. On 24 Jan 1940, the \textit{Times} recorded these questions
in Parliament. According to Churchill's secretary, John Colville, the questions about his cousin's return
from Germany asked in the House of Commons embarrassed Winston. (John Colville, \textit{The Fringes of

\textsuperscript{1067} Folkestone arrival inquiry from January 1940 with deposition by security control officer there, and
copies of phone conversation between Janos/ Lord Redesdale from 24 Dec 1939 details arrival/
surveillance before and after as well as confirming no special treatment given KV 2/882/211314.

\textsuperscript{1068} Parliamentary debates, House of Lords, 24 Jan 1940.

\textsuperscript{1069} "Abuse of Freedom” reply to Raymond Savage by G.T. Cummins, letter to editor, \textit{Times} (London) 25
Jan 1940; “Film Censorship” \textit{Times} (London) in House of Lords report from 25 Jan 1940.
press and the Labour Party were so angry over the issue of Unity Mitford's return.1070

As 1940 progressed, France, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands fell to the Nazi war machine. Uncomfortable questions came up once again in the House of Commons about Unity Mitford's parents' request to bring her to their home on Inch Kenneth. Its location in the Hebrides along the Scottish coast was part of a "protected area," and Cabinet minutes reveal that, while Chamberlain's government did not consider Unity Mitford a threat to national security, they did not permit her to travel to Scotland because they were so fearful of the public outcry that might come from such a move.1071 Britain spent the summer of 1940 waiting for its turn to face a German attack. The island's citizens knew they were next after France fell, and anxiety reached fever pitch. Diana and Sir Oswald Mosley had been arrested and detained under Regulation 18b. (The Home Office did not allow Unity to visit her sister in prison until some time later.1072) The British government was eager to associate British fascism with a threat to security during this time period so that it would not provide a potential fifth column in the event of an invasion.1073 In Waiting for Hitler, Marge Gillies records the rumours and arrests that consumed popular press attention. Reminders to be on guard against spies and fear the government hid unpleasant truths behind wartime censorship led to fantastic stories of Nazis disguised as nuns, only caught after their hairy (presumably masculine)

1071Times (London) 9 March 1940. CAB 65/6/4, page 27 [War cabinet 59 (40)]. Another mention is in Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 11 July 1940.
1072Diana Mitford Mosley, 201 and 196-7; See Times 1 July 1940, "Lady Mosley Detained." Diana moved from prison to house arrest in August 1945, when she was able to rejoin her children. (Lovell, 413-4).
arms betrayed them. Other rumours linked back to Unity Mitford more directly. For example, after her arrest in November 1940, genuine spy Anna de Wolkoff claimed she knew all about Unity and Hitler through her time as Pam's dressmaker. Another woman distributed pro-German propaganda postcards using Unity Mitford's name, and one elderly German who saw his sons arrested as potential enemy aliens complained sarcastically, “I suppose being born in Hamburg, they are much greater enemies to the British people than Unity Mitford or Sir Oswald Mosley.” Complaints from citizens, requests for more information from Members of Parliament, and even one confusion of Unity and Debo that made it seem Unity was in Scotland poured in to the Home Office. The Oxfordshire Constabulary and its chief constable Sir Thomas Eric St. Johnston stayed in constant communication with the Home Office and Professor Cairns to keep the government updated on Unity Mitford's health.

While the ministers in London read medical reports reassuring them that Unity Mitford was in no condition to spy for Nazi Germany, the public only saw her strolling London and rural Oxfordshire as the bombs began to rain down during the Battle of Britain. Unity Mitford's aristocratic background encouraged suspicions that her rank and connections had prevented her arrest, and her gender only augmented popular scorn because there were largely unspoken hints that her political infidelity was akin to sexual infidelity. Historian Sonya Rose has documented how wartime Britain was deeply

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1076 ICCCR at Open University ERICSJ/1/1/3 1940-2. MP request for information on Mitford's freedom from 28 June 1940 in HO 144/21627/211314 and postcard in same file from 31 July 1940. June and July correspondence re: complaint from citizen that Unity was at Inch Kenneth and correspondence between Home Office, Argyllshire and Oxfordshire constabularies re: determined confusion with Debo are in HO 144/21627/211314. Further letters of complaint between 1940-1 summarized in HO files KV2/882/211314.
socially conservative about young women's sexual behavior. “Good-time girls” were the target of angry editorials and complaint because they had fun (often with American servicemen, during the later part of the war) instead of embracing the wartime ethic of austerity and hard work. When Unity Mitford went to her sister Debo's wedding to Andrew Cavendish in April 1941, questions about her detainment promptly followed in the House of Commons, and pictures appeared in the newspapers. Letters flew from the Homes Office, the Oxfordshire Constabulary, and Professor Cairns in April, June, August, and September. Other scandals came as Unity Mitford's mother allowed her to obtain a permit so she could drive. Although Muv had to be in the car with her and they remained in the countryside, potentially impaired peripheral vision from the suicide attempt make this a frightening image. Also, angry letters from citizens claiming that Unity was zooming about and picking up British airmen in her car came to the Home Office by December 1941. The Constabulary ultimately reported back that it was a case of a friendship with one married airman, an RAF test pilot named John Sidney Andrews, whom his superiors relocated to northern Scotland within a month, but there remained

1077 S. Rose, 71, 74, 79-80, 83. Unity's sisters also felt this prejudice, and even friends as distant as Cecil Beaton wrote how crowds “always believe I am a fifth columnist and bosom friend of Unity Mitford” as he did his war work photographing bomb damage. (Hugo Vickers, *Cecil Beaton: The Authorized Biography*, 1st Weidenfeld paperback ed. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1993), 246-7).  
1079 June 1941 Cairns letter to St. Johnston re: her care from infirmary, HO144/21627/211314. Cairns was director of Nuffield Department of Surgery. (St. Johnston worked at County Police Headquarters in Oxfordshire.). Also contained in ICCCR records. 24 April letter to Detective Inspector Harris at Home Office from Oxfordshire Chief Constable re: Mitford's health, HO 144/21627/211314. Aug and Sept inquiry from Home Secretary to Cairns in order to make sure her health was still bad and connected to Oxfordshire police, HO 144/21627/211314. The same and communication with St. Johnston in KV2/882/211314. June 1941 response to Debo wedding hype in which Redfern confirms Unity's bad health in April 1941, KV2/882/211314. See Barrow, 110. Letter from Unity to Diana 15 August 1941, Chatsworth Papers. Unity to Decca from 25 July 1941, OSU Box 209: Folder 1674; Lovell, 340-1; Charlotte Mosley, *The Mitfords*, 174 and 185 (Unity to Diana from 15 Oct 1941 and Unity to Diana 20 Nov 1941).
concern that public outcry would build over the matter. Surveillance of Unity Mitford was more careful than any of the men and women mailing in angry complaints realized. When eventually permitted to visit Diana at H.M. Prison Holloway, records of any even remotely political conversations with Diana appear in the Home Office files.

Public interest died down as the Soviet Union and the United States joined the war. Victories came to dominated headlines instead of invasion rumours. In summer 1944, Unity Mitford gained permission to travel to the family's Scottish island home. Locals near Mull and the Mitfords' boatman and household manager Neil MacGillivray recalled how Unity Mitford attracted less attention in rural Scotland. She still had Hitler photographs on the walls of her room, a swastika flag on the house's flag pole, and German marches on the gramophone, but he also remembered, “the bullet 'affected her brain' so that she would be 'at all kind of silly things.' One time she set about making a cake by breaking four or five dozen eggs but adding no flour-- an outrage at the end of the war when eggs were rationed. But the people of Mull didn't judge Unity.”

Complaints came from citizens much less often, and the last parliamentary inquiry came on 5 December 1945. The war was over, but the House of Commons demanded one last time if Unity Mitford would be prosecuted for “consorting with the enemy.”

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1080 See Sherwin interview re: vision problems and December letter passed on from an MP to the Home Office re: UM complaint about airman with response in Jan 1942 from Oxfordshire Constabulary, HO 144/21627/211314.
1081 Surveillance from 12 May 1941 at H.M. Prison Holloway and record of conversation, HO144/21627/211314. The politics, in this case, had to do with Esmond Romilly's missing plane.
1082 Articles in the Sunday Herald and Scotsman from online. Letter from Home Office confirming permission for Unity Mitford to live at Inch Kenneth from 18 August 1944 plus press articles from Sunday Pictorial, Sunday Dispatch and Daily Telegraph re: Scotland in HO 144/21627/211314: l and KV2/ 882/ 211314.
1083 Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 5 Dec 1945; 1 August 1944 citizen letter in HO 144/21627/ 22314 and another five page letter from 10 August 1944 “from one of the people;” complaint from 21 May 1945 re: Unity HO 144/21627/211314.
Unity Mitford’s life changed very little between the end of the war and her death in 1948. She continued to spend much of her time in Scotland, and her mother continued to act as her primary caregiver. It was in Scotland that she took a chill in May 1948. Vomiting and a fever plagued her, along with severe headaches. After a doctor’s treatment at home and at least one prior hospital visit, doctors felt her condition still had not improved as expected. They diagnosed meningitis. During an interview, Professor Sherwin explains that there would have been a significant risk of meningitis since the time of her suicide attempt. The bullet likely left the path from her sinuses to her brain that the pneumococci bacterium took, making the jump from pneumonia to meningitis. As the ambulance arrived, Unity Mitford experienced a seizure, and late that evening, she died in West Highland Cottage Hospital, Oban. Devastated by her death, Decca later voiced her thoughts in her memoir, Hons & Rebels:

I pondered over the unsolvable riddle: why had she, to those of us who knew her the most human of people, turned her back on humanity and allied herself with those grinning beasts and their armies of robot goose-steppers? …How could Boud, a person of enormous natural taste, an artist and poet from childhood, have embraced their crude philistinism? She had been an eccentric all her life, completely outside the bounds of normal behavior, uncontrollable by governesses, parents and the headmistress of her boarding school…; yet she had enthusiastically adopted the most deadeningly conformist of all philosophies…. It always seemed to me that this last really conscious act of her life, the attempt at self-destruction, was a sort of recognition of the extraordinary contradictions in which she found herself, that the declaration of war merely served as the occasion for her action, which would in any case have been inevitable sooner or later.

1084 Pryce-Jones, 324-6. In a letter to Diana, Nancy mentions that Muv consulted Cairns on the cause of death, and letters between Cairns and the surgeon treating Unity Mitford at the time of her death indicate the esteemed doctor agreed with the local diagnosis of her cause of death. (23 June 1948, Charlotte Mosley, The Mitfords, 246).
1085 Allan Sherwin interview.
1086 Pryce-Jones, 324-6. Obituaries in Times on 31 May 1948, and her parents issued thanks for the condolences they had received on her death in a Times “court circular” on 14 June 1948. DNB entry by Richard Davenport-Hines.
In some ways, Decca summarized the question at the heart of human reactions to an inhuman ideology.

It is impossible to say what Unity Mitford’s reaction might have been to the events of the war and the mass murder that followed the violent prejudice and harassment in Nazi Germany. No one can know if she would have recognized the contradictions Decca discusses. Modern mythologization of Unity has made her into someone stupid, scheming, or spoiled. As recently as 2007, a wave of articles beginning with Martin Bright’s *New Statesman* blog claimed there was evidence Unity Mitford had given birth to “Hitler’s love child.”

No evidence but one second-hand memory supports this view, but the sexualization of Unity’s relationship with Hitler by the media is certainly nothing new. It is still hard to understand why a young British woman of aristocratic background would leave her home to follow Hitler through Germany. Mitford is a critical witness to Nazi Germany’s most important figures, she illustrates one woman’s reaction to class and gender barriers, but what does she clarify about fascism’s dangerous appeal? Charlotte Mosley said in an interview that the Mitfords appeal to readers because of their “whole-heartedness.” Unity Mitford was a whole-hearted dreamer, who refused to accept the real world consequences of actions and ideals. She chose not to see her black and white worldview as the cause of suffering for millions, but instead, she believed the epic dramas staged in fascist propaganda. This led her to condone

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1089 Anonymous close family member and Charlotte Mosley, 29 October 2008.
unforgivable acts of hatred and violence. Unity Mitford had energy, vision, courage, humour, and artistic talent, but she spent it all in pursuit of a terrible cause. In fact, those personality traits encouraged her embrace of fascism in a perverse way. St. Mary’s Swinbrook has a churchyard where Unity Mitford’s headstone reads, “Say not the struggle naught availeth.” Her mother chose the epithet both because it had been a favorite poem of her daughter and to issue some sort of reassurance her life had not been lived in vain.1090 Some might view the choice as provocative. Perhaps a better view of the words is to admit that the struggle to understand Unity Mitford’s motivations is a struggle to understand the attractions of fascism. There is no simple, easy answer, but as fascist movements continue to emerge, genocide continues to take place, and troubling leaders still provoke cultish devotion, the struggle to understand the women and men behind them remains critical to preventing such horrors.

1090 Redesdale MS, 261.
Summary

Unique access to Unity Mitford's life and particularly her letters illustrate the energy and aesthetics of fascism in the 1930s. While her life is a specific example of one individual who had a close friendship with Hitler, she exposes some of fascism's most frighteningly appealing aspects at the same time that she gives hints as to what normative behaviors were for someone of her class and gender. In many ways, she is an exception to rules. In others, she conforms perfectly. Ultimately, Mitford is an opportunity to focus through a window to a time period that is both lost to history and an opportunity to learn about a danger that has yet to pass. Arts and ideals have extraordinary power-- even in the wrong hands.
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