

"Mehr Sein als Scheinen"

The *Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten* (NPEAs/NAPOLAs) in the Memoirs of Former Students

Conceived as boarding schools for boys between the ages of ten and eighteen, the *Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten*, also known as the NAPOLAs or NPEAs, were one of the main avenues through which the education of the future National Socialist elite took place. In contrast to the Adolf-Hitler Schulen, the Ordensburgen and Feldafing, the NAPOLAs were not a mere NS-construct but built on the traditions of the Prussian Cadet Schools (*Kadettenanstalten*). They were also partially modeled after the English Public Schools. As state institutions, they were subordinated to the *Reichsministerium für Erziehung und Wissenschaft* led by Bernhard Rust, former Gauleiter of Südhannover-Braunschweig. The forty-fourth birthday of Hitler in 1933 served as impetus for the transformation of the *Staatliche Bildungsanstalten* in Plön, Potsdam and Köslin into the first three NAPOLAs. The outbreak of war in 1939 marked the expansionist phase of these schools. The plan to found 100 NPEAs by 1945 failed. Despite that only 35 such schools were set up (some sources list up to 42), in the minds of the population and many adolescent boys, they became the desired passage to masculinity, prestige and success.

Relying on a combination of memoirs, state documents and selected secondary literature, the thesis investigates the character of these institutions and NS-elite training from the standpoint of both, the regime and the students who attended them. By tracing the diverse avenues through which an elite consciousness was instilled, it challenges the prevailing image of the NPEAs as institutions of terror and illustrates how the schools reflected the complexities, improvisations and contradictions of the National Socialist regime.