

Buckingham Palace orders inquiry, threatens legal action over Nazi salute film

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A grainy video—17 seconds long—was published as an exclusive on Saturday by Rupert Murdoch's *Sun* newspaper, under the heading "Their Royal Heilness," igniting a political firestorm. The film depicts a young Queen Elizabeth and members of her family giving a Nazi salute.

Thought to have been taken in 1933, it shows the queen, then aged six, playing with her three-year old sister Margaret, her mother and her uncle, then Prince Edward.

Smiling at the camera, the queen's mother makes a Nazi salute. Following her lead, Elizabeth mimics the salute, which is then repeated by her mother and uncle.

Buckingham Palace reacted furiously to publication of the footage, ordering an inquiry into security breaches and threatening legal action over copyright infringement.

The family were "playing and momentarily referencing a gesture many would have seen from contemporary news reels."

"No one at that time had any sense how it would evolve," a spokesperson said. "To imply anything else is misleading and dishonest. The Queen is around six years of age at the time and entirely innocent of attaching any meaning to these gestures."

While the children are innocent, the same cannot be said of the adults.

Commenting in the *Guardian*, historian Alex Von Tunzelmann said, "It's completely revisionist to start saying people didn't know what the Nazis were doing. Nobody thinks the Queen is a Nazi, but that's not the point. It's a myth that no one knew in the 1930s what the Nazis were about... a lot of people in the aristocracy thought this was the perfect obstacle to the threat of communism."

In January 1933, the year the film was apparently made, Adolf Hitler was made chancellor of Germany. Two months later, he was granted dictatorial powers.

For the German bourgeoisie, Hitler's fascists were

indeed seen as the necessary means to defeat the threat of communism, through war against the Soviet Union and mass repression of the working class at home.

Hitler had set out this aim in his *Mein Kampf* (first published in 1925). Within months of taking office, the Nazi regime had begun the mass round-up of communist and socialist workers, opening the infamous Dachau labour camp, and began banning Jews from government, health and legal professions. In July the De-Naturalisation Law revoked the citizenship of naturalised Jews.

The queen's uncle Edward would have been well aware of Hitler's mission. He had welcomed Hitler's accession, saying, "It is the only thing to do. We will have to come to it, as we are in great danger from communists too."

The then Prince of Wales was reportedly a sympathiser of the British Union of Fascists, founded by Sir Oswald Mosley, who hoped to emulate the German dictator.

For his part, Hitler wanted an alliance with Britain against Russia, and actively sought out support. Karina Urbach, author of *Go-Betweens for Hitler* details how the Fuhrer deployed members of the German aristocracy for secret missions to win their British royal cousins to this end.

Urbach records how, after Edward acceded to the throne in January 1936, the Anglo-German Duke of Coburg was able to report to Hitler, the "British King sees an alliance with Germany as a necessity. It has to become a leitmotiv of British foreign policy."

Edward is said to have sought a secret meeting with Hitler, and even threatened to give up the throne if war was declared. He was forced to abdicate, however, in December 1936, in favour of his brother, George VI.

Officially, Edward's abdication was caused by his desire to marry Wallis Simpson, an American divorcee. More critical, however, were concerns that Simpson was a Nazi collaborator who was passing on British government secrets to Berlin.

Just ten months later, Edward and Wallis were invited on an all-expenses paid visit to Germany, where they were photographed fawning on Hitler at his Berchtesgaden retreat.

Abdication did not end the plotting. Urbach has found evidence in Russian and Spanish archives that Edward discussed a secret alliance with Hitler in 1940, in which he would be installed as king after Nazi invasion. Edward told a Spanish diplomat, “This war has to end at all costs and the best way to end the war would be for the Germans to bomb Britain.”

In 1996, a 60-year old Foreign Office memorandum released by the Public Record Office confirmed Edward’s plan to be puppet king. Dated July 7, 1940 and sent from occupied Czechoslovakia to Sir Alexander Cadogan, permanent secretary at the Foreign Office, the memo reports “that the Germans expect assistance from the Duke and Duchess of Windsor [Edward and Wallis], the latter desiring at any price to become Queen. The Germans have been negotiating with her since June 27.

“The status quo in England expect an understanding to form an anti-Russian alliance.

“The Germans propose to form an opposition government with the Duke of Windsor, having first changed public opinion by propaganda. The Germans think King George will abdicate during the attack on London.”

There has been a massive effort to conceal the full extent of Edward’s treason, which continues to this day. But in response to what is known, the official narrative is that Edward was just a bad apple.

The clip, however, is especially damaging because of the involvement of the queen’s parents, George VI and his wife, Elizabeth. As historian Christopher Wilson noted, “It is quite clear from the footage that it is the cameraman—the future King George VI—who is encouraging first Elizabeth, then her mother, and lastly the Prince of Wales, to make the Nazi salute.”

Urbach records that after Edward’s abdication, Hitler courted George VI, with one German diplomat reporting, “If he remains on the throne, the German attitude will be useful since he has great sympathies for the Third Reich.”

Following the annexation of Austria in March 1938, Hitler’s aristocratic go-between held several discussions in London, Urbach explains, to talk to “Bertie [George] and Elizabeth... His mission was successful; Hitler got the Sudetenland.”

George VI and the queen mother were strident supporters of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain’s

policy of “appeasement” with Nazi Germany—aimed at giving Hitler a free hand against the Soviet Union.

At any rate, should Edward’s ambitions have achieved fruition in 1940, it is likely he would have found significant support for a Vichy-style regime from within the ruling elite.

Those seeking common cause with the Nazis read like a veritable “Who’s Who?” They include Lord Brocket, Lord Redesdale, Lord Londonderry (Churchill’s cousin), the newspaper magnate Lord Rothermere, the Duke of Westminster, Marquess of Graham and the fifth Duke of Wellington.

In May 1939, the secret elite Right Club was founded by the Scottish Unionist MP Archibald Ramsay, who described its objective as being “to oppose and expose the activities of organised Jewry.” It is thought to have had more than 200 members from within the heart of the British establishment.

The *Sun* is now leading a campaign to open up the royal archives. Some have suggested that its exclusive is motivated by Murdoch’s long-standing “republican” sympathies. Others have speculated that the film could have been among those found in Edward’s villa near Paris after his death. The property and its contents were bought by former Harrods owner Mohammed Al Fayed, the father of Dodi Fayed, who died with Princess Diana in a car crash in August 1997.

Much still needs to be revealed. But the re-emergence of such politically embarrassing historical truths, ones long carefully buried beneath a mountain of censorship and lies, must reflect more contemporary and profound conflicts and disagreements—that may go far beyond those already offered up as an explanation.



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