Georgetown at Nuremberg
Edmund Walsh and the Curious Case of Karl Haushofer

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Introduction

Beginning in the mid-1940s, American scholars condemned the Nuremberg Trials as biased and unfair. Among other critiques, they challenged the International Military Tribunal’s (IMT) nation-state composition, namely its lack of neutral judges. As targets of German aggression, the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union could not objectively establish Nazi guilt; without the staid hand of “disinterested parties,” prejudice would rule the day. “The crime [against peace] which is asserted,” American jurist Charles Wyzanski protested, “is tried not before a dispassionate … bench, but before the very persons alleged to be victims.”¹ Nuremberg judge Norman Birkett likewise placed such complaints among “the principal matters upon which … criticism has already centered.”² Twenty years later, philosopher Hannah Arendt and Yale University Press editor Eugene Davidson agreed.³ “In the treatment of the defendants and their counsel,” wrote the latter, “it was often evident that a long, bitter war had just ended between the countries represented by the prosecution and the judges and the country represented by the defeated.”⁴ Historian István Deák criticized the trials for similar reasons.⁵

Nuremberg supporters actively confronted their opponents. “In the existing state of international law,” Cambridge University professor Hersch Lauterpacht explained, “it is probably unavoidable that the right of punishing war criminals should be unilaterally assumed by the victor. This is so in particular when … there are few neutral states left capable of ensuring the

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⁴ Davidson, The Trial of the Germans, 592.
impartial administration of justice.”

Herbert Wechsler, a legal expert at Columbia University, turned the critique against its proponents:

No one who examines the record and the judgment, as most of the commentators have not, will question the disinterestedness of the Tribunal; and those who argue that disinterestedness is inherently impossible in this situation may ask themselves why nations that can produce such impartial critics should be intrinsically incapable of producing equally impartial judges.

Colonel Murray Bernays and American Chief Prosecutor Robert Jackson similarly defended their colleagues, followed by Russian scholar A. M. Larin in 1995. But the debate focused exclusively on Allied judges. Most officials—advisers, consultants, and researchers—avoided scrutiny.

After signing the Nuremberg Charter in 1945, selecting defendants became the Allies’ most important task, compounded by the fact that many senior Nazis killed themselves when Berlin fell. This part of the process demands additional inquiry, both for its significance and its complexity. The unknown Allied investigators who recommended prosecuting twenty-two major criminals played an integral role at Nuremberg, and challenged the fabric of international law.

More than Jackson or even the judges, they decided who lived and who died. But each of them harbored potential bias. Like everyone else, they had suffered immensely during the war, and

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9 Adolf Hitler, Minister of Propaganda Josef Goebbels, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler, and party leader Martin Bormann all committed suicide in May or June 1945.
10 They provided the evidence that sent twelve men to the gallows.
their personal agendas did not always match the charter’s. A timely case study proves how dangerous those differences became.\footnote{Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service will celebrate its centennial in 2019.}

Despite minimal name recognition, German Major General Dr. Karl Haushofer (1869-1946) played a noteworthy role in the rise of National Socialism. Introduced to Adolf Hitler by Rudolf Hess in May 1920, he provided scientific justification for some of the future despot’s murderous policies. Ideas like “living space” (Lebensraum) and the re-conquest of “German” territory—Austria, the Sudetenland, and Memel, among others—figured heavily in his work, united by the theory of “German geopolitics” (Deutsche Geopolitik).\footnote{The study of geography’s influence on humanity for the purposes of guiding foreign policy. The term Geopolitik applies only to Haushofer’s specific worldview.} Nevertheless, he maintained peripheral status throughout the Nazi period, and found himself ostracized by 1938. In the United States, however, journalists, scholars, and filmmakers embellished his influence to the extreme. Rev. Edmund A. Walsh, S.J. (1885-1956), who founded Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service (SFS), joined them in 1940 with a powerful speech denouncing Geopolitik. His work eventually led him to Nuremberg as an expert consultant, where he built a preliminary case against Haushofer. Motivated by anticommunism, he successfully tarnished the general’s legacy and saved geopolitics.

The following examines Walsh and Haushofer, myths about the general’s relationship with Hitler, and Germany as an ideological battleground. Chapter I explores Haushofer’s early life and asks whether he influenced the Nazis. The answer is complicated: though his ideas found clear expression in National Socialism, he never wielded political power and often contradicted the Führer, albeit privately. Chapter II contrasts that with the “Haushofer Myth,” a questionable theory promoted by arrogant elites; far from ambiguous, the general became a criminal on par
with Hitler. Chapter III covers Walsh. Fiercely anti-Soviet, he considered geopolitics the key
to defeating communism, and despised Haushofer for giving it “a bad name.”
He therefore embraced the myth, using it to divorce Geopolitik, which many considered a tool of Nazism, from
the discipline at large. Chapter IV subsequently explains how Walsh manipulated the Nuremberg
process to discredit Haushofer and save geopolitics, all in the name of national security.

This thesis relies heavily on primary sources, including over fifteen hundred original
manuscripts, many discussed here for the first time. Material written by, or associated with,
Haushofer, Walsh, and Jackson, plays a critical role. Translated excerpts, documents, letters, and
diaries reveal Haushofer’s political convictions and relationship with the Reich, while most
information on Walsh comes from the Booth Family Center for Special Collections at
Georgetown. Significant pieces include handwritten “Geopolitics” lecture notes (1942-1945), a
report on Haushofer submitted to Jackson in September 1945, and three pocket-sized journals
(1945-1946). Walsh wrote two books after the war, as well. The Library of Congress’s Jackson
collection similarly establishes the American legal team’s opinion on Haushofer. Nazi leaders
and other individuals close to the trial provide context.

In addition to personal papers, sources from “outside observers” in the United States—
reporters, professors, and filmmakers—figure prominently. The New York Times, the Los Angeles

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17 Raphael Lemkin, for example, who famously coined the term “genocide” to describe the Holocaust.
Times, and The Washington Post published articles about Haushofer, as did Current History and Forum, LIFE, Reader’s Digest, and TIME. Short documentaries, namely Plan for Destruction (1943) and Why We Fight: The Nazis Strike (1943), also advanced false narratives. So, too, did respected scholars, among them Herman Beukema (United States Military Academy, West Point), Werner Cahnman (University of Chicago), Robert Strausz-Hupé (University of Pennsylvania), Hans Weigert (University of Pittsburgh), and Derwent Whittlesey (Harvard University). Together, they spread and legitimized the Haushofer Myth.

Along with School of Foreign Service catalogues, secondary sources play a significant role. Although some authors, like Rev. Louis Gallagher, S.J., and Donald Norton, criticized Haushofer through the 1960s, by the early 2000s most acknowledged that wartime writers exaggerated his influence. Despite choosing provocative titles, Holger Herwig agreed, and recently published a trove of new primary source material. Nevertheless, misconceptions persist.

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For example, Haushofer’s so-called “Institute for Geopolitics” (*Institut für Geopolitik*), cited in several contemporary works, never existed.\(^1\) One must therefore treat material on him with extreme care. The same can be said of Walsh, though only two books cover his life in detail.\(^2\)

Despite the time researchers have spent on Haushofer, and to a lesser extent, Walsh, few have examined their experiences at Nuremberg. Walsh’s geopolitical history—his background, biases, and beliefs—likewise escapes scrutiny.\(^3\) Haushofer’s case also elicited input from numerous actors, and so uniquely exposed a wide cross-section of American legal conduct before the trial. While filling a scholarly void, this thesis adds nuance to the Nazi war crimes process.

Walsh left the United States for Nuremberg in August 1945 blinded by the desire to protect geopolitics. To that end, he placed a Nazi sympathizer whose ideas probably influenced Hitler, on the same moral level as men who planned the Holocaust. His dramatic narrative, which he believed because he had to, raises serious questions about how organizations like the International Criminal Court (ICC) vet their staff. Legitimacy depends on whether member-states believe the ICC prosecutes cases fairly. If investigators provide faulty information or weak defendants to advance personal agendas, trust will collapse and so will the court. Walsh’s crusade thus serves as a warning: be careful with “expert consultants,” lest they put justice at risk.

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\(^1\) Parker, *Western Geopolitical Thought*, 57; Black, *Geopolitics and the Quest for Dominance*, 157; Murphy, “Hitler’s Geostrategist,” 2-3.


\(^3\) Only McNamara and Tuathail cover it at length.
I. The Real Haushofer
A Study in Ambiguity

“It once lay within the strength of his will to plunge the daemon back into its durance. But my father broke away the seal. He did not see the rising breath of evil. He let the daemon soar into the world.”
- Albrecht Haushofer

Karl Haushofer played an ambiguous role in twentieth-century Germany. On the one hand, he supported Adolf Hitler and openly endorsed flagrant violations of international law. A respected professor, he offered educated voters rational, scientific reasons to back Nazi imperialism, expressed through “German geopolitics” (Deutsche Geopolitik). He also justified expansion in Central and Eastern Europe, and promoted military alliances with Russia and Japan. At the same time, he wielded no political power, had little direct impact on foreign policy, and found himself permanently ostracized from Nazi circles in 1938. Haushofer never became an “epitome of evil,” instead occupying a hazy middle ground between complicity and resistance. Hitler adopted some components of Geopolitik and ignored others; Haushofer supported the government, but also opposed it. Contradiction defined his relationship with the Nazis.

None of that nuance crossed the ocean. Throughout World War II, American books, newspapers, magazines, and films portrayed Hitler as Haushofer’s puppet, a demagogue controlled from the shadows. In the face of rampant exaggeration, this chapter relies on contemporary sources, emphasizing Haushofer’s early life, worldview, and influence on the Third Reich. It thus seeks to construct a factual account of his collaboration with, and hostility toward, Nazi Germany. To understand the lies, and why they matter, one must first expose the truth.

2 See Chapter II for a complete analysis.
Before the Reich

Born on 27 August 1869, Haushofer enjoyed a comfortable childhood in Munich. As a young adult, he took high school classes with future Nazi Franz Ritter von Epp and enlisted in the Royal Bavarian Army. His conservative background, combined with a strict education in geography and language, served him well: he became an officer in 1889, entered the Bavarian Artillery and Engineer School in 1890, and enrolled at the War Academy (Kriegsakademie) in 1895. He subsequently married his lifelong partner, Martha Mayer-Doss, on 8 August 1896, and joined the Operations Division of the Bavarian General Staff in 1899. After returning to the War Academy as a military history professor in 1904, he accepted an assignment to study Imperial Japan three years later. With Martha at his side, Haushofer set off for the Far East, touring the British Empire along the way. His experience proved transformative.\footnote{Herwig, \textit{The Demon of Geopolitics}, 2-6, 12-16; Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, \textit{Karl Haushofer: Leben und Werk, Band I} (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1979), 25.}

The Haushofers arrived in Nagasaki on 19 February 1909, and spent the next six months acclimating to Japanese culture. Karl found much to admire, from Tokyo’s crushing victory over Tsar Nicholas II in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), to Japan’s Meiji Restoration (1868), which he compared to German unification (1871).\footnote{Herwig, \textit{The Demon of Geopolitics}, 19-21.} In a May 1910 report, he specifically praised the empire’s education system, warning his superiors in Munich:

\begin{quote}
If, over the course of the next decade, we do not bring about a totally different maturing of our youth from school to army by way of conviction and example, then in the areas of future recruitment and military development we will fall behind what is happening here [Japan], perhaps to an irreparable degree.\footnote{Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv-Kriegsarchiv, Munich, Germany, Generalstab 237, quoted in Holger H. Herwig, \textit{The Demon of Geopolitics: How Karl Haushofer “Educated” Hitler and Hess} (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 26.}
\end{quote}
Haushofer returned to Bavaria in July 1910 and shared his research with German officials, crediting geography and “blood” with Japan’s dominance in eastern Asia. At Martha’s behest, he wrote “On Japan” (Dai Nihon) three years later, organizing everything he learned into a study of geopolitics. As they would for the next three decades, borders figured prominently.

Like many Germans, Haushofer greeted World War I (1914-1918) with surprise. The assassination of Habsburg Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo, on 28 June 1914, shocked Europe. Germany’s unwavering friendship with Austria-Hungary, and Russia’s ironclad support for Serbia, quickly dragged Britain, France, the Ottoman Empire, Italy, and countless smaller powers into a disastrous war. Despite his age and weak health, Haushofer refused to miss it. Over the next four years, he fought as an artillery officer on both fronts, winning numerous medals and receiving the brevet rank of major general.

Haushofer’s experience during World War I shaped his geopolitical views. In early 1918, he laid out Europe’s future, demanding for the Reich Courland, Riga, Lithuania, and Alsace-Lorraine, as well as Austrian control over Poland, an “enlarged” Bulgaria, and the “smooth evacuation” of all German colonies, presumably in East Africa. He likewise promoted a tripartite alliance between Berlin, Moscow, and Tokyo, in hopes of breaking British power and avoiding another two-front war. Neither recommendation came as a surprise, since Haushofer often emphasized the implications of earth’s physical terrain, or space, on politics. He therefore

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7 Martha often helped her husband write and transcribe his work.
9 Herwig, The Demon of Geopolitics, 56.
10 Jacobsen, Karl Haushofer, I:129.
11 Jacobsen, Karl Haushofer, I:132.
attributed Germany’s crushing defeat in 1918 to its schools: young men did not understand geography, and thus could not use it to their advantage.\textsuperscript{12} As a cure, he prescribed \textit{Geopolitik}, which preached the practical application of geographical knowledge to German foreign policy.

Making Geopolitik

\textit{Geopolitik} did not develop in a vacuum. On the contrary, Haushofer reinterpreted old ideas and applied them to Germany. Among his predecessors, Alfred Mahan (1840-1914), Halford Mackinder (1861-1947), Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904), and Rudolf Kjellén (1864-1922) made particularly significant contributions to the rise of geopolitics, a “pseudo-scientific” amalgamation of politics and geography asserting the primary influence of physical factors on human development—and laying “the foundation for a program of political action.”\textsuperscript{13} (Political geography differed from geopolitics like Darwinism differed from Social Darwinism, in that it emphasized “the investigation of conditions” rather than their implementation.)\textsuperscript{14} From this broad discipline sprang Haushofer’s \textit{Geopolitik}, which argued Germany should wield geography as a military weapon. His theories justified much of World War II, and thus deserve special attention.

Writing in 1890, American naval officer Alfred Mahan felt a nation’s fleet determined its place in the world. As he argued in \textit{The Influence of Sea Power upon History}:

\begin{quotation}
The profound influence of sea commerce upon the wealth and strength of countries was clearly seen long before the true principles which governed its growth and prosperity were detected. To secure to one’s own people a disproportionate share of such benefits, every effort was made to exclude others, either by the peaceful
\end{quotation}

\textsuperscript{12} Robert Houghwout Jackson Papers: Box 104, Folder 10, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C.
\textsuperscript{13} David Thomas Murphy, \textit{The Heroic Earth: Geopolitical Thought in Weimar Germany, 1918-1933} (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1997), 2-3; Derwent Whittlesey, \textit{German Strategy of World Conquest} (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1942), 79.
legislative methods of monopoly or prohibitory regulations, or, when these failed, by direct violence.\textsuperscript{15}

Mahan extended his theory to physical location, noting that states with easy access to the sea and few land borders, like England, had “an advantage as compared with a people one of whose boundaries is continental.”\textsuperscript{16} Geography in fact played a critical role in the rise of empires:

The geographical position of a country may … give the further strategic advantage of a central position and a good base for hostile operations against its probable enemies. … If, in addition to facility for offence, Nature has so placed a country that it has easy access to the high sea itself, while at the same time it controls one of the great thoroughfares of the world’s traffic, it is evident that the strategic value of its position is very high.\textsuperscript{17}

Mahan’s thesis—that naval power and a country’s location determined its political might—set the stage for geopolitics, which made an even stronger claim: knowing the connection between geography and human development, leaders ought to pursue specific goals.

Mahan’s emphasis on the sea did not go unchallenged. A reader in geography at the University of Oxford, British thinker Halford Mackinder led the opposition, asserting the primacy of land in relation to power. His ideas found their clearest expression in two seminal works, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” a paper he presented to the Royal Geographical Society on 25 January 1904, and Democratic Ideals and Reality, published in 1919. The former established his influential “Heartland” theory, which underpinned Geopolitik.\textsuperscript{18}

Mackinder sent world leaders a strong message in early 1904, arguing that the acquisition of physical territory would determine future distributions of power. The Briton’s determinist attitude informed his groundbreaking geopolitical views, which contradicted Mahan’s. Instead of

\textsuperscript{16} Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 29.
\textsuperscript{17} Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 30-32.
\textsuperscript{18} Haushofer cited Mahan, Mackinder, Ratzel, and Kjellén as inspiration after the war.
the sea, he placed “Euro-Asia”—Russia and Central Asia—at the center of world politics. “The spaces within the Russian Empire and Mongolia are so vast,” he wrote, “and their potentialities in population, wheat, cotton, fuel, and metals so incalculably great, that it is inevitable that a vast economic world … will there develop inaccessible to oceanic commerce.”

Ruled well, Russia could make itself impregnable. And thus, Mackinder concluded:

> Is not the pivot region of the world’s politics that vast area of Euro-Asia which is inaccessible to ships, but in antiquity lay open to the horse-riding nomads, and is today about to be covered with a network of railways? … In the world at large [Russia] occupies the central strategical position held by Germany in Europe. She can strike on all sides and be struck from all sides, save the north.

On the periphery of this great landmass, Mackinder located an inner crescent—Germany, Austria, Turkey, India, and China—and an outer crescent—Britain, South Africa, Australia, the United States, Canada, and Japan. A Russian alliance with the inner crescent, particularly Germany, would spell disaster for the rest of the world.

Mackinder expanded his Euro-Asia thesis in *Democratic Ideals*, which gave the region a proper name. The Eurasian “Heartland,” he argued, covered approximately one-third of the “World-Island,” defined as continental Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and continental Asia. From this dramatic reinterpretation of geography, which completely disregarded North, South, and Central America, Mackinder argued: “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland: Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island: Who rules the World-Island commands the World.” Aspiring powers, he suggested, should therefore befriend or conquer Russia.

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23 Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, 150.
Of all prewar geographers, Mackinder had the greatest impact on Geopolitik.\footnote{Haushofer acknowledged his influence during and after the war. See Karl Haushofer, 	extit{Weltpolitik von heute} (Berlin: 1934), 48 ff., quoted in Andreas Dorpalen, 	extit{The World of General Haushofer: Geopolitics in Action} (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1942), 127-129.}

Haushofer’s insistence that Hitler make peace with the Soviet Union depended on the Briton’s “Heartland” theory, as did his preference for contiguous expansion over colonization. Securing Russia by treaty would allow Germany to break British power and establish hegemony in Europe.

If Mackinder gave Haushofer the means to his imperialist end, Friedrich Ratzel provided the justification. Heavily influenced by Darwin, he considered the state “an indigenous organism” linking soil (\textit{Boden}) to nation (\textit{Volk}).\footnote{Friedrich Ratzel, 	extit{Politische Geographie} [3\textsuperscript{rd} ed.] (Munich: 1923), 1-2, quoted in David Thomas Murphy, 	extit{The Heroic Earth: Geopolitical Thought in Weimar Germany, 1918-1933} (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1997), 9.} Seizing a country’s “living space” (\textit{Lebensraum}), a term he invented, therefore constituted an existential threat to its survival:

\begin{quote}
The state is to us an organism not simply because it is a bond of the living nation with the inflexible land, but because this bond strengthens itself so much through mutual interaction that both become one and can no longer be imagined dissolved from one another without that life slipping away.
\end{quote} \footnote{Friedrich Ratzel, 	extit{Politische,} 4, quoted in Murphy, 	extit{The Heroic Earth}, 9.}

Ratzel’s perception of political bodies as organic included the \textit{Volk}, which grew perpetually.\footnote{Friedrich Ratzel, Der \textit{Lebensraum. Eine biogeographische Studie}, in Festgaben für Albert Schäffle zur siebenzigsten Wiederkehr seines Geburtstags, ed. K. Bücher et. al (Tübingen: Verlag der Laupp’schen Buchhandlung, 1901), 171-172, quoted in Mark Bassin, “Imperialism and the nation state in Friedrich Ratzel’s political geography,” 	extit{Progress in Human Geography} 11 (1987), 473.} He assigned the same quality to states, which tend “by [their] nature toward expansion and … conquest.”\footnote{Friedrich Ratzel, \textit{Anthropo-Geographie oder Grundzüge der Anwendung der Erdkunde auf die Geschichte} (Stuttgart: 1882), 1:116, quoted in David Thomas Murphy, 	extit{The Heroic Earth: Geopolitical Thought in Weimar Germany, 1918-1933} (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1997), 11.} In other words, Germany had a right to invade its neighbors.

Though Ratzel did not adopt race theory or espouse Pan-Germanism—the belief that all Germans should live in the Fatherland—he advocated blatant imperialism, justified by an organic
conception of land and nation. As the lion eats the gazelle, he concluded, so too must powerful
empires consume their smaller enemies. Ratzel thus gave Haushofer “scientific” grounds for
rejecting the Treaty of Versailles (1919), which attempted, unnaturally, to separate a state
(Germany) from its soil (Alsace-Lorraine, Danzig) and people (Germans). Like an amputee
seeking reattachment, it was only fair that Hitler retake what Germany lost.

Swedish by birth, Rudolf Kjellén expanded on Ratzel’s “organic state” theory to justify
war. A professor and parliamentarian, he published several influential works, including “The
State as a Living Organism” (Staten som Lifsform). In it, he used biological metaphors to describe
states, calling them “state-bodies” with “Achilles’ heels and hearts.” Losing territory thus
became less political and more surgical, “a consequence of which is not only a loss of removed
tissue, but also of a certain strength.” Kjellén likewise posited a Ratzellian bond between state
and nation. Each of these theories contributed to his conception of “geopolitics”:

Geopolitics is the teaching of the state as a geographic organism or a manifestation
in space: therefore, the state as land, territory, district, or, most obviously, as an
empire. As a political science it has the state unit constantly in its focus and wishes
to contribute to the understanding of the essence of the state.

However unclear, the term “geopolitics” made its way into academia for the first time. The state,
inextricably linked to geography (land), became for Kjellén something to examine, define, and

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29 The Treaty of Versailles officially ended World War I in the Summer of 1919 and imposed harsh
punishments on Germany, including massive reparations payments and significant territorial losses.
30 Rudolf Kjellén, Staten som Lifsform (Stockholm: Hugo Gebers förlag, 1916), 50, quoted in Ola
Tunander, “Swedish-German geopolitics for a new century: Rudolf Kjellén’s ‘The State as a Living
31 Kjellén, Staten som Lifsform, 50, quoted in Tunander, “Swedish-German geopolitics for a new century,”
455.
32 Kjellén, Staten som Lifsform, 40, quoted in Tunander, “Swedish-German geopolitics for a new century,”
457.
33 Rudolf Kjellén, Der Staat als Lebensform, trans. Margarethe Langfeldt (Leipzig: 1917), 46, quoted in
David Thomas Murphy, The Heroic Earth: Geopolitical Thought in Weimar Germany, 1918-1933 (Kent:
discuss, like amoebae in a laboratory. The results, he proposed, would serve as a “practical guide” for future decision-making, setting geopolitics apart from political geography.  

Haushofer relied on others to conceptualize his version of geopolitics. Mahan demonstrated the influence of geography on development; Mackinder feared a German alliance with Russia; and Ratzel and Kjellén justified territorial expansion with appeals to *Lebensraum* and the organic state. Combining their ideas, Haushofer constructed *Geopolitik*.

Haushofer’s geopolitics rested on two fundamental claims: first, that geography shaped human history, and second, that understanding it made states more powerful. As he wrote in 1925: “[*Geopolitik*] relates politics to the soil. It rids politics of arid theories and senseless phrases which might trap our political leaders into hopeless utopias. It puts them back on solid ground. *Geopolitik* demonstrates the dependence of all political developments on the permanent reality of the soil.”  

Using Ratzellian language, Haushofer stressed the importance of land to state. Eleven years later, his colleague Otto Maull provided a slightly more intelligible definition: “*Geopolitik* … is a discipline that weighs and evaluates a given situation [based on geography] and by its conclusions seeks to guide practical politics.” In short, it encouraged the application of geographical knowledge to political decision making.

Haushofer studied geography for a reason. “*Geopolitik*,” he mused, “will serve our statesmen in setting and attaining their political objectives. … [They] must learn to use all

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34 Murphy, *The Heroic Earth*, 6.
available tools to carry on the fight for Germany’s existence.” Understanding earth’s physical terrain, he hoped, would guide German officials to a program of successful expansion, which the country “desperately” needed. Food production had already fallen below requisite levels, and without more land, Germany would starve.

Imperialism defined Geopolitik. After 1919, Haushofer convinced himself that Germany lacked sufficient Lebensraum for its growing population. “[W]e must emerge out of the narrowness of [our] present living space,” he cried, “[and] into the freedom of the world.” His plan vacillated between war and peace. On the one hand, he urged caution: “If [a country’s] space has grown too small, it has to be expanded—and a skillful statesman will take pride in meeting this need at the least possible risk to his people.” He added in 1939: “We can hope to add only those to our living space which we are able to undermine geopolitically by ‘peaceful infiltration.’” But when subversion failed, he endorsed violence.

Despite wartime propaganda, Haushofer never called for world conquest, nor did he think it possible. In fact, by the late 1920s, he clearly distinguished Germany’s “natural and cultural soil” from that of its neighbors, including among his demands remarkably specific regions:

North Schleswig, Eupen and Malmédy, the Saar Territory, Palatinate, Lorraine, Alsace, Vorarlberg and Tyrol, Carinthia, Styria, Burgenland, Moravia, German

40 Haushofer’s conception of Lebensraum emphasized autarky; a country had enough “living space” when it could support itself economically without the help of external powers.
settlements dispersed in Central and Southeastern Europe, Upper Silesia, Western Poland, Danzig, and the Memel Territory. Here the main efforts of Geopolitik will be devoted to keeping alive the knowledge that all these [areas] are biologically part of the Reich. Haushofer also identified Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, and Hungary as part of “the old German Empire.” He firmly believed they belonged to Berlin, and that their loss constituted nothing less than a “mutilation of [Germany’s] national soil.” He likewise felt Versailles made the country physically indefensible. Justified on three counts—Lebensraum, history, and security—Geopolitik therefore endorsed radical, albeit limited expansion.

Haushofer knew Germany could not conquer the world, and that its enemies would oppose the absorption of cities like Memel. To stunt their resistance, he proposed a tripartite alliance between Berlin, Moscow, and Tokyo, the very coalition Mackinder feared most. He initially floated the idea in Dai Nihon and repeated it throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 made his vision state policy, and he warned Hitler to keep his word: “It is vitally necessary that Russia and Germany unite their powers.” Haushofer’s opinion reflected Geopolitik’s basic formula: understand the terrain—Eurasia’s endless steppe—and use it to make shrewd foreign policy decisions.

Political recommendations aside, several claims underpinned Geopolitik. Drawing from Ratzel and Kjellén, Haushoer conceived of the state as a biological entity, and considered expansion both natural and necessary. “Borders are anything but dead,” he wrote in 1934. “They are living organisms extending and recoiling like the skin and other protective organs of the human body.” Allusions to territorial mutilation likewise evoked surgical imagery, as if the Treaty of Versailles had amputated Germany’s limbs, in this case, Alsace-Lorraine or Danzig. Channeling Ratzellian Darwinism, Haushoer also accepted “the inevitability of the struggle for survival [between states].” In other words, Nature justified war.

A unique branch of geopolitics, Geopolitik reinforced its core values throughout the interwar period (1918-1939). Limited expansion, supported by an alliance with Russia and Japan, comprised the heart of its political program. Hitler initially echoed those principles, peacefully increasing German territory and signing a nonaggression pact with the Soviets. But that only lasted two years; as of December 1940, Geopolitik fell out of favor. The question then becomes to what extent Haushoer influenced his “student.” The answer is complicated.

The Rise of Hitler

The end of World War I in November 1918 sparked political violence throughout Germany, especially Haushoer’s home region of Bavaria. Rather than fight, he decided to teach at the University of Munich, in the vain hope that geopolitics would save the country from another disastrous war. The most important moment of his life did not occur in the classroom, however, but at a meeting on 4 April 1919, when friend and wartime aide Max Hofweber

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52 Haushoer, Weltpolitik, 170, quoted in Dorpalen, The World of General Haushoer, 223.
introduced him to a young soldier named Rudolf Hess.\footnote{Jacobsen, \textit{Karl Haushofer}, I:224.} The general took to his new student immediately, and their relationship eventually led him to Hitler.

Hess’ political activity intrigued Haushofer. Besides sharing membership in the anti-Semitic Thule Society with future Nazis Hans Frank and Alfred Rosenberg, he marched in Ritter von Epp’s paramilitary \textit{Freikorps Oberland} and fought in the “Bavarian Revolution.”\footnote{Communist rebels and conservative “Free Corps” reactionaries fought a brutal civil war in Bavaria in early 1919. For information on Hess, see Ian Kershaw, \textit{Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris} (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 138-139; Herwig, \textit{The Demon of Geopolitics}, 74.} Enraged by the Treaty of Versailles, which imposed severe financial and territorial losses on Germany, Haushofer followed suit, joining Oberland in mid-1919.\footnote{Herwig, \textit{The Demon of Geopolitics}, 75.} He also enlisted in the Citizens’ Defense Force (\textit{Einwohnerwehr}), a ceremonial right-wing militia supplied by future \textit{Sturmbteilung} (SA) chief Ernst Röhm.\footnote{Herwig, \textit{The Demon of Geopolitics}, 75.} It was only a matter of time before he met Hitler.

Karl Harrer and Anton Drexler cofounded the German Workers’ Party (DAP) in Munich on 5 January 1919.\footnote{Kershaw, \textit{Hitler}, 139.} Their small movement, which combined radical nationalism with economic socialism, expanded rapidly after Hitler joined in late September. A gathering on 16 October drew 111 people, followed by 400 several weeks later.\footnote{Kershaw, \textit{Hitler}, 140-141.} Sensing an opportunity, the group organized a large meeting on 24 February 1920, where Hitler unveiled the newly christened National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP) and its twenty-five-point platform to a raucous crowd.\footnote{Kershaw, \textit{Hitler}, 145-146. For the platform, see \textit{Nazi Ideology before 1933: A Documentation}, intr. and trans. Barbara Miller Lane and Leila J. Rupp (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 41-43.}

Well acquainted with Munich’s conservative community, Hess and Haushofer stumbled across Hitler “at the latest” in “spring 1920.”\footnote{Herwig, \textit{The Demon of Geopolitics}, 77; Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, \textit{Hess: A Biography} (New York: Drake Publishers, 1973), 22.} Though some evidence suggests the general knew...
him as early as November 1919, they did not develop a close relationship until 1924; Hess, on the other hand, joined the Führer’s “inner circle” by 1921.\(^{61}\) This timeline challenges claims that Haushofer “educated” Hitler, since the latter developed his core principles—anti-Semitism, Pan-Germanism, imperialism, and “exaltation of Nordic blood”—long before their conversations at Landsberg Fortress.\(^{62}\) The NSDAP’s February 1920 program, which reflected Hitler’s “aggressive foreign policy” and bore striking resemblance to *Geopolitik*, likewise stemmed from popular narratives rather than Haushofer.\(^{63}\) The general may therefore have influenced Nazism, but Hitler and his colleagues invented it.

France’s occupation of the Ruhr in January 1923 proved enormously important for the Nazis, and reversed several years of slow growth.\(^{64}\) Due to frustration with the Treaty of Versailles, party membership soared, almost tripling in ten months.\(^{65}\) At the same time, an unprecedented inflationary crisis caused by reparations payments—one U.S. dollar bought 4.2 trillion paper marks on 20 November—had created a situation of extreme discontent.\(^{66}\) As rumors of a Nazi putsch grew, Bavarian leaders proclaimed martial law and banned fourteen party meetings.\(^{67}\) Driven by hubris, and under immense pressure from restless allies, Hitler attempted to overthrow the government—and failed. He and Hess began lenient sentences at Landsberg Fortress in April 1924.\(^{68}\)


\(^{63}\) Nazi Ideology before 1933, 40.

\(^{64}\) Germany’s industrial heartland, located on the German side of the French-German border. Paris justified the invasion as a response to Berlin’s inadequate reparations payments.

\(^{65}\) Kershaw, *Hitler*, 190.


Haushofer and the Nazis

Following the coup, Hess and Hitler plotted their next move at Landsberg. Sensing an opportunity, Haushofer visited both, and attempted to teach them. But as he related in 1945, “Whenever Hess understood [something] and tried to explain it to Hitler, Hitler usually came out with one of his new ideas about an autobahn or anything else which had nothing to do with it.”

In fact, Haushofer complained at length about the Führer’s inability to grasp geopolitics: “I am utterly convinced that … [he] has never understood these things and he did not have the right outlook for understanding them.” Yet parts of “My Struggle” (Mein Kampf), which Hitler published in 1925, reflected basic tenets of Geopolitik. He expounded, for instance, on the importance of space, and posited a Ratzellian bond between state and nation:

> The foreign policy of the folkish state must safeguard the existence on this planet of the race embodied in the state, by creating a healthy, viable natural relation between the nation’s population and growth on the one hand and the quantity and quality of its soil on the other hand. … The National Socialist Movement must strive to eliminate the disproportion between our population and our area—viewing this latter as a source of food as well as a basis for power politics.

While expansionist ideas certainly proliferated in Weimar Germany, Hitler’s language, from population growth to economic autarky, bore uncanny resemblance to Haushofer’s. His conception of the state as a “living organism” likewise reflected a knowledge of Ratzel and Kjellén he supposedly lacked.

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69 Herwig, The Demon of Geopolitics, 91-94.
70 Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., Papers: Box 10, Folder 635, Georgetown University Library, Booth Family Center for Special Collections, Washington, D.C.
71 Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 635.
72 Haushofer’s postwar criticism may have stemmed in part from a selfish desire to downplay his influence on Hitler.
73 Italics included as shown in text. For quote, see Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 642-643, 646.
74 Scholars use the term “Weimar” to describe the republican regime Germany adopted during the early interwar period (1919-1933).
75 Hitler, Mein Kampf, 394.
Despite claims to the contrary, one cannot help but feel Haushofer’s visits influenced Hitler. Nevertheless, he denied writing a single word of *Mein Kampf*, and claimed it distorted, or simply ignored, *Geopolitik*. The truth is complicated. Though Haushofer did not share Hitler’s biological anti-Semitism, he privately blamed Jews for Germany’s defeat in World War I. At the same time, he refused to divorce his half-Jewish wife and never supported extermination. The Soviet Union presented a similarly murky case, in that Hitler initially opposed a military pact with Premier Josef Stalin. He wrote:

> Present-day Russia divested of her Germanic upper stratum [tsarist aristocracy], is, quite aside from the private intentions of her new masters, no ally for the German nation’s fight for freedom. … Do not forget that the international Jew who completely dominates Russia today regards Germany, not as an ally, but as a state destined to the same fate [death]. *And you do not make pacts with anyone whose sole interest is the destruction of his partner.*

Unlike Haushofer, Hitler did not support *entente* with Stalin. In fact, he advocated a completely different alliance structure. While *Geopolitik* proposed a Eurasian Troika—Berlin, Moscow, Tokyo—to sink Britain, Hitler urged the opposite:

> If we look about us for European allies … there remain only two states: *England and Italy*. … On soberest and coldest reflection, it is today primarily these two states … whose most natural selfish interests are not, in the most essential points at least, opposed to the German nation’s requirements for existence, and are, indeed, to a certain extent, identified with them. … *In the predictable future, there can be only two allies for Germany in Europe: England and Italy.*

Paradoxically, Hitler changed his mind after 1933. By late 1939, he had declared war on Britain and signed a nonaggression treaty with Russia. But when it suited his interests two years later, he

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76 Jackson Papers: Box 104, Folder 10; Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 635.
77 Haushofer did not consider Jews sub-human, but probably harbored an “intellectual anti-Semitism” that acknowledged their “dubious” influence on world affairs. Herwig, *The Demon of Geopolitics*, 50-51.
stabbed Stalin in the back. He no less than perverted the “art” of *Geopolitik*, adopting and
discarding components as he saw fit.

The scale and direction of expansion also proved divisive. Haushofer desired for Germany
a limited set of regions located primarily in Western and Central Europe. Though some of his
work betrayed territorial aspirations in Poland, Ukraine, and the Baltics, he hoped to achieve them
peacefully, if at all. Yet Hitler directed Nazi aggression to the east:

And so we National Socialists consciously draw a line beneath the foreign policy
tendency of our pre-War period. We take up where we broke off six hundred years
ago. We stop the endless German movement to the south and west, and turn our gaze
toward the land in the east. … If we speak of soil in Europe today, we can primarily
have in mind only *Russia* and her vassal borders states.  

Conquering the Soviet Union, or “Beelzebub,” would give Germany the *Lebensraum* it needed to
extinguish Jewish Bolshevism.  

Hitler manipulated Haushofer’s ideas for nearly two decades. Practically speaking, Nazi
foreign policy mirrored *Geopolitik* until 1941, when the *Wehrmacht* invaded Russia. German
expansion up to that point elicited praise from Haushofer, who openly celebrated the Führer’s
geopolitical prowess. “Place your trust in [Hitler],” he wrote after Germany voted to remilitarize
the Rhineland in March 1936, “look upon him who thinks in terms of centuries … [and] steer in
the wake of your [F]ührer.”  

*Geopolitik* also helped the Reich justify blatant imperialism with
appeals to Germany’s “high” population density and historic position in Europe. Hitler and
Haushofer even shared common ground on Jews. But the Führer eventually discarded

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82 The Treaty of Versailles demanded the demilitarization of a strip of western German territory called the
“Educated” Hitler and Hess* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 152.
83 Both believed Jewish treachery contributed to Germany’s defeat in World War I. See Herwig, *The
Demon of Geopolitics*, 50.
Geopolitik, as he did everything that no longer served his interests. In fact, many of the concepts he supposedly took from Haushofer had deeper roots. He demanded “land and soil” for the German people as early as February 1920, and his “thinking on Russia and the ‘living space’ question was essentially in place” by late 1922. Ideas like autarky also found expression in Nazism before Haushofer “taught” Hitler, suggesting the latter’s core beliefs came from different sources. It is therefore impossible to say how much influence Geopolitik had on the Nazi project. While it certainly contributed to German foreign policy, it did not play an authoritative role. Hitler’s decisions were indeed syncretic; no single belief system steered his agenda. Even so, Haushofer’s ideas proved far more important than his personal contributions to the party.

Unlike Hess, Haushofer avoided politics following Hitler’s release from Landsberg. Between 1924 and 1938, he taught geography at the University of Munich, led the German Academy, and edited the “Journal of Geopolitics” (Zeitschrift für Geopolitik); he also worked with the Association of Germans Living Abroad (VDA). During that time, he met Hitler on numerous occasions, and even joined him as a witness at Hess’s wedding.

Haushofer’s support for the German Academy brought him closer to the Führer than any other position he held during the Nazi era (1933-1945). Starting as early as April 1923, he and “more than two dozen prominent citizens of Munich” began organizing a “‘German Institute’ which would coordinate all non-official relations with Germans abroad and promote research and propaganda in [that] area.” Haushofer hoped to cultivate stronger ties between Germany and its expatriate community, especially in regions he wanted to annex.

84 Nazi Ideology before 1933, 41; Kershaw, Hitler, 247-249.
85 Like the German Academy, the VDA cultivated closer ties between Berlin and ethnic Germans outside Germany. See Herwig, The Demon of Geopolitics, 120.
86 Herwig, The Demon of Geopolitics, 132; Manvell and Fraenkel, Hess, 37.
The German Academy opened in 1925 free from Nazi influence. Led by President Georg Pfeilschifter, Haushofer, and others, the organization funded cultural research and language courses, both inside and outside the Reich; affiliated groups subsequently spread throughout Europe, including Memel and Danzig, which Geopolitik claimed for Germany. With Hess’s support, and possibly orders from Hitler, Haushofer became president in mid-1934, only to face financial ruin a year later. In exchange for proper funding, the Foreign Ministry planted representatives on the academy’s “Small Council” leadership board. Frequent disagreements with members who opposed Nazi involvement eventually wore on Haushofer, and he left his post frustrated in April 1937—but not before proposing a party takeover. The Ministry of Propaganda assumed full control in 1941.

Haushofer’s work during the interwar period extended far beyond the German Academy. From 1918 onward, he and his colleagues spread geopolitics throughout Germany, focusing on schools. Conservative Prussia actively pushed the subject at an early age, particularly under regional Minister for Education Otto Boelitz. As his administration wrote in 1924:

It is desirable that geographic instruction also contribute to the training of our youth for practical life. It is, therefore, necessary to emphasize more than has heretofore been the case (1) the connection between the nature of the land and the economy, (2) the political side of geography, the dependency of states, their borders, and their world power on the geographic, ethnic, and economic conditions of their territories.

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89 The Great Depression drove the Nazi Party to major electoral victories in 1930 and 1932. German President Paul von Hindenburg named Hitler chancellor in January 1933, and the latter assumed permanent “emergency powers” two months later. Hess subsequently became Deputy Führer and supported Haushofer’s bid for the presidency. For evidence, see Norton, “Karl Haushofer,” 89-90.
Germans in elementary and high school subsequently learned about the state as a biological organism, building on the work of Ratzel, Kjellén, Haushofer, and others.  

Young people likewise explored revisionist theories about Germany’s territorial claims in Europe and studied geopolitics at universities across the country. That continued under the Nazis: one student recalled a lecture on “Germany’s Geopolitical Situation in the World” as late as 1942. Haushofer and his associates therefore prepared school-age Germans to support aggressive war.

Haushofer did not limit Geopolitik to textbooks, but also used print media and the radio to reach adults. In January 1924, he co-founded the Zeitschrift für Geopolitik, a monthly journal that eventually sold several hundred copies per run. Although it initially avoided alignment with the Nazis, publisher Kurt Vowinckel urged open support as Hitler soared in 1930 and 1932. With no complaints from Haushofer, he took a position as general secretary of the “Working Group for Geopolitics” (Arbeitgemeinschaft für Geopolitik), led by NSDAP member Richard Wagner, in 1932, and spearheaded the Zeitschrift’s slow descent into Nazi propaganda. Unfortunately, Hitler’s appointment as chancellor marked the beginning of a similar decline for Haushofer.

Biological anti-Semitism aside, Haushofer embraced Nazi rule. In November 1933, Berlin “Aryanized” Jewish magnate Franz Ullstein’s publishing business, Ullstein Verlag, and gave the general a seat on its executive board; at Hess’s request, he took over the Germany Academy several months later. Berlin also exempted the Zeitschrift from a new press law that barred

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93 Murphy, *The Heroic Earth*, 141.
individuals married to non-Aryans from holding editorships. In fact, the entire Haushofer family benefited from Hess’s protection. Though technically Jewish, Albrecht and Heinz kept their jobs, as did Karl, who faced significant pressure from the Bavarian Ministry for Education and Culture and the University of Munich.

Haushofer also backed Hitler. In 1933, he published “The National Socialist Idea in the World” (Der nationalsozialistische Gedanke in der Welt), which sought to legitimize Nazism. Amidst praise for the Führer, he promoted racially pure leaders and posited a “very ancient German” connection to Austria and Danzig. He likewise lamented the “crowded, overpopulated, economically pressed, [and] culturally deeply rooted supporters of the National Socialist ideology,” who had a right to “sufficient breathing space and to all of the land which was first highly developed by their [races].” He concluded with a call to action:

In this case, too, the main point is: “Action means everything—fame nothing.” Therefore, as with the Nationalist renewal of Italy through Mussolini, so also with the German rejuvenation through Hitler, ideology follows the paths of action, and wherever this does not occur, too much ideology may easily kill the energy for action.

Haushofer’s eulogy celebrated Hitler and displayed potent traces of “intellectual” anti-Semitism, amounting to little more than Nazi propaganda. In September 1935, the Nuremberg Race Laws jeopardized his marriage. As usual, Hess intervened.

Despite the constant mistreatment of his family, Haushofer publicly supported Hitler as late as 1939. He praised the Reich’s 1936 remilitarization of the Rhineland, endorsed its 1937 annexation of Austria (Anschluss), and played a discrete role in the September 1938 Munich

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99 Herwig, The Demon of Geopolitics, 140-141.
100 For above, see Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 628.
101 Herwig, The Demon of Geopolitics, 147.
Agreement, which granted Germany large swaths of western Czechoslovakia (Sudetenland). Two months later, he fell out of favor and watched the “Night of Broken Glass” (Kristallnacht) pogrom set fires across the country. Years of harassment finally came to a head. He had educated the Nazis since 1924, with great success; much of Central Europe finally returned to Germany, where it belonged. But unlike his teacher, Hitler never intended to stop.

Two major events punctuated Haushofer’s life in the Fall of 1938. The first came during a meeting on 8 November at Hess’s home, when, for reasons that remain unclear, he urged Hitler to reject expansion in Eastern Europe and seek rapprochement with the Western Allies. “At that time,” he told investigators in 1945, “I hoped that the agreement with Bohemia [Czechoslovakia] was going to be adhered to and that there would be no war.” The Führer did not take kindly to a lecture. He abruptly left, and the two never spoke again. The night after their fateful meeting, German civilians proved Geopolitik could not contain anti-Semitism. The infamous Kristallnacht pogrom of 9-10 November left synagogues burning throughout the Reich, and sent thousands of Jews to concentration camps. Hess gave Martha a certificate four days later declaring her a pure Aryan, but that did not allay the family’s fears. As Haushofer noted in 1945: “The threat of the internment of my wife, that is, her being sent to Tersienstadt [sic] or Auschwits [sic], has always been over my head like the sword of Damocles.” Kristallnacht confirmed Hitler’s violent

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103 Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 635; Jackson Papers: Box 104, Folder 10; Herwig, The Demon of Geopolitics, 162-163.
104 Walsh Papers: Folder 10, Box 635.
105 Edmund Walsh and numerous primary sources corroborate Haushofer’s account. See, for example, Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 645.
107 Herwig, The Demon of Geopolitics, 163-164.
108 Walsh Papers: Folder 10, Box 635.
intentions toward German Jews. From then on, only Hess, and Haushofer’s grudging cooperation, stood between Martha and the trains.\footnote{Or so Haushofer claimed.}

Ignoring repeated scrutiny, Haushofer continued to praise Hitler.\footnote{Jacobsen, \textit{Karl Haushofer}, I:370-375.} Around him, the world collapsed. Berlin’s occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, followed by its annexation of Lithuania’s Memel region, which Haushofer supported, dissolved the Munich Agreement and undermined calls for peace.\footnote{“Hitler Drives On,” \textit{The New York Times} (New York, NY), March 19, 1939; “Hitler Takes Over Memel in Triumph,” \textit{The New York Times} (New York, NY), March 24, 1939.} Hitler would not accept “concessions,” nor rely on international conferences to meet Germany’s territorial needs. Conflict, he concluded, was inevitable—and that terrified Haushofer, who naively promoted “peaceful” expansion before 1939, but feared another war.\footnote{Paradoxically, \textit{Geopolitik} acknowledged the inevitability of struggle between states.} The enormous price Hitler prepared to pay for further gains in Eastern Europe—direct military engagements with Britain and France—tested Haushofer’s recommendation from the late 1920s: “If [a country’s] space has grown too small, it has to be expanded—and a skillful statesman will take pride in meeting this need at the least possible risk to his people.”\footnote{Haushofer, “Geographische,” 258 ff., quoted in Dorpalen, \textit{The World of General Haushofer}, 39.} \textit{Geopolitik}’s influence on Hitler cracked.

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which established nonaggression between Germany and the Soviet Union in August 1939, allayed Haushofer’s concerns. He celebrated the deal as the near-culmination of Mackinder’s “Heartland” theory, the Berlin-Moscow-Tokyo coalition he had supported since 1913.\footnote{Haushofer, “Der Nahe,” 781 ff., quoted in Dorpalen, \textit{The World of General Haushofer}, 217-219.} Hitler’s subsequent moves became defensible, since he no longer needed to fight on two fronts. Haushofer therefore praised the occupation of western Poland, as well as
the military’s “first-class strategic performance” in Norway and Denmark. 

“And now the Axis from the North Sea to the Pacific is realized and extends its natural front up to the owners of the gold-fringed begging coat of Asia,” he declared in an 8 October 1939 letter to Hess. “How often, in our wildest dreams, have we had such world political visions of sufficient space, which are finally being [achieved]!”

If entente with Russia held, Britain and its allies would have no choice but to cede Germany great power status. But the Nazis had other plans.

Hitler definitively abandoned Geopolitik in December 1940, when he approved an invasion of the Soviet Union codenamed “Operation Barbarossa.” Around the same time, Albrecht and Hess, possibly encouraged by Haushofer, organized discrete peace talks with Britain through the Swiss Red Cross. Unfortunately, the Deputy Führer’s last-ditch flight to Scotland in May 1941 sunk any chance at a ceasefire. His departure likewise put pressure on Haushofer: without protection, Martha, Albrecht, and Heinz faced arrest and possible deportation, especially after the “Final Solution” took effect in January 1942. Cooperation became paramount. When German troops marched into the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, Haushofer offered no public resistance. Martha’s journal spoke volumes: “Another black day; war with Russia.”

A year later, party leader Martin Bormann demanded that Haushofer “no longer be given any publicity.” Following an attempt on Hitler’s life in July 1944, German officials arrested all three Haushofers—Karl, Albrecht, and Heinz—as possible conspirators; after a brief stay at

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118 Reich officials Led by Adolf Eichmann and Reinhard Heydrich approved the mass extermination of Jews, dubbed the “Final Solution,” at the Wannsee Conference in January 1942.
120 Walsh Papers: Folder 10, Box 654.
Dachau, the former retreated to rural Bavaria, where he remained until September 1945.\textsuperscript{121} Albrecht, who spent nearly a year in Moabit Prison, did not survive.\textsuperscript{122}

Major General Professor Doctor

Karl Haushofer played a complicated role in the rise of National Socialism. From 1924 to 1939, he spread imperialism at the University of Munich; advanced \textit{Geopolitik} in German schools; backed Nazi policies in the \textit{Zeitschrift}; pulled the German Academy closer to Berlin; benefited from Aryanization; worked with the VDA; and wrote eulogistic propaganda. His ideas went even further: until at least 1939, Nazi foreign policy reflected basic tenets of \textit{Geopolitik}, and effectively justified Hitler’s decisions. At the same time, Haushofer never wielded political power; rejected biological anti-Semitism; promoted peace over war; and opposed the invasion of Russia. His influence was at best indirect, and never approached that of a Grigori Rasputin (Tsar Nicholas II) or Cardinal Richelieu (King Louis XIII). It is therefore incredibly difficult to measure his complicity in Nazi crimes. Ambiguity defined the real Haushofer—but his enemies disagreed.

\textsuperscript{121} Albrecht’s connections to German resistance cast suspicion on the entire family. See Herwig, \textit{The Demon of Geopolitics}, 192-193.
\textsuperscript{122} Nazi agents murdered him in April 1945, several weeks before the end of the war.
II. Hitler’s Brain
The Haushofer Myth

“For the fourth time in 20 months Germany has rolled its forces irresistibly against the weakest points of its opponents’ defenses at exactly the right moment. … This formula of destruction and split-second timing is [primarily] the work of Major General Professor Dr. Karl Haushofer.”

- Frederic Sondern, Jr.¹

During World War II, Karl Haushofer gained a reputation in the United States as the real leader of Nazi Germany. While journalists claimed his fictional “Institute for Geopolitics” (Institut für Geopolitik) coordinated a vast network of international spies and passed information to the German army, filmmakers accused him of controlling Adolf Hitler.² Respected scholars made the same baseless accusations. Grotesquely arrogant, they considered the Führer a vulgar, uneducated demagogue who could not have seized power without help; to their elitist sensibilities, an aristocratic puppeteer made sense. The “Haushofer Myth” therefore attracted support from both popular and academic circles.

The myth did not develop in a vacuum. Dedicated to protecting geopolitics, School of Foreign Service founder Edmund Walsh promoted damaging lies.³ Although he did not go as far as his peers, he nevertheless convinced himself that Haushofer’s crimes equaled those of “the better known criminals,” like Schutzstaffel (SS) head Heinrich Himmler or Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring.⁴ His fundamental misunderstanding of the general’s complicity, “confirmed” by dubious reports from exchange professors in Germany, led him to recommend Haushofer’s prosecution at Nuremberg.⁵ Walsh’s eventual failure spoke to the myth’s rotten foundations.

² Though scholars may have confused the Institut with the German Academy or “Working Group for Geopolitics” (Arbeitgemeinschaft für Geopolitik), they nevertheless invented its characteristics.
³ See Chapter III for complete analysis.
⁴ Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., Papers: Box 10, Folder 633, Georgetown University Library, Booth Family Center for Special Collections, Washington, D.C.
⁵ See Chapters III and IV for complete analysis.
The Institut für Geopolitik

Possibly influenced by Georgetown professors Joaquin de Siqueira Coutinho and Erik von Kühneldt-Leddhin, Walsh first alluded to Haushofer’s supposed Institut für Geopolitik in a 16 February 1940 speech at Memorial Continental Hall in Washington, D.C. He declared:

There exists in Munich, where it has been functioning for many years, a so-called “Geopolitical Institute.” … Hundreds of very competent, if very fanatical experts, are working in their various specialties under the leadership and direction of a certain General Karl Haushofer, who is the master mind and chief adviser of Herr Hitler and at the same time the controlling power over Reich diplomacy and foreign relations. … As the Politburo of the Russian Communist Party dominates the Russian State and its every movement, foreign and domestic, so the Institute of Geopolitics in Munich directs the Nazi government in its foreign adventures.

Although it is unclear where his claims originated—the term came from an August 1939 article in the British New Statesman and Nation—they soon became de rigueur in American historical circles. In June 1941, “prolific journalist” Frederic Sondern, Jr., popularized them in Current History and Forum and Reader’s Digest. Building on Walsh’s hysteria, he wrote:

Major General Professor Dr. Karl Haushofer and his Geo-Political Institute in Munich with its 1000 scientists, technicians and spies are almost unknown to the public, even in the Reich. But their ideas, their charts, maps, statistics, information and plans have dictated Hitler’s moves from the very beginning. Here is an organization for conquest … which no conqueror before Hitler ever had at his command. … Haushofer’s Institute is no mere instrument which Hitler uses. It is the other way round [sic]. Dr. Haushofer and his men dominate Hitler’s thinking.

Following Walsh and Sondern, the “Institut myth” proliferated rapidly, retaining some of its initial attributes and adding new ones along the way.

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7 Walsh Papers: Box 5, Folder 324.
9 Murphy, “Hitler’s Geostrategist,” 7.
10 Frederic Sondern, Jr., “Hitler’s Scientists: 1,000 Nazi Scientists, Technicians and Spies Are Working Under Dr. Karl Haushofer For the Third Reich,” Current History and Forum, June 1941, 10.
The Institut as a shadowy, information-gathering machine appeared throughout World War II. Werner Cahnman, a German-Jewish refugee and sociologist at the University of Chicago, advanced a conventional view in 1942 when he wrote that Haushofer’s organization kept “a file on almost everything and everybody in every country and in every part of every country on the face of this globe.”  

Frank Capra’s propaganda short, *Why We Fight: The Nazis Strike*, released a year later, went even further. “Here [at the Institut],” the narrator claimed, is “gathered together more information about your hometown than you yourself know.” Both allegations resembled the “Strategic Index” Sondern described in 1941, a “geopolitical map and file of the world” that supposedly tabulated “every phase of every nation’s life—every detail of its military, economic and psychological strength—of its political, social and religious thinking—of its geography, topography and weather conditions.” Colonel Herman Beukema, who taught history and economics at West Point, political scientist Robert Strausz-Hupé, and Harvard geographer Derwent Whittlesey also cited the fictional Institut’s “remarkable” research capabilities. Strausz-Hupé alleged “vast” funding from the Reich.

Like Sondern, American observers also saw in the Institut’s “enormous” staff—estimates ranged from eighty to more than one thousand people—a dangerous spy network capable of undermining global stability. Whittlesey claimed Haushofer sent “agents abroad, probably

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12 *Why We Fight: The Nazis Strike*, dir. Frank Capra (United States: The War Department Special Service Division, 1943), online.
13 *Why We Fight*, 4:00.
14 Sondern, Jr., “Hitler’s Scientists,” 11.
16 Strausz-Hupé, *Geopolitics*, 111.
several hundred of them, [to] contribute to [the group’s] store of facts about” foreign countries; *LIFE* associate editor Joseph Thorndike, Jr., agreed. Such allegations, however unfounded, fueled speculation that the *Institut* played a key role in Nazi espionage.

Although some scholars thought Haushofer controlled Germany, others accused the *Institut*. Cahnman boldly declared that “after 1933 the whole official and semi-official apparatus of the State and the Party, especially the consular offices and the organizations of Germans abroad, was put into the service of the Geopolitical Institute.” In short, the organization monitored, and presumably approved, everything Berlin did. Its influence extended to the German General Staff and assorted elites, who apparently made decisions based on the group’s research. The “Journal of Geopolitics” (*Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*), the *Institut*’s alleged “mouthpiece,” likewise advanced geopolitical principles in “upper-bracket” Nazi circles, swaying those who would later wage aggressive war. German immigrant Andreas Dorpalen agreed: “In the Geopolitical Institute at Munich [Germany’s future leaders] receive the ‘world political’ training which [those governing] the Kaiser’s Germany were so sadly lacking.” Like Cahnman, Strausz-Hupé, and Whittlesey, he concluded that the *Institut* shaped Hitler’s foreign policy.

Dubious reports indicated Haushofer’s *Institut* did not work alone. On the contrary, it apparently supported a “National Bureau of Spatial Organization” (*Der Reichsbüro*), which supposedly managed the redistribution of Germany’s growing population, namely the transfer of

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“loyal Germans” to frontier zones, and the maintenance of industry in preparation for armed conflict.\(^{23}\) The *Institut’s* rumored connection to that organization brought with it links to war crimes in the form of violent German colonization, deportation, and material support for unprovoked military aggression.

Contrary to popular belief, there was no *Institut für Geopolitik*. With few exceptions, American journalists, scholars, and filmmakers failed to cite their claims, “treating [them] … as if they [were] simply well-known and accepted facts for which documentation [was] unnecessary”; when they did, spurious “first-hand accounts” sufficed.\(^{24}\) It is thus fair to conclude that wartime writers, inspired by Walsh, invented the *Institut*; while they may have confused it with the German Academy or “Working Group for Geopolitics” (*Arbeitgemeinschaft für Geopolitik*), neither resembled the information-gathering machine advanced in popular literature. Later revelations about Haushofer’s break with Hitler in November 1938 removed any possibility of the *Institut’s* existence, let alone its domination of the Reich.

**Haushofer as Political Puppeteer**

The idea that Haushofer exercised significant influence over Nazi leaders and personally dictated state policy likewise proliferated during the war. American actors, especially in the media, discussed the general’s authority on numerous occasions, often prioritizing his power over Hitler’s. Sondern made it clear in June 1941 that Haushofer, not the Führer, ran Nazi Germany.\(^ {25}\) With Walsh’s help, he turned an obscure professor into a political mastermind.

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\(^{24}\) Murphy, “Hitler’s Geostrategist,” 6.

Wartime commentators generally emphasized three categories of Nazi that Haushofer supposedly controlled: low-level bureaucrats, military brass, and Hitler himself. “At [the Institut],” wrote Dorpalen, “Nazi politicians, diplomats, journalists, and teachers are initiated into Haushofer’s very own world.” Strausz-Hupé concurred, claiming, without evidence, that “candidates for the German diplomatic and consular service” filled Haushofer’s lectures. Those individuals went on to occupy important offices in the Reich, and were apparently expected to bring their geopolitical training with them. Haushofer thus “planted” in the Nazi hierarchy a conception of international affairs that matched his own.

Though observers only posited general links between Haushofer and the German bureaucracy, they clearly identified him as a driving force behind the Wehrmacht:

From the beginning, Haushofer had a strong hold on the men who did the brain work in the German army … The situation was therefore ideal for making the army élite a well-prepared, eager and, as the years passed, increasingly enthusiastic group of disciples of Haushoferism … What kindled the interest of the army officers was their application of Haushofer’s theories to military strategy … We shall see later that Haushofer’s plans actually became an integral part of the global strategy of the German General Staff—until [Hitler] took over himself [presumably in 1941].

This sentiment found expression in almost every World War II source about Haushofer, from academic works to newspapers and films. While Sondern charged him with steering Nazi aggression, Strausz-Hupé suggested young officers frequented his classes at Munich. Despite acknowledging a total lack of documentary evidence, Whittlesey likewise affirmed Haushofer’s connection to the German military, based on the testimony of unverifiable sources.

\[\text{\footnotesize 26} \text{Dorpalen, } The World of General Haushofer, 17.\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 27} \text{Strausz-Hupé, } Geopolitics, 76.\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 28} \text{Dorpalen, } The World of General Haushofer, 18.\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 29} \text{Weigert, } Generals and Geographers, 69-71.\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 30} \text{Sondern, Jr., “Hitler’s Scientists,” 10; Strausz-Hupé, } Geopolitics, 76.\]
“Haushofer’s twofold career as a brilliant staff man in the army and as leader of thought on geopolitics,” he concluded, “makes certain some degree of interaction between the general staff and the agencies engaged in broader political planning.”

Yale graduate Richard Harrison and German refugee Hans Weigert similarly considered the Zeitschrift a near-perfect rendering of the General Staff’s thoughts, while the latter attributed to Haushofer and his colleagues “significant influence on the strategy of the German army.” Why We Fight joined the fray, too, couching Hitler’s military plans in geopolitical language. As with the Institut, however, their assertions relied on exaggeration over evidence. While Haushofer may have known members of the Germany armed forces, nothing in his papers suggests he personally advised them, nor is it likely he did so without the knowledge of investigators at Nuremberg.

Accusations against Haushofer stretched far into military policy, positing a direct link between his words and the choices German generals made on the ground. Dorpalen alleged, for example, that Haushofer’s 1932 booklet “War Geopolitics” (Wehr-Geopolitik) anticipated “many of the features which subsequently characterized the Nazi campaigns of World War II. … [It] also [contained] many a pointed war-political advice which the Germans since heeded to good advantage.” Though his broad assertion may have been true—that Haushofer wrote those things—Dorpalen made no serious attempt to prove his work had a measurable impact on Nazi policy. (He did not show, for example, that senior officers read the pamphlet.) In fact, it is likely that military leaders would have operated the same way without the general’s influence.

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32 Whittlesey, German Strategy of World Conquest, 113.
35 Hitler’s imperialist ideas came from many sources, not just Haushofer.
Cahnman followed Dorpalen with the dubious assertion that Haushofer “probably counseled” Hitler to remilitarize the Rhineland in 1936, while Sondern claimed the “campaigns in Africa and the Balkans started when, and not until, [the general] was ready and pushed the button.”

Why We Fight followed suit, arguing Haushofer and his supporters planned the entire war:

Satisfied they had created the right sense of fear in the world [by the mid-1930s], the Nazi leaders [pictured: Hitler and Göring] were now ready to strike. The hour had come. It was time to start conquering Eastern Europe, according to the plan of Hitler’s geopoliticians. It was time to win the domination of the Heartland.

The New York Times and The Washington Post repeated similar charges, spreading the myth to an even larger audience. Once again, no documentary proof supported their allegations.

The myth extended Haushofer’s personal influence all the way to Hitler. Many sources, including Dorpalen, Strausz-Hupé, Whittlesey, and The New York Times, posited a formative relationship between them, beginning with Haushofer’s visits to Landsberg in 1924. His long conversations with Rudolf Hess and Hitler supposedly inspired Chapter XIV of Mein Kampf and eventually led to Haushofer’s advancement in the Reich. The Washington Post called him “Hitler’s No. 1 ‘brain truster’” and “one of [the Führer’s] chief advisers on foreign policy.” The Los Angeles Times added its commentary, too, rendering Haushofer Hitler’s “chief adviser,” “No.

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37 Why We Fight, 15:40.
40 Strausz-Hupé, Geopolitics, 49-50.
I strategist,” and teacher.42 “History will rate Karl Haushofer … more important than [the Führer],” Beukeuma concluded, “because [his] studies made possible Hitler’s victories.”43

Haushofer’s opponents also condemned his ideas. Strausz-Hupé portrayed Geopolitik and its founder as key cogs in Hitler’s machine: “For the leaders of Nazi Germany geopolitics is the blueprint for world conquest.”44 He similarly labelled Geopolitik “the working basis of German foreign policy,” that is, “the master plan designed to tell those who [control the Reich] what to conquer and how.”45 Whittlesey agreed:

It is quite probable that history will show an intimate relationship between the expansionism of Nazi foreign policy and the ideas of Haushofer and other geopoliticians. … Within the ring of German culture, then, it must be admitted that geopolitics is an integral part of official and military thought and public militaristic opinion.46

He went on to explain that German racism could not have become a “program for action” without the concept of “living space” (Lebensraum), which some sources thought Hitler took from Haushofer.47 Charles Kruszewski, who briefly represented the United States Treasury in Berlin and Frankfurt, likewise considered the general’s spatial ideas a key reason World War II broke out, noting Haushofer’s “profound” impact on the Reich.48 But their convictions relied on a faulty premise: though Geopolitik influenced Hitler, it did not control him.

In the pantheon of wartime literature, Haushofer became the unseen puppeteer of Nazi aggression. That notion has since proven false. While he and his ideas played an important role,
Hitler abandoned both by late 1940, and possibly earlier. Haushofer lost his direct connection to the Führer in 1938, and all ties when Hess flew to Scotland in May 1941. Rather than guiding Hitler’s decisions, Geopolitik became a tool, used to amass popular support for Nazi policies and justify blatant imperialism. Allegations that Haushofer ruled Germany therefore rested on nothing more than exaggeration.

Haushofer as Anti-Russian

Of all the charges lodged against Haushofer during World War II, none were more preposterous than his “support” for invading Russia. Beginning in 1913, he consistently promoted a military alliance between Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, and Imperial Japan. Though Weigert, for example, rightfully called the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact “Haushofer’s greatest triumph,” others compared Geopolitik to the myth and saw a problem: though he supposedly “controlled” Nazi foreign policy, nowhere did the general promote the conquest of Soviet territory. On the contrary, he understood Germany could not defeat Russia, and urged Hitler to maintain a peaceful relationship with his eastern neighbor. To keep their myth alive, Haushofer’s opponents deliberately distorted the truth.

Dorpalen presented a curious case. On the one hand, he acknowledged Haushofer’s desire for peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union, and claimed the general celebrated Hitler’s 1939 nonaggression deal “as a historical achievement.” But that narrative clashed with his conception of the Haushofer Myth; if Geopolitik played a determining role in Reich policy, Hitler should not have invaded Russia. Dorpalen therefore left room for a change of heart: “Still, it is not entirely

49 Scholars may rightly blame political necessity for any indications to the contrary.
impossible that Haushofer did advocate the attack on the Soviet Union. … Sooner or later a showdown with the ‘pirates of the steppe’ was inevitable if Germany was to realize her ‘planetary’ ambitions.”\(^{52}\) His assertion contradicted everything Haushofer believed.

Dorpalen’s shameless misrepresentation found expression in other sources, too. Though Strausz-Hupé recognized Haushofer’s preference for friendship with Russia, he suggested Operation Barbarossa nevertheless made geopolitical sense.\(^{53}\) He then falsely argued that Haushofer never laid out “a consistent and forthright German policy toward Soviet Russia,” nor committed himself “to any final prescription as to how the … consolidation of the ‘Heartland’ was to be brought about.”\(^{54}\) The general’s work discredited both charges.\(^{55}\) Washington Post columnist Paul Winkler likewise suggested Haushofer did not care whether Hitler invaded Russia, so long as he controlled Eurasia.\(^{56}\) The general’s calls for an alliance with Stalin fell on deaf ears.

**Haushofer as Foreign Agitator**

Haushofer also prepared the world for Nazi domination. Inspired by the mythic Institut, American sources feared his agents had infiltrated countries across the globe. As Dorpalen concluded in 1942, “The German geopoliticians are busy doing their customary spadework. Nothing is left undone to sow discord between South and North America.”\(^{57}\) His choice of the term “customary” revealed a deeper message, that Haushofer often undermined stability in foreign states for Hitler’s benefit. And Dorpalen was not alone. Whittlesey, for example,

\(^{52}\) Dorpalen, *The World of General Haushofer*, 155-156.
\(^{53}\) Strausz-Hupé, *Geopolitics*, 79.
\(^{54}\) Strausz-Hupé, *Geopolitics*, 81.
\(^{55}\) See Chapter I for complete analysis.
connected Haushofer to the “Association of Germans Abroad” (VDA), which the general apparently created to “keep German emigrants and their descendants loyal to the German nation” and collect “information about foreign countries.” Haushofer was, in effect, building covert, “Fifth Columnist” communities in areas of future conquest. Sondern agreed, noting a distinct threat to the United States:

Haushofer regards Latin America as our most vulnerable frontier. Every one of the Latin-American nations has been exhaustively analyzed in the Strategic Index. … Based on this information Haushofer issues his orders. … The Haushofer plan is that Germany, once it has the oil of the Near East, shall strike, beginning by sending materials, guns and military “tourists” from Dakar to the bulge of Brazil. … It is in South America that Dr. Haushofer will probably make us wage war.

These baseless allegations portrayed Haushofer as far more than a simple puppeteer, but an active agent inciting conflict among nations to advance Nazi aims, and possibly conquer America. The VDA and German Academy in fact did no such thing; while they attempted to improve relations between the Fatherland and foreign Germans, they did not foment unrest.

Plan for Destruction

An Academy Award-nominated short documentary, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer’s Plan for Destruction (1943) “exposed” Haushofer’s role in leading Nazi Germany to war. It therefore served as a perfect synthesis of the Haushofer Myth. While geopoliticians planned, strategized, and carried out German expansion, Hitler played the part of mindless demagogue; he was, quite literally, a pawn in their game. The film opened with a clear accusation: Haushofer, not Hitler, sparked World War II; just as the international community settled into what it hoped would be a

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58 Whittlesey, Germany Strategy of World Conquest, 108.
59 Sondern, Jr., “Hitler’s Scientists,” 12, 17.
60 See Chapter I for complete analysis.
61 Plan for Destruction, dir. Edward Cahn (United States: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1943), DVD.
long-lasting peace after 1918, the general “laid down his master plan for human enslavement.”

In director Edward Cahn’s flawed narrative, Haushofer’s early lectures at the University of Munich inspired Hess to introduce him to Hitler; the two subsequently developed a close relationship. The Institut für Geopolitik followed soon thereafter, at which point Plan fully embraced the Haushofer Myth.

Of its approximately twenty minutes, Plan spent two on the Institut, repeating the same false accusations so many writers espoused at the time:

With unlimited funds at his disposal, Haushofer presently had over a thousand employees. Responsible only to Adolf Hitler, he summoned representatives of the Auslands Bureau, the diplomatic corps, and the Gestapo, and with their aid set about forging the only secret weapon that Germany has ever had: information. Information of such scope … as has never been possessed by any other aggressor in history.

The Institut once again became an organization of exceptional size and importance. German “tourists” and ex-patriots sent Haushofer environmental, economic, and social data from across the globe, filling his mail room with thousands of parcels. The general combined that information with his authority over Hitler to single-handedly start World War II: in September 1939, he masterminded the invasion of Poland, supplying the Wehrmacht with “knowledge of backroads and river crossings unknown even to the Poles themselves.” He likewise provided critical information to German forces in Holland (spillways), Belgium (fortifications at Eben-Emael), and France (communications systems), while his agents marched into Norway. The film subsequently depicted Haushofer, surrounded by the generals he supposedly controlled, toasting Hitler.

Plan also carried the myth into Operation Barbarossa. “For the first time, in Russia,” noted the narrator, “Hitler’s mechanized divisions and Haushofer’s geopolitics met [a formidable]
The film identified Geopolitik as a key inspiration for Germany’s ill-fated invasion, and Haushofer as a major proponent; it similarly blamed the general for Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor. The documentary concluded that Haushofer’s “plan for human enslavement [was] unquestionably the most elaborate and dangerous blueprint for destruction ever devised.”

Nominated for an Academy Award alongside propaganda shorts “December 7th” and “Tomorrow We Fly,” Plan for Destruction created a man who did not exist. In the film, Haushofer used intelligence gathered by a fictional Institut für Geopolitik to fashion military strategy in Poland, the Netherlands, and France; supported the conquest of Russia; and even persuaded Japan to bomb the United States. Hitler apparently played a peripheral role in Haushofer’s foreign policy machinations. Unfortunately, Cahn offered no proof for his claims.

Rejecting the Haushofer Myth

Although the Haushofer Myth as a unified whole pervaded scholarship during World War II, few scholars accepted every component. Some, like Beukema and Strausz-Hupé, challenged Haushofer’s ties to Berlin. “The reports concerning [his] personal influence over the makers of German foreign policy,” wrote the latter, “are largely circumstantial.” He similarly downplayed the Institut’s role in Nazi espionage, calling “the direct contribution of Geopolitik to German military intelligence … probably an insignificant one.” Writers also scrutinized Haushofer’s ideological “similarity” to Hitler. The geopolitician’s decades-long history of encouraging rapprochement with Russia stood out as particularly important. Regarding Soviet policy,

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65 Plan for Destruction, 16:00.
66 Plan for Destruction, 17:30.
67 Beukema, introduction, xiii; Strausz-Hupé, Geopolitics, 77.
68 Strausz-Hupé, Geopolitics, 84.
69 Strausz-Hupé, Geopolitics, 86.
Whittlesey and Weigert concluded, there was no special alignment between *Geopolitik* and the Nazi state; on the contrary, Haushofer advocated a tripartite military alliance between Germany, Russia, and Japan to counter the British Empire.\(^\text{70}\) Operation Barbarossa, far from being part of his geopolitical plan, therefore came as an unwelcome shock, one that proved how little influence he had over Hitler. Weigert likewise believed Haushofer did not genuinely support the Führer, but only appeared to in the hopes of making *Geopolitik* state policy:

> When it became clear that Hitler’s power was firmly established, Haushofer, who was still hoping that the tyrant would play his game, sometimes greeted Hitler with due respect, especially in the more popular publications. But he who reads between the lines discovers the inner reserve of Haushofer.\(^\text{71}\)

Strausz-Hupé joined the conversation as well, noting a distinct absence of racism in Haushofer’s early writings.\(^\text{72}\) Unlike Hitler, whose worldview emphasized the purity of German blood, the general largely avoided anti-Semitism, perhaps because his wife was half-Jewish. But although the myth’s many components did not find universal acceptance, it nevertheless prevailed. While Hitler served as Germany’s figurehead, Haushofer was its unseen mastermind.

**Why Haushofer**

Proliferation of the Haushofer Myth stemmed in large part from elitist attitudes toward Hitler. German aristocrats, many of whom looked down on the Führer, formed a powerful core of resistance to Nazi rule. The rebellious Kreisau Circle, for example, boasted some of the most prestigious names in Germany: Count Helmuth von Moltke, Field Marshal Erwin von Witzelben, Count Peter Yorck von Wartenburg, and Adam von Trott zu Solz.\(^\text{73}\) Others, like Colonel Count

\(^{72}\) He nevertheless claimed the general became more racist over time. See Strausz-Hupé, *Geopolitics*, 91.
Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg, led the 20 July 1944 attempt on Hitler’s life. Generally speaking, “these figures shared an aristocratic contempt for mass society and for the radical, vulgar, and chaotic oligarchy of the Nazi parvenus.” Proponents of the Haushofer Myth agreed, convinced an unqualified proletarian could not have taken over Germany alone.

A native Austrian, Strausz-Hupé used derogatory language to describe Hitler, calling him a “half-educated” leader whose “vaporous cerebrations” clashed with Haushofer’s “coherent doctrine of empire.” He wrote:

Political clumsiness and psychological astigmatism do not alone suffice to explain the practical failure of Geopolitik in applying correctly to Russo-German relations the theories cribbed from Mackinder. With the coming to power of the Nazis in 1933, German foreign policy had become the plaything of Hitler’s idiosyncrasies. True, Hitler’s mind was the most uncanny catalyst of any and all theories of popular appeal and had, therefore, lighted upon the suggestions and popular teachings of the Geopolitikers.

Strausz-Hupé’s infantilizing description of the Führer contradicted his respectful treatment of “Major General Professor Doktor Karl Haushofer,” whose books, despite their shortcomings, contained “brilliant insights.” Dorpalen and Weigert, both Germans, mentioned Hitler only when necessary, but otherwise focused exclusively on Haushofer. Their underlying message signaled a prioritization of the teacher over his “student.” Even Walsh could not help himself:

Conviction of the Germanic destiny [has] been planted in [Hitler’s] consciousness from long brooding over the writings of Fichte, Hegel, Treitschke, Nietzsche, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Rosenberg, and similar messianic preachers of Teutonic superiority. That fixed idea exhausted the capacity of his brain and soul, there not being much else there to dispute its presence.

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74 Dulles, *Germany’s Underground*, 2.
79 Walsh’s belief in the myth nevertheless stemmed primarily from anticommunism. For quote, see Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., “Geopolitics and International Morals,” in *Compass of the World: A Symposium*
He later added that the Führer “was not a highly educated man.”

Walsh’s subtle rebuke of Hitler’s intelligence, echoed by Sondern, reflected rampant elitism in the West, where only a small percentage of middle- and upper-class men went to college. For proud academics like Strausz-Hupé, it made sense that an aristocratic professor “controlled” Germany, and that the rabble-rousing Nazis simply co-opted his ideas. Intellectual arrogance thus explains why many writers vilified Haushofer. Americans’ insatiable appetite for conspiracy, confirmed during the Red Scare ten years later, also fueled speculation about the “real” Hitler. These factors combined to create the Haushofer Myth.

When Lies Matter

Prompted by hubris, myths about Haushofer spread rapidly during World War II. The general’s fictional Institut für Geopolitik figured prominently, as did claims that he exercised decisive influence over Nazi bureaucrats, military leaders, and Hitler. Only on rare occasions did the individuals promoting those allegations cite them. It is therefore impossible to understand the Haushofer Myth without acknowledging that most of its components had no realistic basis and often relied on deception. But instead of dying, they survived. With Walsh as its proud champion, the myth reached Georgetown in the early 1940s, and Nuremberg in 1945. Haushofer took on a persona of absolute evil, one he nearly paid for with his life.

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Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 636.

Sondern, Jr., “Hitler’s Scientists,” 10.
III. An American Haushofer
Edmund Walsh and Geopolitics

“It must be clear by this time that Geopolitik is only one factor in evaluating the rise and sensational conquests of modern Prussia. But it became a very important weapon—a synthesis as it were, of all previous arguments.”
- Edmund Walsh

American Chief Prosecutor Robert Jackson did not make Edmund Walsh his adviser on geopolitics at Nuremberg without good reason. By the Summer of 1945, Georgetown University’s vice-president had become a widely respected geopolitician. After the United States declared war on Japan in December 1941, he lent his knowledge to the army as Expert Consultant of the Geopolitical Section, Military Intelligence Division of the War Department General Staff; he also taught several geopolitics courses to Georgetown students and servicemen from 1942 to 1945, focusing on Karl Haushofer’s “bastardized” worldview.

Few scholars challenged Walsh’s credentials at the time. He understood Haushofer and “German geopolitics” (Deutsche Geopolitik) far better than most, and already had experience working with the U.S. government. But his expertise relied on the same misleading sources cited in Chapter II. Rather than rejecting the Haushofer Myth, he wholeheartedly embraced it, condemning the German professor’s collaboration with Nazi elites. Walsh subsequently told students that Haushofer’s ideas fueled the rise of Nazism. In defense of geopolitics, he brought that distorted opinion to Nuremberg.

1 Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., Papers: Box 5, Folder 331, Georgetown University Library, Booth Family Center for Special Collections, Washington, D.C.
2 Walsh Papers: Box 2, Folder 100; Georgetown University School of Foreign Service Catalogues, 1942-1945, Georgetown University Archives; Walsh Papers: Box, Folder 331.
3 Walsh Papers: Box 5, Folder 331.
4 Conclusions based on pre-1945 course catalogues and syllabi, lecture notes, personal correspondence, and related primary source documents.
The School of Foreign Service

Born into an Irish Catholic family on 10 October 1885, Walsh spent his childhood in Boston, Massachusetts. Upon graduating from high school in the early 1900s, he entered the Society of Jesus in Frederick, Maryland, where he specialized in classics, namely Latin and Greek. Walsh left the United States in 1912 for the National University in Dublin, and later transferred to Innsbruck. That placed him in Austria-Hungary when a Serbian assassin murdered Archduke Franz Ferdinand in June 1914; with World War I looming, he and his Jesuit colleagues returned home through Italy. Walsh completed his studies at Woodstock College, was ordained in 1916, and took a post as Dean of Georgetown College in May 1918.  

Walsh’s experience in Belle Époque Europe shaped his perception of the postwar world. With the United States poised to assume great power status, he realized that a complete reconceptualization of its diplomatic corps was in order. Well-trained professionals prepared to advance American interests the day they took office, particularly in commerce, would provide a much-needed bulwark against aggressive adversaries, and strengthen ties with longtime allies. The country’s past dependence on experiential learning for foreign service officers no longer sufficed. “We are now becoming conscious,” wrote U.S. Commissioner of Education Philander Claxton in 1918, “of the fact that our … consular representatives need a specific kind of knowledge and a definite sort of training.” Prospective businessmen faced similar pressures: unlike their domestic counterparts, overseas markets demanded knowledge of international politics, culture, history, and language.

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6 Georgetown University School of Foreign Service Peace Bulletins, January 7, 1919, Georgetown University Archives.
As early as June 1918, Georgetown University’s Board of Regents proposed a new institution to meet Washington’s growing commitments abroad. With support from Walsh, the School of Foreign Service (SFS) offered classes for the first time on 17 February 1919. It would serve a noble purpose: “And one need emerged [from World War I] especially clear and unequivocal … It is that of building up a well-trained group of men for efficient and successful service in all branches of foreign representation, diplomatic, official, commercial, financial, and industrial.” “Physical Geography” made its way onto a list of preliminary courses, prefacing the school’s later emphasis on geopolitics.

On 25 November 1919, in historic Gaston Hall, Georgetown President John B. Creeden, S.J., and new SFS Regent Walsh officially opened their “West Point of foreign service.” The latter began his speech with a rousing justification for the school’s existence:

Having entered upon the stage of world-politics and world-commerce we assume world-wide obligations. … New occasions teach new duties, none more insistently than that of scientific education for those to whom shall be entrusted the good name and forwarding of the material interests of the United States in foreign parts.

American agents abroad, Walsh concluded, would only succeed insofar as they understood the world. Like lawyers training for the courtroom, U.S. spokesmen needed to prepare for international responsibilities. Only then could they “effectively … represent [Washington] in official life or … promote the expansion of [its] commerce.” As Walsh presented it, the School of Foreign Service existed to protect and expand American influence. Creeden echoed that sentiment, noting the university’s Board of Regents had approved the school in part because it “recognized that those countries had secured almost a monopoly in modern trade which had sent

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7 Georgetown University School of Foreign Service Year Books, February 1919-February 1920, Georgetown University Archives.
8 GUSFS Peace Bulletins, January 25, 1919, Georgetown University Archives.
9 For above, see GUSFS Peace Bulletins, April 1919, Georgetown University Archives.
into foreign lands men who were proficient in languages and carefully trained in the customs and history of the land to which they went,” like Britain and France.\(^\text{10}\)

### Becoming Haushofer

Georgetown’s road to geopolitics—and Walsh’s to Haushofer—began with geography. As early as the Fall of 1921, first-year undergraduates in the School of Foreign Service took “Essentials of Geography” and “Applied Historical Geography” from Lieutenant Colonel Lawrence Martin, of the U.S. General Staff.\(^\text{11}\) Catalogues listed both as required. The former focused on geography as a tangible phenomenon, while the latter bore striking resemblance to what Haushofer taught at the University of Munich:

> The final course … is intended to enable the student to learn how to make correct deductions from the facts of geography … Accordingly, the student will be given the opportunity to study the main geographical factors which have determined the historical and economic development of the eastern and western hemispheres and of the political entities in each. A number of lectures dealing with the changes in the map due to the war of 1914-1918 will be included.\(^\text{12}\)

Student newspaper *The Hoya* agreed:

> [This class] is something new in the program of the school and opens up a wide field in “historical geography.” [The professor] will discuss the relations between geography and the history of nations, and how the earth’s physical features affect the growth of … the human race.\(^\text{13}\)

“Applied Historical,” unlike “Essentials,” emphasized Earth’s impact on humanity. In fact, the course description went so far as to suggest the environment “determined” development—a conclusion shared by early geopoliticians.

\(^\text{10}\) For above, see GUSFS Year Books, February 1919-February 1920, Georgetown University Archives.

\(^\text{11}\) Though students presumably studied geography in 1919 and 1920, SFS catalogues only go back to the Fall of 1921. See GUSFS Catalogues, 1921-1922 (Winter Edition), Georgetown University Archives.

\(^\text{12}\) GUSFS Catalogues, 1921-1922 (Winter Edition), Georgetown University Archives.

After one year teaching “Essentials” and “Applied Historical,” Martin combined them into “Applied Geography.” In this “essential course,” students learned about “geographical effects on economic, political and historical conditions,” and gained a “good working knowledge of geography as needed in the various phases of Foreign Service.”\(^\text{14}\) In the Fall of 1923, the “Applied” requirement shifted from first- to second-year students, and Ralph Graves, Assistant Editor of *National Geographic Magazine*, became its new professor. The class likewise expanded to two semesters, but continued emphasizing geography relative to people: “It is to ‘the mutual relations of these diverse elements [land, sea, air, etcetera],’ especially with respect to man, that this course … will be devoted.”\(^\text{15}\) Georgetown’s evolution into a center of American geopolitics stemmed directly from the foundation laid by Graves and his successors.

Professor J.R. Hildebrand, Chief of School Service at the National Geographic Society, took over “Applied” after Graves moved on in the Fall of 1925. The course’s goals did not change: “The purpose is to make applied geography a living vital subject of modern interest and importance.”\(^\text{16}\) Around the same time, Walsh became vice-president of Georgetown and resumed his post as SFS regent after spending two years with the American Relief Administration in Soviet Russia.\(^\text{17}\) Disgusted by the Bolsheviks’ violent persecution of religion, he returned to Washington a vocal anticommunist.\(^\text{18}\) Over the next three decades, he used hundreds of lectures

\(^{14}\) GUSFS Catalogues, 1922-1923 (Summer Edition), Georgetown University Archives.

\(^{15}\) Georgetown University School of Foreign Service Syllabi, 1923, Georgetown University Archives.

\(^{16}\) “J.R. Hildebrand Added to Teaching Staff,” *The Hoya* (Washington, D.C.), October 15, 1925.

\(^{17}\) The country suffered a terrible famine in the early 1920s. For Walsh’s rise to the vice-presidency, see GUSFS Catalogues, 1925 (Winter Edition), Georgetown University Archives.

and multiple courses at Georgetown to denounce Soviet ideology. Walsh’s obsession with defeating communism defined the rest of his life, and eventually led him to geopolitics.

Walsh and his colleagues emphasized comprehensive geographical training from 1921 onward, working with the National Geographic Society to guarantee proper instruction. In doing so, they imitated elite colleges like Harvard University and the University of Chicago, which paved the way for American post-secondary geography programs. The School of Foreign Service thus became a leader in the field. “For many years Geography has been given short shrift among educators,” lamented Graves in 1923. But not at Walsh’s school: “Indeed, there are only a few of the higher institutions of learning in America which have awakened to the realization that Geography is a study of major importance. It is gratifying to know that Georgetown University is one of these.” The SFS transitioned to geopolitics in the late 1930s.

Building on progress across the country in the early 1900s, the School of Foreign Service actively promoted geography, echoing Haushofer’s parallel crusade in Germany. Unlike most universities, Georgetown recognized the discipline’s inherent value. As The Hoya noted in 1925, “This special course in ‘Applied Geography’ was designed by the [SFS] … because the officials of the School felt that geography was an extremely practical thing and should be made both practical and interesting.” The SFS acknowledged that a state could not thrive if its foreign representatives ignored the relationship between physical environments and development, and set

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22 GUSFS Syllabi, 1923, Georgetown University Archives.
23 “J.R. Hildebrand Added to Teaching Staff.”
out to fill the gap. Haushofer reached the same conclusion and embarked on a similar project in Munich. Walsh nevertheless noted stark differences. He later recalled his reaction to reading the general’s “Journal of Geopolitics” (Zeitschrift für Geopolitik) in the early 1920s: “Here was something more than a conventional place geographer. It showed a dynamic force at work. It showed a global perspective. It showed the slow building up of a philosophy of power for the German government.” But his timeline made no sense. Despite “attentively studying” Haushofer from the early 1920s, he did not teach a course about him until 1942; SFS colleague Carroll Quigley likewise claimed he only “became interested in geopolitics at the end of the [1930s].”

Walsh’s heroic version of the story—that he “taught and warned” the United States about Haushofer for two decades—conveniently ignored the sixteen-year gap between his “shocking” discovery of Geopolitik and the first time he openly discussed it, in February 1940.

Like Walsh, the SFS did not embrace geopolitics until the late 1930s, offering its first class on the subject in 1937. Austrian Professor Erik von Kühneldt-Leddhin’s graduate seminar grew out of Georgetown’s focus on geography, and stressed the “elements entering into final forms of state organization: Race, religion, migration, space, borders, soil, physical formation, sea.” Kühneldt-Leddhin also presided over the distinctly geopolitical “Advanced Geography”:

> Geographic environment as an important factor [in] determining types of civilization and culture. Geography as an auxiliary science for the historian, economist, diplomat, racial psychologist, international lawyer and businessman. This course … will examine the … geographic problems of … race and nation, the Nordic theories from [Gobineau] to Rosenberg, Slavs, Aryans … Geographical influences in determining borders and treaty provisions. Populations, religion and raw materials.

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24 Walsh Papers: Box 3, Folder 234.
26 Walsh Papers: Box 2, Folder 126. See entry on 15 March 1946.
27 GUSFS Catalogues, 1937-1938 (Summer Edition), Georgetown University Archives.
28 GUSFS Catalogues, 1937-1938 (Summer Edition), Georgetown University Archives.
Both classes covered concepts advanced by *Geopolitik*, but did not mention Haushofer by name.

“Applied Geography,” still taught by Hildebrand, “Advanced Geography,” and “Geopolitics” continued to meet after Kühneldt-Leddhin left Georgetown in 1938; Joaquin de Siqueira Coutinho, then a professor of Portuguese, took over the latter until at least the Spring of 1939, and possibly later.29 The war period, beginning in December 1941, solidified “Geopolitics” as a critical area of study at the School of Foreign Service. In March 1942, the SFS listed its first “Geopolitics” course for undergraduates, as well as a Walsh-taught “sequel” for servicemen.30 Unlike its predecessors, the latter emphasized Haushofer’s role in Nazi Germany, namely the nonexistent “Institute for Geopolitics” (*Institut für Geopolitik*):

The origin, development and influence of the *Institute of Geopolitics* founded by Haushofer in Germany will be examined and analyzed … The tremendous development and ramifications of that movement [geopolitics] in Germany has proved to be one of the most powerful weapons used by the Axis Powers, and can no longer be neglected in the future foreign policy of the United States.31

Responding to Walsh’s misconceptions about Haushofer, the SFS extended its offerings throughout the war. The school celebrated Germany’s May 1945 surrender with a new Department of Geography, which split “Geopolitics” into four courses: “History and Evolution,” “Distorted Geopolitics—Germany, Japan,” “Legitimate Geopolitics,” and “Study of Selected Foreign Areas.”32 The second of these blatantly criminalized Haushofer:


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29 GUSFS Catalogues, 1938-1940, Georgetown University Archives.
30 The first time he taught a course on geopolitics.
31 Georgetown University School of Foreign Service War Bulletins, March 1942, Georgetown University Archives.
32 GUSFS Catalogues, June 1945, Georgetown University Archives.
Haushofer’s “Strategic Index.” War Geopolitics and the militarism of Clausewitz. The German geopolitical attitude towards Russia and its contradictory phases.  

The class not only laid bare Walsh’s contempt for Haushofer, but also his rapid development into a figure of similar stature. Drawn to geopolitics as a weapon for future peacebuilding, his research made him one of North America’s foremost “experts,” and helped him advance the discipline as a serious academic pursuit. He became a pioneer in the United States—an American Haushofer.

Legitimate Geopolitics

Walsh’s geopolitics diverged from Haushofer’s. For him, at least semantically, the study of geography existed to promote world peace and national defense, rather than expansion. This “legitimate geopolitics” he vaguely defined as the “integrated, realistic study of elements entering into and determining an enlightened foreign policy,” including history, climate, coastline, and natural resources. In contrast, the “distorted + corrupted + bastardized progeny of the narrow Geopolitik of Haushofer and his school,” labeled “illegitimate,” used physical factors to justify the destruction of Germany’s neighbors.

Though Walsh never discussed exactly what he meant by “legitimate geopolitics,” his lectures came close. Like many geographers at the time, he espoused environmental determinism:

The temperate belts of the earth are conducive to energetic activities, research, invention + specialization … The northern lines serve as still greater stimuli to heroic achievement, as the rigors of cold + sleet + snow challenge men … in their battle for life, sustenance, and a viable culture. Their external, environmental factors have a marked effect on the resultant civilization.

33 GUSFS Catalogues, August 1945, Georgetown University Archives.
34 Walsh Papers: Box 5, Folder 328.
35 Walsh Papers: Box 5, Folder 331.
36 Walsh Papers: Box 5, Folder 331.
Walsh applied his theory to Imperial Russia, arguing its physical location near the Arctic necessitated a “march to the sea” in search for warm-water ports. Such “historic determinism based on geography,” he claimed, coaxed Muscovite tsars to advance east and spark the ill-fated Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905).37

Walsh also looked to the United States, where he found “legitimate geopolitics” at work. Despite America’s bloody past, he noted its “territorial evolution was in large part achieved by peaceful means—by treaty, negotiation + purchase.” While condemning the mistreatment of Native Americans, the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), the Spanish-American War (1898), and the annexation of Hawaii (1898), he concluded:

For [the] most part … the new acquisitions were not made at the expense of the home territory of another power … No assault was made on the sovereignty or basic body politic of the other state. [On] the contrary territory was often respected which in the extreme theory of lebensraum [living space] would be considered logically a part of the “organism” of the U.S.A. [e.g., Canada].38

Though Walsh’s dubious interpretation of American history often ignored natives—common at the time—his approval of “peaceful” expansion as opposed to Germany’s violent imperialism revealed a fundamental disagreement with Haushofer. While Geopolitik used concepts like Lebensraum and the organic state to justify occupying sovereign nations against their will, Walsh advocated a quid pro quo system based on fair transactions between consenting governments. When a country genuinely needed more space, he wrote in 1942, “Reasonable provision must be made … [and] negotiations should ensue, in some competent tribunal, with compensation and protection assured to the conceding power. Otherwise,” he concluded, “brute force will again

37 For above, see Walsh Papers: Box 5, Folder 330.
38 For above, see Walsh Papers: Box 5, Folder 331.
plunge the world into reciprocal slaughter.” Unlike Haushofer, Walsh also defended the right of “small nationalities” to self-determination.

Historical inaccuracies aside, Walsh believed in geopolitics as a fount of fairness, by which policymakers could use geography—natural resources, coastline, mountains, rivers—to peacefully resolve their differences. “The best prophylaxis in the field of external strategy [after the war],” he declared in the early 1940s, “will be an American geopolitics based on international justice, international honor and mutuality of international respect.” Haushofer held the opposite view, that geography justified war. Walsh therefore regarded him with contempt: his work, myth or not, tarnished geopolitics, which the United States needed to contain Soviet aggression.

As he warned in his notes before a March 1945 speech to the British Mission:

> With the annihilation of the German geopolitik, a new form [of] geopolitics is asserting itself in Eastern and Central Europe … the German variety proclaimed its purposes noisily, regularly, publicly—and failed. Soviet geopoliticians maintained a profound silence—and are succeeding brilliantly in acquiring domination of Mackinder’s Heartland.

If American officials did not stop Russian growth in Eurasia, Walsh concluded, Stalin would eventually take over the World-Island, and possibly the world. In short, geopolitics was the key to defeating communism—but Haushofer “gave [it] a bad name.”

Rehabilitating the United States’ strongest weapon against Bolshevism thus fell to Walsh, who knew the general better than anyone. Only by discrediting Haushofer could he save “true” geopolitics and protect his country.

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39 Walsh Papers: Box 5, Folder 325.
40 Walsh Papers: Box 5, Folder 329.
41 Walsh Papers: Box 5, Folder 331.
43 Walsh Papers: Box 3, Folder 212.
Selling a Myth

Geography played an integral role in Walsh’s road to geopolitics, laying the foundation for its acceptance at Georgetown—no easy task, since many considered the latter a “pseudo-science” involving “dark plots, evil intrigue and black magic.”\(^{45}\) Alongside Coutinho, Walsh became the SFS’s definitive authority, denouncing *Geopolitik* as a vehicle for German imperialism. But his claims echoed the Haushofer Myth. Among other allegations, he attacked the *Institut für Geopolitik* and condemned the general’s “support” for invading Russia; he also directed his students to several of the myth’s most egregious authors, including Andreas Dorpalen, Robert Strausz-Hupé, and Derwent Whittlesey.\(^{46}\) Far from innocent, Walsh exercised extreme negligence to undermine Haushofer, and in doing so, protect his version of geopolitics.

Walsh’s 16 February 1940 speech at Memorial Continental Hall in Washington, D.C., marked the first time a scholar publicly described the nonexistent *Institut für Geopolitik*.\(^{47}\) Rather than simply accepting this part of the myth, he designed it:

> There exists in Munich, where it has been functioning for many years, a so-called “Geopolitical Institute.” … Hundreds of very competent, if very fanatical experts, are working there in their various specialties under the leadership … of a certain General Karl Haushofer … There is the true Nazi brain trust. As the Politburo of the Russian Communist Party dominates the Russian State … so the Institute of Geopolitics in Munich directs the Nazi government in its foreign adventures.\(^{48}\)

Although the British *New Statesman and Nation* coined the phrase “Institute of Geopolitics” in August 1939, Walsh gave it meaning. Unfortunately, he did not cite his speech verbally or on

\(^{45}\) Herman Beukema, introduction to *The World of General Haushofer: Geopolitics in Action*, by Andreas Dorpalen (Farrar & Rinehart, 1942), xii; Joseph J. Thorndike, Jr., “Geopolitics: The Lurid Career of a Scientific System Which a Briton Invented, the Germans Used and Americans Need to Study,” *LIFE*, December 21, 1942, 106.

\(^{46}\) Walsh Papers: Box 5, Folder 332.

\(^{47}\) The only other mention prior to February 1940 came when the British *New Statesman and Nation* coined the term in August 1939.

\(^{48}\) Walsh Papers: Box 5, Folder 324.
paper. Like every Institut proponent, he gathered information from conveniently unverifiable sources.\(^{49}\) This suggests that Walsh either fabricated the entire story or relied on woefully inadequate evidence to make his point, strange for the vice-president of an elite university.\(^{50}\)

Walsh expanded his version of the *Institut* myth several years later, when in 1944 he advanced the notion that Haushofer controlled a vast spy network capable of providing the General Staff “what was probably the most complete and classified body of knowledge ever assembled for eventual military operations.”\(^{51}\) Haushofer’s so-called “Strategic Index,” presumably organized by the *Institut*, collected data from German consular officials, the Foreign Institute at Stuttgart of Germans Abroad, Section UA-1 of the Gestapo Foreign Division, agents working for Reich Minister of Propaganda Josef Goebbels, and assorted “geopolitical specialists” around the globe.\(^{52}\) Once compiled, Haushofer transferred that information to the German General Staff. Frederic Sondern, Jr., made an identical accusation in 1941.\(^{53}\)

Walsh did not stop with the *Institut für Geopolitik* or its “Strategic Index.” Joining scholars like Herman Beukema, Dorpalen, and Whittlesey, he claimed Haushofer played a key role in the rise of Nazism.\(^{54}\) On 13 October 1942, he discussed an equation with his “Geopolitics” students that explained the outbreak of successful revolutions. He listed among the contributing

\(^{49}\) Murphy, “Hitler’s Geostrategist,” 6.
\(^{50}\) Note that Walsh referred to the *Institut* and the German Academy as separate organizations. See Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 633.
\(^{52}\) Walsh, “Geopolitics and International Morals,” 22.
\(^{53}\) Frederic Sondern, Jr., “Hitler’s Scientists: 1,000 Nazi Scientists, Technicians and Spies Are Working Under Dr. Karl Haushofer For the Third Reich,” *Current History and Forum*, June 1941, 11.
factors “education,” which intellectuals use to justify future violence. For Walsh, the “Nazi Revolution” depended not on economic discontent, but geopolitics:

The … prejudices, passions and historical tendencies of the German people were played on as a master musician touches the chords of his instrument. It was at this juncture that the Geopolitik of Haushofer played a tremendously important role. I do not say it furnished the entire motivation; but it did introduce a most appealing, master argument to cement and consolidate all the internal motives into unified policy for external conquest.

He continued:

[Geopolitik] introduced a new motive for unified resistance to Versailles and justified a unified assault on the non-Germanic neighbors. … Now geography was invoked, to justify a mobilization which hitherto had been achieved for God, for King + fatherland. Not the nation now, nor the government alone was the slogan but the Volk, wherever found, and the geographic destiny of blood and race.

Though Walsh did not blame World War II entirely on Haushofer, he came close: “[The general] and his school capitalized the postwar resentments of Germany and exaggerated, distorted the geographic motive in a manner that mobilized and galvanized an awakened Pan Germanism to its now familiar program of World conquest thru [sic] global assault.” In fact, Walsh spent so much time discussing “geopolitical education” that he barely mentioned Hitler.55

Like most myth-makers, Walsh also charged Haushofer with directly influencing the Reich. “In my last class,” he told students on 10 November 1942, “I was developing the role of Haushofer, tracing his ideas through Hess—to Hitler—to Mein Kampf—to the German [General] Staff and Foreign Policy.” His lesson plan included a reminder to discuss “Haushofer + Hitler teamwork,” between whom he posited a crucial relationship.56 Confined to Landsberg Fortress in 1924, Hitler and Hess received Haushofer regularly. During their meetings, Walsh noted, “the Herr Doktor began his indoctrination.” After the Führer’s release, Haushofer apparently

55 For above, see Walsh Papers: Box 5, Folder 331.
56 For above, see Walsh Papers: Box 5, Folder 331.
maintained contact, matching the influence of party financiers like Fritz Thyssen. The general’s “team-play” with Hitler, Walsh wrote, “soon became manifest and serious for the world.” And when scholars downplayed his influence, the Jesuit responded with force:

   The degree of contact [between Hitler and Haushofer] is irrelevant. … The basic, incontestable proof is that Haushofer, directly in some instances, indirectly in others, coordinated, integrated, and rationalized a whole field of comparative geography for the uses of the Führer.

But although Walsh’s accusations had merit—Haushofer publicly supported Hitler until at least 1939—he often exaggerated the truth based on poor research and questionable information.  

   Following those before him, Walsh emphasized Haushofer’s proximity to German military agents. “In the case of Haushofer,” he told students, “the General Staff had a particularly welcome ally.” Along with broader strategy, he fed army brass significant amounts of data, which they used to plan future invasions. And thus, Walsh concluded in November 1942, Haushofer stood on the precipice of victory. “All Europe lies in chains at the chariot wheels of the conqueror,” he declared. “The geopolitical ambitions of 25 years have been achieved.” His words echoed Sondern, Plan for Destruction, Hans Weigert, and Why We Fight: The Nazis Strike.

   Walsh carried his mythical narrative into Operation Barbarossa. Initially, on 24 September 1942, he acknowledged the general’s preference for confederacy with the U.S.S.R. and Imperial Japan. But six months later, on 3 March 1943, his lecture notes revealed a dramatic shift.

57 For above, see Walsh, “Geopolitics and International Morals,” 21-22.
58 Walsh Papers: Box 5, Folder 331.
60 Walsh Papers: Box 5, Folder 331.
62 Walsh Papers: Box 5, Folder 331.
Regarding Germany’s Russian adventure, he wrote: “In his frenzy of egoism, the master geopolitician of Berlin hurled his scientific formulations against the un-schooled, intangible loyalties of human nature, exactly as Napoleon did in 1812. Neither of them counted on the truth of the old Latin proverb … Drive out Nature with a pitchfork [and] she’ll come back every time.” Importantly, Walsh did not refer to Hitler. In his mind, Nazi Germany had only one “master geopolitician”: Karl Haushofer, who apparently orchestrated Wehrmacht operations in the Soviet Union—which would not have surprised Walsh’s colleagues.

By late 1945, Walsh considered Haushofer a major figure in the Reich. Though most of what he believed came from “reliable” secondary sources—Whittlesey taught at Harvard, after all—he nonetheless accepted their poorly cited narratives as fact; at the same time, his disturbingly detailed speech about an Institut für Geopolitik that never existed raises serious ethical questions. Walsh’s faith in the Haushofer Myth therefore depended on a toxic combination of shoddy research and outright lies, motivated by anticommunism.

The Battle for Geopolitics

As regent of the School of Foreign Service, Edmund Walsh set out in 1919 to train the next wave of American ambassadors. Two decades later, Georgetown had developed one of the country’s leading geopolitics programs. Consciously or not, Walsh became an American Haushofer, determined to teach his countrymen how “the land” influenced human behavior. But he rejected Geopolitik. Where Haushofer used geography to justify violence, Walsh saw a

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63 Walsh Papers: Box 5, Folder 330.
peaceful “counter-weapon” against Soviet aggression; properly educated, the United States could use “legitimate geopolitics” to contain Bolshevism. He therefore considered Haushofer, who brought the discipline unwelcome notoriety, a threat to both international law and American security. Despite its importance, geopolitics would face nothing but derision unless Walsh disgraced the general’s work. Nuremberg gave him that opportunity.
IV. Saving Geopolitics
The Trial at Nuremberg

“Among the positive and active elements contributing to Germany’s planned aggressive warfare was the group which furnished a persuasive rationalization and intellectual preparation for world conquest by pseudo-scientific arguments. Foremost among these instrumentalities was the teaching and indoctrination of General Karl Haushofer and his Geopolitics.”
- Edmund Walsh

From the “Rape of Nanking” by the Japanese Imperial Army to the Nazi Holocaust, which claimed at least six million Jewish victims and five million others, World War II set new standards for brutality. Fully aware of German atrocities, the Allies decided in 1941 to seek legal “retribution.” The International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg (IMT) eventually dispensed harsh punishments, but its sentences did not tell the whole story. Since most senior Nazis committed suicide or fled before the Fall of 1945, American Chief Prosecutor Robert Jackson and his peers relied on “expert consultants” to identify defendants. As the former’s chief adviser on geopolitics, Edmund Walsh argued strongly for Karl Haushofer’s prosecution:

Because direct and voluntary cooperation in a criminal conspiracy is punishable in the case of the individual instigator, even [if he did not fire] the fatal shot, and since geopoliticians furnished the Nazi State with powerful arguments to justify their aggression … the professional geopoliticians of the Nazi regime are legally and morally guilty of participation in a premeditated crime of wanton aggression that resulted in the loss of many millions of lives.

Though Walsh’s conclusions, which bore striking resemblance to the Haushofer Myth, met stiff resistance, he nevertheless manipulated Nuremberg and saved geopolitics.

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1 Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., Papers: Box 10, Folder 633, Georgetown University Library, Booth Family Center for Special Collections, Washington, D.C.
2 Non-Jewish targets included Roma (Gypsies), Poles, Christian clergymen, the disabled, homosexuals, political prisoners (mainly Communists), and “asocials” (beggars, vagrants, and the unemployed).
3 Robert Houghwout Jackson Papers: Box 95, Folder 3, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C.
4 Adolf Hitler, Josef Goebbels, Heinrich Himmler, and Martin Bormann killed themselves, while Adolf Eichmann, Josef Mengele, and others escaped.
5 Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 633.
Setting the Stage

Allied leaders threatened the Nazis with prosecution as early as 25 October 1941, when United States President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill endorsed the punishment of German criminals. “Retribution,” wrote the latter, “must henceforward take its place among the major purposes of the war.” Three months later, nine governments-in-exile, including France and Belgium, signed a declaration at St. James Palace, placing “among their principal war aims the [judgment], through the channel of organized justice, of those guilty of or responsible for these crimes, whether they have ordered them, perpetrated them or participated in them.” The Moscow Conference of November 1943 likewise detailed how the Allies would carry out future trials, handing major Nazis “whose offenses [had] no particular geographical localization” over to international tribunals.⁶

The White House commenced official preparations for the first Nuremberg trial in late April 1945, when President Harry Truman asked Jackson, then an Associate Supreme Court Justice, to serve as “head of the American delegation for the purpose of presenting the evidence and to personally conduct the American case” against senior Nazis. He accepted the president’s offer and finalized his executive staff on 28 May, which included Sidney Alderman and Assistant Attorney General Francis Shea. Jackson also worked closely with General John Weir of the Judge Advocate General’s Office (JAG), who strongly supported Haushofer’s indictment.⁷

Jackson left Washington, D.C., for London in late May to meet his French, British, and Soviet counterparts. On 8 August, they signed the “Charter of the International Military Tribunal,” which defined the crimes in question—Crimes Against Peace, War Crimes, and

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⁶ For above, see Jackson Papers: Box 95, Folder 3.
⁷ For above, see Jackson Papers: Box 95, Folder 4.
Crimes Against Humanity—and outlined how the trial would work, with one tribunal member and a chief prosecutor from each main Allied country.\textsuperscript{8} For the next two months, debate raged over whom to include in the indictment. A 7 June list from the JAG Office proposed one of Haushofer’s former colleagues, Rudolf Hess; the British likewise recommended Hermann Göring, Alfred Rosenberg, Joachim von Ribbentrop, and Julius Streicher, among others.\textsuperscript{9} Jackson and his peers eventually settled on a list of twenty-two Nazis, none of them named Haushofer.\textsuperscript{10} The trial lasted approximately one year and ended in death sentences or long prison terms for most defendants. Jackson returned to the United States a hero.

The Reports

Throughout the trial, expert consultants gathered evidence and interrogated suspects on Jackson’s behalf, providing expertise on obscure issues like economics. Walsh played a similar role from August 1945 to June 1946, after Weir and Colonel Howard Brundage asked him “to prepare a case, from geopolitics, showing how the German geopolitikers had corrupted the German mind and prepared people for cooperating in the criminal attack on Europe.” They also requested that he “investigate and tabulate persecution of religion by Nazi [government] insofar as specific acts violated [International] Law.”\textsuperscript{11} Long an opponent of Haushofer’s, Walsh reveled in the opportunity to put him on trial and rehabilitate geopolitics. He already knew what to say:

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\textsuperscript{8} Jackson Papers: Box 95, Folder 9.
\textsuperscript{9} Jackson Papers: Box 101, Folder 2; Jackson Papers: Box 95, Folder 5.
\textsuperscript{11} Ironically, Walsh never mentioned Jews or the Holocaust in any of his journals.
The Nazi government deliberately destroyed ... the whole pattern of legality on which international jurisprudence was based. In international relations it was done philosophically and by indirection, through the claims to lebensraum ... In the case of those who, as individuals, participated in the preparation of the aggression—they can ethically and morally be indicted under the laws of conspiracy.\(^{12}\)

For reasons that remain unclear, Weir also sought a report from Raphael Lemkin.\(^{13}\)

Walsh flew to London in late August and immediately started writing a comprehensive memorandum titled “Role of Haushofer and Geopolitics.” In a journal entry penned between 3-7 September, he implored his peers to indict the general as a member of the Nazi plan to wage aggressive war, which constituted a “crime against peace”:

Similarly the conspiracy of Haushofer in his application of Geopolitics was an entirely unprecedented device which transcends previous categories of conspiracy and should not be judged by the rules drawn up for the more conventional statutory crimes. ... Too much adherence to the latter conventions may result in some of the major conspirators, e.g. Haushofer, escaping justice. They put themselves outside and above the law and to cope with them the prosecution will have to follow them into that new territory of their own choosing and rely on a broad interpretation of our present responsibility.\(^{14}\)

Despite exaggerating the truth, Walsh’s argument had merit. Beginning in the mid-1920s, Haushofer actively encouraged the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland, celebrated the invasion of Poland, and cheered German victories in Norway and Denmark. He advocated blatant imperialism throughout the interwar period, and claimed for the Reich large swaths of independent Europe, threatening military action if neighboring states resisted. Nevertheless, he did not directly influence preparations for World War II.

Walsh submitted his final report to Jackson on 10 September 1945 with the recommendation that Haushofer “be included in the indictment.”\(^{15}\) Unfortunately, he advanced

\(^{12}\) For above, see Walsh Papers: Box 2, Folder 126. Entries on 22 May, 16 July, and 31 July 1945.

\(^{13}\) Lemkin coined the term “genocide,” but had no apparent knowledge of geopolitics.

\(^{14}\) Walsh Papers: Box 2, Folder 126.

\(^{15}\) Walsh Papers: Box 2, Folder 126.
largely sensational claims that failed to incriminate the general on tangible grounds. That eventually proved his undoing. American officials wanted evidence connecting Haushofer to a grand Nazi plot—which did not exist.

In his report, Walsh situated “Haushofer and his influence” at the beginning of Adolf Hitler’s rise to power, calling them “chronologically the first criminal phase in the conspiracy.” His assertion matched what scholars later confirmed, that the general successfully introduced Germans to the idea of justified conquest in the 1920s and 1930s. But Walsh went further. “Without such preparation,” he concluded, “it is doubtful whether the German [General] Staff would have succeeded in … mobilizing the German people to their notorious aggression.” His unfounded causal leap, which discounted radicalizing factors like the Great Depression and anti-Semitism, obscured the truth with exaggeration.

Despite offering some defensible charges, Walsh filled his report with fiction. He insisted once again that Haushofer ran an Institut für Geopolitik in Munich, which “prepared the experts for the future [Nazi] program,” and claimed the professor’s “so-called Strategic Index” collected “important information from every quarter of the world” for the German General Staff. Both allegations matched questionable components of the Haushofer Myth. Walsh similarly called Chapter XIV of Mein Kampf “virtually Haushofer in print” and traced the general’s time at the German Academy to Hitler, rather than Hess. He subtly blamed “German geopolitics” (Deutsche Geopolitik) for inspiring Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor, placed his ideas “in an integrated program” that included “extermination [centers],” and condemned the “Journal of Geopolitics” (Zeitschrift für Geopolitik) for “indoctrination.” He concluded in no uncertain terms:

16 Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 633.
17 David Thomas Murphy, The Heroic Earth: Geopolitical in Weimar Germany, 1918-1933 (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1997), 127.
Every writer, author, professor, teacher, text-book writer, educator and public official who popularized Geopolitik and thereby justified aggression on a geographic-political-philosophic basis was an accessory before the fact to the criminal conspiracy finally executed in the field by the S.A., the S.S., the Gestapo and the Wehrmacht.

Although Walsh exaggerated the general’s role in Nazi Germany, he seemed to believe it.\(^{18}\)

Lemkin also wrote a scathing report on Haushofer. His 18 August 1945 “Memorandum for Brig. General Weir” charged the aging professor with numerous crimes, among them:

[Preparing] a plan for a global illegal war, by working constantly for the conclusion of a tripartite pact between Germany, Italy, and Japan … [Inciting] Nazi sympathizers in foreign countries to overthrow, by acts of violence, governments for the purpose of assuring foreign assistance to German plans of world domination … [And training] fifth columnists and [instructing] Germans living in foreign countries for the purpose of disrupting … these countries, and the weakening of them preliminary to their military, political or economic conquest by Germany.

Like Walsh, Lemkin made numerous mistakes. He mentioned a “Geopolitical Institute,” which supposedly gathered “military intelligence” from covert agents, falsely linked Haushofer to “mass deportations” in Eastern Europe, and called him “an intimate advisor to Hitler, Hess and other policy-making Nazi leaders.” He even claimed Haushofer “conspired with the German government” to surreptitiously plant ethnic Germans in positions of power abroad.\(^{19}\)

Lemkin’s shortcomings reflected Walsh’s. Though his philosophy justified aggressive war, and almost certainly influenced Hitler, Haushofer avoided overt political entanglements whenever possible. He did not incite rebellion in foreign countries, nor did he plan invasions. Lemkin and Walsh therefore relied on speculative causal leaps to prove their cases, conflating an article with active espionage and explicitly linking geopolitical education at the elementary level with mass violence. Haushofer was not innocent, but his detractors went too far.

\(^{18}\) For above, see Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 633.

\(^{19}\) For above, see Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 626.
The Response

Haushofer’s prosecution divided the Americans. On 31 August 1945, Lieutenant Colonel Leonard Wheeler claimed that Walsh’s studies “on geopolitics and any further investigation along that line” exceeded “the scope of [the team’s] case as presently envisioned.” Alderman disagreed. In a 7 September memorandum to Shea and Telford Taylor, he excoriated Haushofer, calling him “Hitler’s intellectual godfather.” He continued:

It was Haushofer, rather than Hess, who wrote Mein Kampf and who furnished the backbone for the Nazi bible and for what we call the common criminal plan. Geopolitics was not merely academic theory. It was a driving, dynamic plan for the conquest of the heartland of Eurasia and for domination of the world by the conquest of that heartland.

For Alderman, Haushofer was the “missing link.” “We are trying to produce a major conspiracy trial,” he complained, “in the absence of the father of the conspiracy, which means that we are really trying to convict a group of participi criminis without reaching the principal author of the conspiracy.” He saw that author in Haushofer, a cloaked mastermind acting out imperial fantasies through Nazi puppets. He wrote:

We all … think of Hitler as the arch criminal. Really, Hitler was largely only a symbol and a rabble-rousing mouthpiece. The intellectual content of which he was the symbol was the doctrine of Haushofer. And, fortunately, while we do not have Hitler, the symbol, we do have Haushofer, the actual author of the criminal plan.

Like Walsh, Alderman urged “serious consideration” of Haushofer as a major war criminal.

Weir agreed. During a 10 September telephone conversation, he noted how “very, very important” it was to “possibly include Haushofer” in the indictment, arguing, “There is the thinker who has devised many of the programs and policies that Hitler has followed and which he

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20 Jackson Papers: Box 110, Folder 1
put in his book, ‘Mein Kampf.’” Shea, also on the call, assured Weir that he and Alderman would discuss Haushofer with Jackson as soon as possible. “Everyone agrees that it’s desirable to go after him,” he claimed, provided the team had ample resources. “And I may say,” he added, “that we were much impressed with the work which Lempkin [sic] and Father Walsh [have] done on [this].”  

In short, he lied.  

On 13 September, three days after Walsh submitted his final report, Alderman penned another memorandum, this time for Jackson. In it, he reiterated his support for Haushofer’s prosecution, calling Walsh’s work “extremely well done” and the general “an arch war criminal.” Yet he noted resistance from his colleagues, many of whom balked at the idea of trying a professor at Nuremberg. “Mr. Shea and Colonel Taylor,” Alderman lamented, “have both expressed interest in the question but great doubt whether as a practical matter Haushofer can be shown to have been an actual instigator of aggression and war crimes as distinguished from a weaver of geopolitical theories.” Franz Neumann, who “commented … on the weakness of the parallelism in the quotations from Hitler and from Haushofer,” even called the general “an old fool.” Walsh likewise recounted opposition: Colonels John Amen and Brundage doubted the prosecution could “prove an overt act or establish [Haushofer’s] direct participation in the Nazi conspiracy to launch an aggressive war,” while De Witte Clinton Poole, from the State Department, considered his books and lectures free speech. Alderman left the final decision to Jackson, but feared that if “these interesting … studies make no more impression on our Staff.

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22 Jackson Papers: Box 110, Folder 9.  
23 Based on Alderman’s 13 September memorandum, Shea already knew that most staff members, himself included, did not support Haushofer’s prosecution.  
25 Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 644.
than indicated above … the whole subject will make no impression” on the British or Russians.\textsuperscript{26} He was probably right: on 10 September, English official Ernest Passant told him during a meeting that it would be “very difficult to make anything convincing” out of Haushofer’s case.\textsuperscript{27}

Opposition to Walsh stemmed from the disconnect between word and deed. Through Geopolitik, Haushofer encouraged the Nazis to commit crimes against peace in the name of “living space” (Lebensraum), endorsed flagrant violations of international law, influenced Hitler, and made imperialism palatable to millions of Germans. But he avoided endorsing the entire Nazi project, and worked directly with Berlin only on rare occasions; he did not plan military engagements or foment revolution in foreign countries, either, nor did he provide the German General Staff strategic intelligence. Trying him next to SS butchers therefore made little sense.

The Interrogation

With support from Lemkin, Alderman, and Weir, Walsh forged ahead anyway. On 25 September 1945, he met Haushofer for the first time at his home in rural Bavaria. Their brief discussion covered his initial arrest by American soldiers and murky tenure at the German Academy; Haushofer also mocked American newspapers for inventing the Institut für Geopolitik. Jackson called him to Nuremberg the next day, “willingly if he would, by arrest if he refused.”\textsuperscript{28}

Though most of Walsh’s journal entries bordered on the mundane, his conversation with Haushofer about the trial revealed an apparent contradiction:

After some persuasion he agreed [to go to Nuremberg peacefully]; I pointed out that the ghastly tragedy was such that only one thing was left for him … to do everything possible to have the truth established in order that peace might safely return to the

\textsuperscript{26} Lincoln Papers, War Crimes File: Evidence—Major War Criminals, Folder 2.
\textsuperscript{27} Lincoln Papers, War Crimes File: Evidence—Major War Criminals, Folder 3.
\textsuperscript{28} Walsh Papers: Box 2, Folder 126.
world. … How far [his geographical theories] were distorted to political and Nazi ends was now our own duty to uncover.29

After railing against Geopolitik for years, Walsh reversed course and described it as a victim of false interpretation. His dubious “change of heart,” likely a ploy to win Haushofer’s trust, reflected a significant tactical shift. Realizing the general would escape prosecution, “since so many of staff [believed] no direct indictment of an overt act [could] be proved,” he demanded “a statement repudiating the distorted [Geopolitik] of the Nazi period” instead.30 But Haushofer would only cooperate if he felt the Americans treated him fairly and saw the situation from his point of view—so Walsh lied. He pitched his new strategy to Jackson on 2 October: “I suggested we might not find it justified to name H. a defendant but we should be able to get a complete disavowal and refutation of the Geopolitics of the Nazi stripe and thus serve both education and international justice.”31 Haushofer suffered a minor heart attack two days later. Afraid the general would die before renouncing Geopolitik, Walsh asked to “interrogate [him] at once.”32

On 5 October 1945, a “recovered” Haushofer spoke with Walsh and Colonel Brundage for the first time, covering a range of topics. The conversation initially emphasized his influence on Hitler, which he vaguely acknowledged but more often dismissed. He also attacked the Führer’s invasion of Russia and ridiculed Mein Kampf:

> Usually I am not conceited, but I must say that I never could have written such a bad book. I only saw the book after it had been finished in printed form, and [Hess] wanted me to make a review and I [refused]. The book has nothing to do with geopolitics. … When I first saw this book I was very much against it, apart from other things also because of [Hitler’s] racial ideas.33

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29 Walsh Papers: Box 2, Folder 126. See entry on 26 September 1945.  
30 Walsh Papers: Box 2, Folder 126. See entry on 4 October 1945.  
31 Walsh Papers: Box 2, Folder 126. Entry incorrectly listed as 3 October 1945.  
32 Walsh Papers: Box 2, Folder 126. See entry on 4 October 1945.  
33 Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 635.
But not all Haushofer’s answers were credible. He insisted, for example, that the German Academy had no relationship with the Nazi Party before 1938, even though Hess supported his presidency. He “never had anything to do with the Party organizations” either, despite working with the Association of Germans Abroad (VDA), playing a role in the 1938 Munich Agreement, and exploiting Aryanization for personal gain. Haushofer’s testimony ended in tears after Walsh produced an anti-Semitic article he wrote about the United States. He then “became very confidential” and expressed remorse for “his violent writing.”

Walsh continued the next day with an emphasis on Geopolitik, and whether Haushofer supported the occupation of countries with German populations. Haushofer countered with a lie:

This is a one-sided point of view which I did not have. … This was Hess’ and my conviction at the time, and I never would have made all of these speeches which I made in Stockholm and Oslow if I was not under the impression and did not believe it was never meant to take away any of these countries and incorporate them into Germany, but the only intention was to permit cultural rights of German minorities there. … You can see from my action since 1938 that I was against any forcible measures not counting [those] territories that we had at that time.

But Haushofer did have that view: on multiple occasions in the 1920s and 1930s, he wrote about expanding German territory, peacefully or otherwise, and later celebrated Hitler’s early victories. Haushofer proceeded to explain his work after 1933, especially an imperialist chapter in “War Geopolitics” (Wehr-Geopolitik), as the result of fear for his wife and children; he also denied any connection to Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor. Sorting through a sea of ambiguity,

36 Walsh Papers: Box 2, Folder 126. See entry on 5 October 1945.
37 Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 635.
38 See, for example, Jacobsen, Karl Haushofer, 1:392-394.
Walsh summarized the interrogation in Haushofer’s words: “What is … historically before the world is that many of your arguments were used both by the Japanese and by the Nazi Party, and I add, according to your testimony yesterday and today, into a direction which you never intended.” Haushofer welcomed the American’s judgment, and agreed to “disavow” his work.

The Death of Geopolitik

Jackson released Haushofer from custody on 10 October 1945, so he could prepare a document refuting Geopolitik. The aging professor returned to rural Bavaria and completed his “Defense of German Geopolitics” on 2 November, which Walsh initially re-titled “The Failure of German Geopolitics.” In it, he addressed the main tenets of Geopolitik, denied several of the myths tarnishing his name, and attempted to compare his conception of geopolitics to Walsh’s.

First and foremost, Haushofer defended his calls for Lebensraum. “It would be an inhuman and impossible demand,” he wrote, “to expect that a German scientist could disregard the inadequacy of the distribution of living space in central Europe.” He likewise insisted that Geopolitik only became “illegitimate” after Hitler rose to power:

I could point to numerous lectures, dating from the years 1919 to 1933, which correspond in their development, for example, with Scheme II … of a course on Geopolitics of the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University in use there on the date 1 July 1944.

Haushofer even denied allegations of imperialism. “Imperialistic plans of conquest,” he claimed, “were never favored … neither by me in my writings nor in my lectures. … I never approved of

39 Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 635.
40 Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 638.
41 Haushofer titled it “Defense of German Geopolitics in the Light of the Insight Derived from the Conversations of 5 and 6 October 1945.” See Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 642.
annexation of territories alien to our people and which had no German settlements.”

His private support for invading Poland and Western Europe suggested otherwise.

Haushofer also used “Defense” to refute accusations lodged against him in the United States. The Institut für Geopolitik did not exist, nor did he write Mein Kampf. He likewise distanced himself from the military:

Therefore it is self-evident that the charge of planning conquest, including carefully worked out maps to infiltrate other continents, such as South America, was manufactured from thin air. In such matters the sensation-loving press was raving without let or hinderance [sic], even using detailed forgeries of maps.

Haushofer concluded his coup-de-grâce with an appeal to “legitimate geopolitics”:

The goal of German Geopolitics originally had been [before 1933] … in common with legitimate American geopolitics … to achieve the possibility of excluding disorders in the future, like these of 1914 to 1918, through mutual understanding of peoples and their potentialities to develop on the basis of their cultural foundations and living space … This presupposed a geographically correct picture of the world: it required mutuality, moreover, and respect of one nationality and race by others.

Haushofer essentially copied Walsh, who in 1944 proposed “an American geopolitics based on international justice, international honor, the sanctity of the given word, and mutuality of international respect” to prevent war.

They used the same words—legitimate, mutuality, and respect—and identical themes. In fact, these similarities, and the existence of at least one copy edited in Walsh’s handwriting, raise serious questions.

At best, Haushofer wrote what he thought the Americans wanted to hear; at worst, Walsh drafted some of it himself. Either way, “Defense” had a much broader agenda than its title implied. It did not fight for Geopolitik, but

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42 For above, see Jackson Papers: Box 104, Folder 10.
43 Jacobsen, Karl Haushofer, I:392-394.
44 For above, see Jackson Papers: Box 104, Folder 10.
46 Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 642.
rather the entire discipline. “An international Geopolitics,” Haushofer declared, “could become one of the best means to [aven] world-catastrophe.”\textsuperscript{47} Walsh must have been proud.

With Haushofer’s last testament in hand, Georgetown’s celebrated Jesuit turned his attention to Nazi persecution of the Catholic Church. The two maintained periodic contact, but otherwise Walsh left him alone. Haushofer subsequently fell into a bout of depression, which had plagued him at Nuremberg. “I live, or rather I keep on vegetating quietly,” he wrote Walsh on 7 February 1946. “Should you be able to meet my wish [of speaking again], please do not put it too far off.”\textsuperscript{48} A month later, on 14 March 1946, Walsh learned from Haushofer’s son, Heinz, that his parents had committed suicide. He paid his respects the next day:

I went to [Haushofer’s] grave and said a few prayers in a drizzling rain—I could not help but think of the deep tragedy of this death by night, alone, in a lonely gulley, of the last of the geopoliticians! What an inscrutable destiny, that after 19 yrs. of teaching and warning U.S.A. about the teachings of Haushofer, I should today be kneeling over his … body in one of the loneliest spots in Bavaria!

Walsh expressed genuine remorse, lamenting the “tortured geologist whose teachings came to naught and whose false interpretations by Hitler ruined Germany.”\textsuperscript{49} But in sadness his words betrayed cunning duplicity. After publicly labeling Haushofer a major criminal, he privately blamed World War II on Hitler’s distortions. That dichotomy continued for years.

Walsh after Geopolitik

Following Haushofer’s interrogation and “Defense of German Geopolitics,” Walsh submitted a final report to Jackson in February 1946.\textsuperscript{50} He repeated well-worn narratives, labeling

\begin{footnotes}
\item[47] Jackson Papers: Box 104, Folder 10.
\item[48] Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 656.
\item[49] For above, see Walsh Papers: Box 2, Folder 126.
\item[50] Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 644.
\end{footnotes}
the general a “morally and legally guilty” Nazi accomplice whose poor health saved him from prosecution—even though he admitted the Allies “might not find it justified to name H. a defendant” two days before his heart attack.\textsuperscript{51} He then set himself up for a blatant contradiction:

I disagree vigorously with [Haushofer’s] statement that his ideas were violently distorted and abused by Hitler against the wishes and intent of their author. If Haushofer felt in 1945 that his teachings had been abused, yet long before he had endorsed the use which later was made of them by the Fuehrer. … [The Nazi program] simply executed with brutal logicality the more general concepts advocated by Haushofer.\textsuperscript{52}

But Walsh secretly embraced the opposite view a month later, when he had no further incentive to lie.\textsuperscript{53} The man he promoted publicly therefore differed from the one he knew privately. Given a pulpit, Walsh denounced Haushofer as an active Nazi, which made sense; geopolitics would only survive if Geopolitik died. But behind closed doors, he portrayed the general, despite his flaws, as more victim than aggressor. Perhaps he did not believe what he preached after all.

Walsh followed his final report on Haushofer with an 18 June 1946 address at the University of Frankfurt, titled “True Geopolitics for False Geopolitics in Germany.” Before a captive audience, he railed against Geopolitik, calling it “an important ideological instrument for the leaders of National Socialism” whose “tenets and practical conclusions figured prominently in the program of the Party before 1933 and became state policy [afterward].” He again claimed Hitler did not distort Haushofer’s ideas, and argued the latter avoided prosecution on “technical grounds.”\textsuperscript{54} In fact, he misrepresented the general’s acquittal on multiple occasions. In a 15 April 1946 letter to personal secretary Walter Giles, he blatantly lied about the investigation:

What a strange whirligig [twist] of fate it was that put in my hands the decision whether [Haushofer] should be put with the other criminals in the dock here at

\textsuperscript{51} Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 644; Walsh Papers: Box 2, Folder 126.
\textsuperscript{52} Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 645.
\textsuperscript{53} Walsh Papers: Box 2, Folder 126. See entry on 15 March 1946.
\textsuperscript{54} For above, see Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 646.
Nuremberg? I am glad now that I was able to recommend that same mercy which we hope for before the judgment seat of God.\footnote{Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., letter to Walter Giles, April 15, 1946.} Walsh concluded his Frankfurt lecture with a defense of “true geopolitics,” which would lead man “to a reasonable and equitable solution of boundary problems and to a humane distribution of the fruits of the earth.”\footnote{Walsh Papers: Box 10, Folder 646.} His diatribe against Haushofer, in some ways warranted, but often deceptive, served a specific purpose: to advance the study of geopolitics and in doing so increase the field’s credibility as a peaceful counterweight to Soviet aggression.

Walsh also attacked Haushofer in the media. On 16 September 1946, \textit{LIFE} published an article in which he called the general’s “contribution to the Nazi revolution … considerable.”\footnote{Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., “The Mystery of Haushofer,” \textit{LIFE}, September 16, 1946, 107.} He likened Haushofer to a “companion and political Nestor of the ruling clique,” linking him to Japanese officials in Germany (probably true).\footnote{Nestor played the role of a wise, albeit flawed “warrior-counsellor” in Homer’s \textit{Iliad}. See Hanna M. Roisman, “Nestor the Good Counsellor,” \textit{The Classical Quarterly} 55, no. 1 (2005): 22.} “After the outbreak of World War II,” he continued, “the interrelation of cause and effect became evident as one invasion after another followed the pattern so long and so openly expounded by the master geopolitician.”\footnote{Walsh, “The Mystery of Haushofer,” 107.} Eleven months after his colleagues at Nuremberg rejected the idea that Haushofer directly influenced Nazi aggression, Walsh shamelessly printed it in a popular magazine. But he did not stop there.

On multiple occasions, Walsh manipulated Haushofer’s words to imply the existence of an Institut für Geopolitik. During his interrogation, the latter praised the priest’s large collection of geopolitical materials, including a summary of courses at Georgetown. Walsh recorded Haushofer’s response in his journal: “And how they complained about my so-called Institute of
Geopolitics.” In retrospect, Haushofer appeared to be joking, saying something like, “Americans feared my resources, but look at this!” He did not intend to suggest an “institute” ever existed, but later versions of the quote changed. In *LIFE* and *Total Power*, Walsh inserted the word “little” before “so-called,” meaning Haushofer characterized the “institute” with a tangible adjective. It had not just been a “so-called” organization, but a small one. Walsh also added “at Munich” after “Institute of Geopolitics,” making it sound like Haushofer was referring to a specific group in a specific place. He even used the phrase “My little institute” as a section heading. In doing so, he deliberately hid the awkward truth, that there was no *Institut für Geopolitik*.

Walsh returned to Georgetown in July 1946 and continued teaching. In 1947, the School of Foreign Service (SFS) offered three geopolitics classes: “Basic Course” covered the “influence of geography on the evolution of states traced in the writings of the ancients … to the moderns such as Ratzel, Kjellen [sic], and Haushofer”; “Legitimate Geopolitics” emphasized the “proper function of geographic factors in the political study of the state”; and “Seminar on Geopolitics” analyzed “in greater detail a specific field,” like Soviet Russia. “Selected students” even worked with “scholars and teachers” at a vaguely-defined “Institute of Geopolitics.”

Following a four-month trip to Japan in late 1947 and early 1948, the dawn of the Cold War inspired Walsh to publish *Total Power* (1949), in which he launched a final salvo against *Geopolitik*. The first section covered his time in Germany, condemning the “direct and influential

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60 Walsh Papers: Box 2, Folder 126. See entry on 6 October 1945.
63 Awkward because Walsh invented it.
64 Georgetown University School of Foreign Service Catalogues, 1947-1948 (Summer Edition), Georgetown University Archives.
65 The only *Institut* that ever existed. See GUSFS Catalogues, 1947-1948 (Summer Edition), Georgetown University Archives.
role that Haushofer … personally played for many years in the inner counsels of the [Nazi]
Party,” along with his “powerful stimulus and specific activities in justifying Hitler’s political and
military aggressions.”66 The rest of the book focused on power, totalitarianism, and revolution,
with a section at the end on “New Geopolitics in Europe and Asia.” Staunchly anticommunist
since the 1920s, Walsh decried “the reincarnation of [Geopolitik’s] spirit in a very virile successor
[the Soviet Union].”67 “I have not the slightest doubt,” he concluded in 1952, “that there are
members of the old Haushofer school in Russia today.”68 Despite the rise of airpower, Walsh
feared Stalin’s control of the Heartland, and interpreted his aggressive moves in eastern Siberia,
northern Korea, and the Kurile Islands, as well as his alleged plans for Albania and the
Dardanelles, as an attempt to seize the World-Island.69 He concluded with a call-to-arms.70

Walsh referenced Mackinder again in Total Empire, published two years later.

Recognizing the disruptive power of aviation, he posited a new Heartland theory:

I believe the unknown geopoliticians behind the Iron Curtain have adapted
Mackinder’s formula to the new circumstances of the air age. They have probably
changed and shifted some elements and emphasized others, so that their
consolidation of land power in central and eastern Europe now leaves them free to
accelerate control of the marginal lands on the rim of the world island. It may well
be that they are saying: “Who controls the rimlands of Europe and Asia can protect
the Heartland of the World Revolution.”71

The Soviet Union, Walsh concluded, had perverted the study of geography to imperialist ends.

Once again, he promoted “legitimate geopolitics” as the only antidote—and a literal interpretation

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66 Walsh, Total Power, 12.
67 Walsh, Total Power, 247.
68 Walsh Papers: Box 3, Folder 234.
69 Walsh, Total Power, 247-248.
70 Walsh, Total Power, 329-330.
71 Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., Total Empire: The Roots and Progress of World Communism (Milwaukee: The
of Mackinder advocated military containment.\textsuperscript{72} Geopolitics therefore became a bulwark against totalitarian aggression. Thus, Walsh concluded, “The military power of the United States must continue to be so apparent and so alert that any [foe] will think more than twice before provoking another devastating conflict with America.”\textsuperscript{73} He even justified the preemptive use of nuclear weapons.\textsuperscript{74} Yet in a nod to legitimate geopolitics, he also urged a “renaissance of spiritual power in the souls of men”—or the peaceful conquest of Soviet values.\textsuperscript{75} After \textit{Total Empire}, in 1952, Walsh celebrated his Jesuit Golden Jubilee and thirty-seven-year anniversary at Georgetown. He died four years later, leaving a remarkable legacy behind.

\textbf{Victory At All Costs}

The first Nuremberg war crimes trial targeted Germany’s senior leaders, many of whom faced the gallows. For months’ beforehand, Allied researchers gathered evidence and interrogated suspects, condemning some Nazis and “acquitting” others. Edmund Walsh, driven by anticommunism, actively promoted Karl Haushofer’s prosecution. Though most officials rejected his conclusions, he still won: the general’s “Defense of German Geopolitics,” combined with Walsh’s blatant lies, thoroughly discredited \textit{Geopolitik} and rescued its “legitimate” cousin. American interventions against communist rule in Korea and Vietnam subsequently reflected new interpretations of Mackinder’s old theories. Walsh wanted to save geopolitics, and he did.

\textsuperscript{72} Blocking the Soviets in Korea or Vietnam would stunt their control of the rimlands, and in doing so, protect the globe from communism.
\textsuperscript{73} Walsh, \textit{Total Empire}, 209.
\textsuperscript{74} Walsh, \textit{Total Empire}, 252.
\textsuperscript{75} Walsh, \textit{Total Empire}, 209-211.
Conclusion

Karl Haushofer and Edmund Walsh met for the first and last time at Nuremberg. There they fought a battle over geopolitics. Born in Munich, Haushofer developed his imperialist worldview in the late 1910s and early 1920s, spurred by Germany’s disastrous defeat in World War I. Geopolitik, founded on an organic conception of the state and two key recommendations—limited territorial expansion coupled with a tripartite alliance between Germany, Russia, and Japan—subsequently spread throughout the country. Haushofer thus prepared young people and their parents to support aggressive war, and eventually vote for Adolf Hitler.

Haushofer’s relationship with the Nazi Party (NSDAP) began in the Spring of 1920, when he and Rudolf Hess met Hitler for the first time. Hess joined the party immediately, and tried to bring his mentor into the Führer’s inner circle. Haushofer successfully resisted his overtures for several years, focusing on the University of Munich. That changed after the Nazis’ failed coup in November 1923. While Hess and Hitler occupied cells at Landsberg Fortress, Haushofer attempted to give them a basic geopolitical education; Mein Kampf, published in 1925, subsequently reflected many of his teachings. The general nevertheless recused himself from party politics throughout the 1920s.

Upon Hitler’s rise to power in early 1933, Haushofer embraced the Nazis. His work at the German Academy and Association of Germans Abroad (VDA), combined with public support for expansion in Austria and Czechoslovakia, raised his profile in the Reich. Though it is impossible to prove a direct, causal relationship, Nazi foreign policy also reflected basic tenets of Geopolitik until at least 1939. But in late 1938, Haushofer suffered two major setbacks: he fell out of favor with Hitler on 8 November and watched in horror as civilians burned synagogues across Germany two days later (Kristallnacht). After Hess left for Britain in May 1941, the family lost its
guardian, and their situation deteriorated. Haushofer continued collaborating until July 1944, when Nazi agents arrested him after implicating his son in an attempt on Hitler’s life. Following a brief stay at Dachau, he lived out the rest of the war in rural Bavaria.

Haushofer’s story is complicated. Though he backed the Nazis and promoted blatant imperialism, he did not play an active role in policymaking nor wield political power; it is also unclear to what extent his ideas influenced Hitler. Rather than a villain, he played the role of tragic hero; neither good nor evil, he cast his lot with the Nazis and inadvertently contributed to Germany’s destruction.¹ Yet American observers depicted him as a shadowy puppeteer throughout the war. Georgetown University vice-president Edmund Walsh seized on those allegations, and promoted lies of his own. He considered geopolitics a means to peace, and its “legitimate” variant the key to defeating communism. Haushofer’s connection to the field thus threatened Western security: no one would use geopolitics against Russia if they considered it a tool of Nazism. Walsh therefore sold a myth, first at Georgetown and then at Nuremberg, in hopes of discrediting Haushofer. His success rehabilitated geopolitics—and that matters.²

Challenging its integrity, Walsh twisted the Nuremberg process and manipulated reality to advance a personal agenda. That should disturb anyone who believes in international law, especially leaders at the International Criminal Court (ICC). A decent trial depends not only on fair judges, but also the people working under them. If those individuals pursue their own goals instead of the ICC’s, trust will collapse. For the sake of justice, that cannot happen.

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² Scholars still study it today.
Glossary

**Alderman, Sidney (1892-1973)**—Key adviser to American Chief Prosecutor Robert Jackson at Nuremberg, 1945 to 1946. Strongly supported Karl Haushofer’s prosecution.


**Creeden, S.J., John B.**—President of Georgetown University from 1918 to 1924. Major figure in foundation of School of Foreign Service.

**Deutsche Geopolitik**—German variant of geopolitics founded by Karl Haushofer in mid-1920s. Promoted limited territorial expansion in Central and Eastern Europe, and tripartite military alliance with Russia and Japan. Likely influenced Hitler and Nazi foreign policy. Widely condemned in United States during and after World War II.

**Dorpalen, Andreas (1911-1982)**—Born in Germany. Emigrated to United States and became a citizen in 1942. Taught at Ohio State University.

**Geopolitics**—Academic discipline concerned with geography’s impact on foreign policy. Established in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by geographers like Alfred Mahan, Halford Mackinder, Friedrich Ratzel, and Rudolf Kjellén. Karl Haushofer, Isaiah Bowman, Edmund Walsh, and others took their place in 1930s and 1940s.

**German Academy**—Founded in 1925 by Karl Haushofer and a small group of Munich elites. Actively strengthened ties between Germany and Germans living abroad. Period of deliberate Nazification during Haushofer’s presidency, 1934 to 1937. Taken over by Josef Goebbels’ Ministry of Propaganda in 1941.


**Harrison, Richard**—Graduated from Yale University in 1923 and Yale School of Architecture in 1930. Independent cartographer.

**Haushofer, Albrecht (1903-1945)**—Karl Haushofer’s eldest son. Secretly attempted to broker peace between Germany and Great Britain in 1941. Arrested for possible involvement in July 1944 attempt on Hitler’s life. Murdered by Nazi agents in April 1945.
Haushofer, Karl (1869-1946)—Born in Munich, Germany. Veteran of World War I. Close friend of Rudolf Hess and father of “German geopolitics” (Deutsche Geopolitik). Professor at University of Munich. Significant connections to Nazi Party and Adolf Hitler throughout 1920s and 1930s. Investigated by Raphael Lemkin and Edmund Walsh at Nuremberg. Avoided prosecution. Committed suicide in rural Bavaria in March 1946.

Haushofer Myth—A set of false claims about Karl Haushofer’s role in Nazi Germany before and during World War II. Promoted by American journalists, scholars, and filmmakers.


Institut für Geopolitik—Fictional organization supposedly led by Karl Haushofer before and during World War II. Key component of Haushofer Myth.

Jackson, Robert (1892-1954)—Associate Supreme Court Justice of United States. American Chief Prosecutor at first Nuremberg trial, 1945 to 1946.

Kjellén, Rudolf (1864-1922)—Early twentieth century Swedish geographer known for his conception of the state as a biological organism. Coined the term “geopolitics.”

Kruszewski, Charles—Briefly represented United States Department of the Treasury in Berlin and Frankfurt. Periodic contributor for Foreign Affairs and other magazines through 1940s and 1950s. Wrote several articles about Karl Haushofer during World War II.

Lebensraum—Translated as “living space.” Reference to population density in Germany, used as justification for territorial expansion. Term invented by Friedrich Ratzel in 1890s, adopted by Karl Haushofer in late 1910s and early 1920s.

Lemkin, Raphael (1900-1959)—Eastern European Jewish refugee who invented the term “genocide” to describe the Holocaust. Compiled an exhaustive report on Karl Haushofer for American authorities at Nuremberg.


Mahan, Alfred (1840-1915)—Nineteenth century American geographer famous for writing The Influence of Sea Power Upon History. Commonly cited as major figure in early geopolitics.

Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact—Nonaggression treaty signed by German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop and Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov on 23 August 1939, one week before invasion of Poland. Secret provisions divided country in half and granted Baltic states to Soviet Union.
Ratzel, Friedrich (1844-1904)—Major German geographer in late nineteenth century. Coined the term “living space” (*Lebensraum*). Inspired Karl Haushofer.

Rosenberg, Alfred (1893-1946)—Hitler’s chief racial ideologist. Infamous anti-Semite. Sentenced to death at Nuremberg.

Shea, Francis (1905-1989)—Assistant Attorney General of the United States during World War II. Served as adviser to Robert Jackson at first Nuremberg trial, 1945 to 1946.

Sondern, Jr., Frederic—Well-known American journalist from 1930s to 1960s. Wrote for *LIFE* and *Reader’s Digest*, among others. Published several blatantly false articles about Karl Haushofer during World War II.

Strausz-Hupé, Robert (1903-2002)—Born in Vienna, Austria. Emigrated to United States in 1923. Took political science position at University of Pennsylvania in 1940, promoted to associate professor six years later. Advised American presidential candidates Barry Goldwater (1964) and Richard Nixon (1968) on foreign policy. Served as U.S. ambassador to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), the Maldives, Belgium, Sweden, NATO, and Turkey.

Thorndike, Jr., Joseph (1913-2005)—Celebrated journalist. Started at *TIME* after graduating from Harvard University in 1934. Associate editor at *LIFE* from 1936 to 1945, managing editor from 1946 to 1949.


Weigert, Hans (1902-1983)—Born in Berlin, Germany. Fled to United States in 1938. Held positions at Trinity College, Carlton College, University of Chicago, and Georgetown University.


Whittlesey, Derwent (1890-1956)—Renowned political geographer. Received Ph.D. from University of Chicago in 1920, taught geography there until 1928. Moved to Harvard University, became full professor in 1943. President of Association of American Geographers in 1944.


*Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*—Small journal founded by Karl Haushofer and others in January 1924 with focus on geopolitics. Slowly adopted Nazi ideology and became propaganda tool by early 1940s. Last issue printed in late 1944.
Images

Rev. Edmund A. Walsh, S.J.
Courtesy of Georgetown University Special Collections
Walsh Papers: Box 11, Folder 738
Edmund Walsh surveying a stockpile of food in Soviet Russia, ca. 1922-1924
Courtesy of Georgetown University Special Collections
Walsh Papers: Box 11, Folder 723
Edmund Walsh teaching “Geopolitics,” ca. 1942-1945
Courtesy of Terrence Boyle
Edmund Walsh touring Nuremberg ruins, ca. 1945-1946
Courtesy of Georgetown University Special Collections
Walsh Papers: Box 11, Folder 728
Edmund Walsh in Nuremberg uniform, ca. 1946
Courtesy of Georgetown University Special Collections
Walsh Papers: Box 11, Folder 727
Edmund Walsh giving a speech, ca. 1940-1952
Courtesy of Georgetown University Special Collections
Walsh Papers: Box 11, Folder 745
Major General Dr. Karl Haushofer
Published in *TIME* (16 September 1946)
Martha and Karl Haushofer
Published in Leben Und Werk: Band I (1979)
Karl Haushofer and Max Hofweber in France, ca. 1914
Published in Leben Und Werk: Band I (1979)
Rudolf Hess and Karl Haushofer, ca. 1933-1941
Published in *Prisoner of Peace* (1954)
Karl Haushofer and Japanese Naval-Attaché Admiral Yendo, 13 March 1939
Published in Leben Und Werk: Band I (1979)
Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei

Partei-Kanzlei

Der Leiter der Partei-Kanzlei

An den
Beauftragten des Führers für die Überwachung der gesamten geistigen und weltanschaulichen Schulung und Erziehung der NSDAP,
Herrn Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg,
Berlin-Charlottenburg 2.
Bismarckstr.1

Betrifft: Die Professoren Dr. Karl und Albrecht Haushofer.

Sehr geehrter Parteigenosse Rosenberg!

Wie mir mitgeteilt wurde, ist Professor Dr. Karl Haushofer in der letzten Ausgabe der NS.-Monatshefte stark hervorgehoben worden. Es hat sich dabei um eine Buchbesprechung seines Werkes über Wahrgeopolitik gehandelt, die darauf hinauslief, dass dieses Buch nicht übergangen werden könne.

Ich bin der Meinung, dass Professor Dr. Karl Haushofer und auch sein Sohn Prof. Albrecht Haushofer in der Öffentlichkeit nicht mehr herausgestellt werden sollten und wäre Ihnen dankbar, wenn auch Sie sich dieser Ansicht anschließen würden.
Ich darf um Mitteilung Ihrer Stellungnahme bitten.

Heil Hitler!
Ihr

(M. Bormann.)
Karl Haushofer preparing German generals to invade North and South America
Featured in *Plan for Destruction* (1943)
The Institut für Geopolitik
Featured in *Why We Fight: The Nazis Strike* (1943)
Sidney Alderman exchange with Ernest Passant about Haushofer, 10 September 1945

Courtesy of Harry S. Truman Presidential Museum and Library
K. Lincoln Papers, War Crimes File: Evidence—Major War Criminals, Folder 3
13 September 1945

MEMORANDUM TO MR. JUSTICE JACKSON

SUBJECT: Karl Haushofer as a Major War Criminal

1. I am handing you herewith Father Walsh’s Memorandum on the Role of Haushofer and Geopolitics, with his Annex I, his review in the American Journal of International Law, October 1944, of Gyorgy’s Geopolitics, The New German Science, and his Annex II, being pages 150 to 153 of German Strategy of World Conquest, by Derwent Whittlesey.

2. I cabled General Weir to deliver to you in Washington a copy of Dr. Leekin’s study on Haushofer and cabled you expressing the hope that you might read it on your trip back, since I deemed it too important to overlook.

3. You have in your office a copy of my Memorandum of 7 September to Mr. Shea and Colonel Taylor. However, for convenience I am attaching a copy of that memorandum herewith so that you may have all these papers together. You will see that my Memorandum of 7 September had wide distribution and circulation in our Staff.

4. As shown by my Memorandum of 7 September, I was impressed by the Leekin study on Haushofer. The weakest part of the study, I think, is the purported parallelisms between quotations from Mein Kampf and quotations from Haushofer. The parallelism is by no means striking and often is virtually non-existent. However, I still retain the general impression of the study expressed in my Memorandum of 7 September.

5. Father Walsh’s Memorandum is extremely well done and strongly supports the general conclusions of the Leekin study, that Haushofer is an arch-war criminal, whose influence not only had no geographical localization but obviously covered Europe and Asia.

6. Regardless of all this, I feel complete frustration in any effort to interest any practical man in Haushofer as a prospective defendant. Mr. Shea and Colonel Taylor have both expressed interest in the question but great doubt whether as a practical matter Haushofer can be shown to have been an actual instigator of aggression and war crimes as distinguished from a weaver of geopolitical theories. Aside from these, the only favorable reaction I have had from our Staff was from Dr.
Hazard, who noted on my memorandum, "I agree that this is a question well worth considering. Ideas are vitally important in the new movements in the world." Dr. Neuner commented to me on the weakness of the parallelism in the quotations from Hitler and from Haushofer and expressed his view that Haushofer is an old fool," indicating his view that we would be wasting our time considering him as a major war criminal. Such other expressions as I have had from the staff range all the way from mild interest to skepticism and the view that Haushofer's undoubted intellectual or pseudo-scientific contribution to pan-Germanism, Hitler, Nazism, aggressive war, war crimes and crimes against humanity is too intangible a thing with which to deal in our trial.

7. If these interesting and well-done studies make no more impression on our staff than indicated above (I should, however, observe that Father Walsh's study has not been circulated to the staff), then I fear that the whole subject will make no impression on our practical British cousins or on the even more practical Russians. It might appeal more to the raison d'etre of the French. The British reaction is suggested by my minutes of the meeting of Committee 4 on Monday, 10 September, when Mr. Pannett was commenting on the necessity of finding early Nazi documents stressing ideas of pan-German expansionism and I asked him if he had given any thought to the geo-politics school and to Haushofer's contribution to Hitler, the Nazis and aggression and he replied, "Yes, but I think it would be very difficult to make anything definite out of it." If the four delegations would be only mildly impressed then obviously the Tribunal would not be impressed.

8. I did not wish to pass up this whole subject without careful consideration or idly throw it into the waste basket. I tried it on the staff, with the above negative results. In the last analysis I think it depends on how it impresses you, who are used to passing on important matters judicially. If you are sufficiently impressed, it might be well to present the Haushofer question to the other Chief Prosecutors. Otherwise we had better forget the whole matter and wait to see if Hitler turns up alive. Maybe Haushofer is just an old fool."
Edmund Walsh journal from Nuremberg, 2 October 1945 (incorrectly listed as 3 October)
Courtesy of Georgetown University Special Collections
Walsh Papers: Box 2, Folder 126
My dear Giles: April 15, 1946

Many thanks for your welcome letter dated 2, also for the previous one before you returned to Washington. We arrived about 3 months after you wrote it, due to a change in my APO number. But your last two came in good time. I am away a good deal, having been as you may know in Austria, Italy, Czechoslovakia, France, the Rhineland, etc. I have been in many kinds of conveyance - airplane, railroad cars, car, trucks, and Army jeeps. I have lived for 8 months in the ruins and rubble of Germany, which James, Louis, and yourself had much to do with when you were selecting targets for the Air Force. Tell James that I have often wished he had to live among these ruins as he had so much to do with causing them! I have a good photographic record to show you all when I get back.

The date of that happy event has been changed twice as my original orders expired at the end of February. But a cable came from the War Dept. extending them because of certain conditions here, and if I get back sometime in June I shall.
Edmund Walsh letter to Walter Giles, 15 April 1946

Courtesy of Terrence Boyle
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