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Karl Haushofer and Geopolitics – the History of a German Mythos

GÜNTER WOLKERSDORFER

This essay attempts to reassess the writings of Karl Haushofer, a German professor of geopolitics during the period of the Third Reich. However, this examination is not to be another historical reflection. Instead it approaches the question what different kinds of historical reflections on Karl Haushofer as a person and his geopolitics were made in Germany and how they influenced the further geopolitical research. The different interpretations of Haushofer are examined in the form of a discourse analytic study. It shows that the different judgments concerning his work are open to diverse political interpretations.

This article examines the geopolitician Karl Haushofer (1869–1946) as a person and his influence on geopolitics under the Nazis as well as in the period after the Second World War. Haushofer is of particular interest because in his person, as well as in the history of his family, the discursive significance of the geopolitical concept can be clearly portrayed. The article classifies geopolitics as a discursive phenomenon. Discursive practice is here taken to mean, after Foucault, the establishing of reality through language. However, language itself is not the major factor, but the discursive practices which within the balance of power systematically shape the objects which they describe. In this respect Haushofer and his family are of interest primarily because of their discursive effect. The myth which substantiates the story of the Haushofers had and continues to have an immense effect on the development of geographical discourse in Germany as well as in the USA. Therefore the story of the Haushofers, and the complicated discursive excess which it reveals, will be presented in the following.

Geopolitical discourse in Germany constructs its 'Archimedean Point' in Haushofer's role. A number of different discourse strategies can be identified in this context:

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(1) Direct blame of Haushofer for the political errors in German geography. Thus 'purification' of the discipline was achieved through discourse.

(2) Authors from the conservative to the radical right milieu, who derive their ideas from the history of political geography from Ratzel to Haushofer, attempt to develop a new discursive basis. They see themselves in the tradition of the 'political territorial concept in Germany', which, in their view, was unjustifiably rejected as a result of developments under the Nazis. Sprengel (1996) classifies this attitude as a 'Pseudowestern-Teutonic' form of geopolitics. With the fall of the Berlin Wall the situation unique to Germany from 1945 to 1989 was ended, and the state of normality which existed prior to 1945 can be resumed. At least that is the viewpoint in the monograph *Westbindung* (Grossheim, Weissmann, Zittelmann 1993). This applies especially to the legitimate demands of classical German geopolitics.

Since discourse is manifested on a historical basis, reflection upon developments is necessary. The present situation of political geography and geopolitics in Germany cannot be understood without a specific view of the historical background of the discipline. Although Kuhn refers to the fact that in every discipline the paradigm's fight for power assumes a central position, nevertheless the situation in political geography in the German speaking area is especially confusing. How could it happen that in national-conservative circles the term geopolitics could find a new state of origin, and a definition of geopolitics '... as the teachings of the influence of the geographical area on the politics of a state' (Brill 1994, 21)[1] did not find any varied criticism among the experts of German geography.

A Brief History of German Geopolitics

It is always an arbitrary choice to assume the origin of space/race/political discourse at a certain chronological point. Friedrich Ratzel's *Political Geography*, published in 1897, is considered a starting point by many historical works. This assumption has a certain plausibility, considering the framework provided by meta-narrative at that time, in which imperialism and nationalism determined discourse. However it is also possible to start at an earlier date. As Schultz (1997, 1998) states, Ratzel's *Political Geography* is founded on the traditional natural geographical concept, which, for example, is reflected in Herder's construction of nations as largely influenced by climatic geography. 'Nature produces families; the most natural state therefore is a people with a national character. For thousands

of years this state has existed and can continue to exist within this natural pattern, if this corresponds to the prince's wishes. A people is a plant of nature as well as a family, but one with many branches' (Herder cited by Schultz 1997, p.87).

Ritter, one of the founders of modern geography, shows an understanding of space and nature. In general, ideas concerning the pressure of space began to enter man's conception of the world at the end of the nineteenth century. 'No matter what part of the earth we observe, we find religion against religion, denomination against denomination, race against race, people against people in a tougher conflict than ever before. As the last century rationalised, ours wants to nationalise' (Windelbrand 1890).

The basic 'innovation' of Ratzel's *Political Geography* consisted in the making the model of states' dependency on nature dynamic through the biological plan of natural selection. Ratzel, who had moved from zoology to geography, built his political geography entirely on a positivistic natural-scientific conception of the world. Therefore his construction of the spatial-political relationship is beyond doubt determined by the physical basis of the state. Societies, culture and economics and their effects on the state are hardly dealt with in his discussions.

Another fixed point in his work is his biological analogy of the state as an 'indigenous organism'. The state in this respect is attributed with the traits of a living being, an organism that only displays health and strength when it is capable of indigenous growth, in other words, territorial expansion. This form of geopolitics according to Darwin's hypothesis legitimates every form of imperialism and expansionism, as long as it is of a geographical nature. As a result of a growing and healthy population, every state needs more space to continue the development of its civilisation. In this manner a struggle for more space automatically develops between states. For the state this conflict is the driving force of every human development.

At the end of the last century structural-materialistic paradigms dominated all theories of human science. Durkheim, for example, the outstanding French sociologist of the time, agreed with the epigones of Friedrich Ratzel's *German Political Geography*, in his conviction of the structural conditionality of societies, as is documented in the correspondence between these two. The state-social determinism which was assumed in different degrees through the structural parameter is also to be found in the contemporary metanarrative. Friedrich Ratzel's *Political Geography* was the object of Durkheim's criticism more for its latent physical-geographical materialism rather than for its structural construction. The term 'geopolitics' itself was first used by the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén. For him 'geopolitics implies teaching about the state as a

geographical organism or as an appearance in space' (Kjellén 1905). His geopolitics builds upon Ratzel's ideas and forms the basis for establishing the geopolitical discourse.

Geopolitics and the Haushofers – a Strange Alliance

Karl Haushofer, who considered Ratzel his mentor, shaped the German geopolitical discourse more than any other one individual. During the First World War he was an officer, rising to the rank of major general. After release from the military after the First World War, his career as a professor of geography at the University of Munich (1921–39) began. He published many books and papers, was editor of the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* (Journal of Geopolitics, 1924–44) and president of the German Academy.

Personal family networks were more important than these details however. Karl Haushofer's position in the Third Reich was shaped by his close relationship to Rudolf Hess and by the political standing of his sons Heinz and Albrecht in the Nazi regime. Evidence for this power is for example Karl Haushofer's and Adolf Hitler's joint role as witnesses at the marriage of Rudolf Hess. Through these contacts Karl Haushofer had direct influence on the policy of the Third Reich.

In a similar manner, Karl Haushofer lost any influence following Hess' flight to Scotland in 1941. He was imprisoned for a few days in the concentration camp at Dachau near Munich. At the end of his life Karl Haushofer's biography takes a tragic twist. His son Albrecht maintained contacts to the German opposition, and because of his connections with the group who plotted Hitler's assassination on 20 July 1944 he was executed by SS on 23 April 1945, two weeks before the end of the war. Karl Haushofer and his wife Marta committed suicide on 10 March 1946.

The geopolitical discourse became eminently powerful as a result of the world-view of the years between the First and Second World Wars and the catalysts Haushofer, Hess and Hitler. During its prime the discourse, at least in Germany, achieved a hegemonic position. Thus the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*, which was founded and printed by Haushofer, reached an immense circulation. The deep friendship between Haushofer and Rudolf Hess, Haushofer's long period of loyalty to a regime that only became a permanent danger for him because of the half-Jewish heritage of his wife Marta, the later persecution and murder of his son Albrecht Haushofer after the attempt to kill Hitler had failed, and Haushofer's suicide close to the beginning of the Nuremberg Trials offer enough material to form a myth. The power of this myth is expressed in poet form in a few lines in the *Moabiter Sonnets* by Haushofer's son Albrecht. The origin of these lines

reminds one of a Greek epos or a Baroque allegory (see Sprengel 1996). In this sonnet he reflects on his father's historical role:

> The Father
> A profound fairy tale from the Orient
> tells us that the spirits of evil power
> are prisoners in the sea's night
> sealed by a worried God
> until once in a thousand years, fortune
> allows a fisherman to decide
> who may release the chains,
> and does not throw his findings back into the sea at once.
> My father's fate was determined.
> Once it was in the power of his
> will to shove the demon back home into his cell.
> My father broke the seal open.
> He did not see a touch of evil.
> He let the demon escape into the world'
> (Haushofer, cited after Hippler 1996, 18).[2]

Was Karl Haushofer actually the mythical figure, the judge of right and wrong, as is insinuated in these verses? Is it he, who by establishing his geopolitical discourses, released the 'genie from the bottle'.

The question of the influence of Haushofer's constructions on Hitler is expressed best in the relevant parts of *Mein Kampf*. During Hitler's imprisonment in the fortress of Landsberg, General Haushofer visited the prisoner every Wednesday afternoon in the fortress and brought him a large number of political works and introduced him to the type of German foreign policy, or, to put it more correctly, German policy for conquering the world, which then became the basis for all of Hitler's foreign political procedures. 'Therefore it is totally wrong to consider Hitler's great undertaking an adventurous act of an amateur. General Haushofer's scientific knowledge of the world supported Hitler's acts of aggression, and Haushofer was supported by all of the Pan-Germanic literature of the previous years and the whole Pan-Germanic team of the German political elite' (Foerster 1953, cited by Hippler 1996, p.219). The contacts between the participants, as well as the fact that discourse usually does not grow out of nothing, can serve as a basis for further consideration. The extent and power that this discourse developed within the National-Socialistic Structure are highly controversial.

As a result historical analysis of Haushofer comes to totally contradictory evaluations of his historical role and significance. In three important essays on Haushofer, Haushofer's influence on the

National-Socialistic political system appears to be very contradictory: (1) Hans-Adolf Jacobsen's *Karl Haushofer – Life and Works* (1979); (2) Frank Ebeling's *Karl Haushofer and German Geopolitics 1919– 1945* (1994); and (3) Bruno Hippler's *Hitler's Teacher – Karl Haushofer as Father of the Nazi Ideology* (1996).

Jacobsen attempts in his very extensive work to relativise Haushofer's influence upon Hitler. Ebeling constructs his picture of Haushofer on the basis of the mythical and tragic figure described above. In his evaluation he finally comes to the conclusion: 'The weak points in the structure of Haushofer's personality show themselves just as clearly. National Socialism was able to take advantage of these. He profited politically from geopolitical ideas primarily by the parasitic instrumentalision of these teachings' (Ebeling 1994, p.24). For him the geopolitics of the years preceding the Second World War present a contradictory picture, which was only adopted by Hitler in a 'parasitic' manner. 'Originally geopolitics had developed its own conception of foreign policy, which ran contrary to the Nazi's conception of the world. Building upon a just basis for all peoples, the world political status quo was to be subjected to a far-reaching renewal' (Ebeling 1994, p.10).

Just how Ebeling arrives at this conceptualisation of geopolitics is not clear. As a discursive concept, this point is not decisive; nevertheless it must be observed that Kost (1988) worked out twelve different meanings of geopolitics up to 1945 in his comprehensive dissertation. The term 'just' occurs only in connotation with 'superior', for example in the rightful demands of the German people. Ebeling tries at any rate in this way to rehabilitate Haushofer and *politisches Raumdenken* (political spatial thought) in Germany. This is especially problematic, since his conceptualisation of *politisches Raumdenken* continues to concentrate on the meaning of physical space for the politics of a state. Hence he isolates the spatial term in a totally unacceptable form.

While Jacobsen and Ebeling in particular relativise Haushofer's role to a considerable degree, Hippler considers Haushofer a central figure in forming National-Socialist ideology. For him '... Karl Haushofer is Hitler's ideological teacher and the intellectual father of the Nazi ideology' (Hippler 1996, p.211). Unlike Jacobsen, Hippler establishes in his essay: 'Here circumstantial evidence indicates that the general and professor Haushofer was the ideological mentor of the army private Adolf Hitler and, through the mediation of his friend Rudolf Hess, largely formed Hitler's ideology' (Hippler 1996, p.7).

Haushofer's chief pupil, Rudolf Hess, has special significance. Through the extensive contact between Hess and his mentor Haushofer, which among other things led to Haushofer hiding Hess for a few months at his

place after the 'Putsch' in Munich had failed, Haushofer's geopolitical outlook became a part of the Nazi ideology. During Hitler's and Hess' period of arrest in Landsberg, the constructivist basis of National Socialism originated with Haushofer's active participation: The myth of the *Führer* and the demand for more *Lebensraum* (living space), put in writing in *Mein Kampf.*

That Haushofer did not appear more visibly within the National-Socialist government was, according to Hippler, a result of his self-perception. Haushofer saw his own role as an 'idealist in the background' as an *éminence grise*. Hippler has extracted this conception of his role from Haushofer's works:

> The personality of Prince Yamagata was never populist, except for a short time of great war-time achievements. Once he remarked: When one who remains in the background feels the full effects of power, he will never want to be on the platform again. Within the cabinet he would rather cast a vote to enable somebody else to be elected than be responsible himself. However, his country house in Hayama was a center for the development of national opinion, and by no means insignificant, and before I became acquainted with him, I was told about his main attribute: He had never started a fight, unless he was sure he could win (Haushofer, quoted by Hippler 1996, p.9).

The historical evaluation of the role of Haushofer as a person, and the surviving myth surrounding him, will surely continue to exist. This is to be expected as a result of the power of his role and his geopolitical construction. From a discursive viewpoint a few things are to be said for Hippler's interpretation; to reconstruct Haushofer as an innocent victim, however, seems to be somewhat exaggerated.

Interestingly enough the allegorical figure of Haushofer offered a totally opposite picture for the German and Anglo-American spheres. One thing they have in common is that they present the actual power and the effect of the persons in a completely different way. The result of this attempt is different in the Anglo-American and the German speaking spheres. While all geopolitics in the German speaking sphere was developed through Haushofer, part of the American geopolitics of the post-war era originated as a result of the myth around the Geopolitical Institute and its director, Haushofer. At least here Haushofer was considered the 'Scientific Brain' behind Hitler. His discursive excesses even got as far as Hollywood, where in an American propaganda film Haushofer and his Geopolitical Institute are shown as the headquarters of National Socialism. As Gearóid Ó Tuathail represents in his *Critical Geopolitics, Haushofer and his imaginary* Geopolitical Institute in Munich were considered the beginning of the

conviction that '... geopolitics was something that America had to know' (Ó Tuathail 1996, p.113) .

It was assumed that hundreds of scientists there were occupied with forming strategic designs of National-Socialist expansion (see Jacobsen 1979) . When the Americans liberated Munich in 1945 their special mission was to locate this institute at the University of Munich. Reality remained well below the level of the visitors' expectations. Instead of the Geopolitical Institute they only found a professor's office.

The American geopolitician Edmund A. Walsh, who was assigned to participate in the Nuremberg Trials, could not conceal his admiration for Haushofer and hence did not criticise the geopolitical construction form in itself, but accused Haushofer of pursuing the wrong type of geopolitics. His demand for a 'true instead of a false' geopolitics is based on the democratic structure of Western society and can be explained at the level of modernising basic theoretical assumptions. Here, the wrong German geopolitics is ascribed to the German 'Special Political Procedure' of that time. The explanation of the construction of a 'German Special Political Procedure' is a widespread legitimate discourse, and therefore is briefly explained here.

The German Special Political Procedure

The expression 'German Special Political Procedure' refers to the phenomenon that Germany was able to fight two World Wars against the rest of the world and committed genocide for which, in its form and degree, there is no parallel.

The geopolitical analysis which is presented by researchers such as Stuermer and Nolte sees the cause of the 'Special Political Procedure' in the geographical location of Germany in the heart of Europe. Consequently, this location largely determined German politics. In the framework of chronological argument it has been established that Central Europe has been a military strategic playground for the 'Wing Powers', England, France and Russia, since the demise of the Holy Roman Empire. The rise of the modern Prussian-dominated Germany in 1871 destroyed the long-existing balance of power between these nations. The result was a Germany '... that was too big to live in Europe and too weak to dominate it' (Nolte 1986, p.12). The causal explanation for the preparations for war and the decision to pursue a major war lies in the 'semi-hegemonic position' of Germany. Even the rise of National-Socialism with all of its barbaric practices is explained in the form of this chain of cause and effect. The central position of Germany, surrounded by competitive powers, forms the basis of the geopolitical explanation for the 'German Special Political Procedure'.

In contrast a democratic 'true' geopolitics such as that of Mahan and Mackinder could be constructed for the Western states. Sloan comes to the dramatic conclusion that the Anglo-Saxon democratic tradition is the 'real' geopolitics which, from the very beginning, differed from the German form. 'The main differences between German geopolitics and classical geopolitics was that German geopolitics subordinated all factors of political knowledge to the primacy of geography, which resulted in geographical determinism' (Sloan 1988, p.58). The problems with these typically modern forms of good/evil dichotomising become evident in the face of the theoretical explanations concerning discourse. The basic problem of this manner of construction is that political geography is deprived of its base for elucidating the nexus of power in space and politics. The term geopolitics is reliant on the historical context in various forms since its first use by Kjellén (1905). Therefore, it is necessary to consider the term in its historical and discursive context. Referring back to Foucault (1981), therefore, the subjective discursive power inherent in the idea of geopolitics and its effects on the relationship of power and politics should be examined.

Political Geography in the German Universities

A similar dichotomy was used in Germany for the 'elimination' of geopolitics. Here political geography and geopolitics formed opposite poles. As a consequence, political geography and geopolitics face each other dichotomously in the canon of German-speaking science. The paradigmatic core of both lies in the question of the nexus between space and politics, but their respective approaches to research differ. Since the beginnings of geopolitical *Lebensraum* (living space), and its instrumentalisation in the *Blut und Boden* (blood and earth) ideology of the Third Reich, the question of the nexus between space and politics can only be pursued in this country on the basis of the science of states embodied in political geography, believed to be on a 'safe' discursive foundation. Based on this, a central difference to geopolitics is assumed: 'Geopolitics, in contrast (to political geography), starts from the premise of the state as a compact organism, from principles beyond the state itself' (Palaschewski 1997, p.174).

Thus political geography and geopolitics are dichotomised, political geography being the only stable scientific branch in Germany, and geopolitics regarded at the most as ideological (see Troll 1947, Schöller 1957, Kost 1988). Kost in his dissertation very thoroughly investigates the genesis of geopolitics, and is to be seen as the advocate of the standpoint of geography in German-speaking countries, when he states: 'Recognition of geopolitics as a science or as a technical terminus would surely mean a step

backward for political geography in the Federal Republic of Germany' (Kost 1988, p.404).

The defensive reaction to questions concerning the connections of space, place, power and politics takes the form of self-cleansing by detachment from all geopolitical content. As early as 1947 Troll tried in *Erdkunde*, which he had founded, to separate German geography from its involvement in the fascist conception of *Lebensraum* as it had been advocated by the Nazi regime. The basic arguments supplied the allocation of guilt to the tragic personal circumstances of the Haushofer family described above.

Thus geopolitics was declared a private issue of Haushofer's from which his geographical colleagues had always distanced themselves. Although it was evolved as a desperate strategy of justification, if the hundreds of colleagues who published articles in the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* are taken as 'accomplices',[3] it can be seen that a cleansing process developed in this manner, attributing sole responsibility to geopolitics and its alleged geographical materialism, and attempting simultaneously to rehabilitate political geography. This strategy can be traced up to today, and forms the basis for Schöller' s warning about the 'Highways and By-ways of Political Geography and Geopolitics' (Schöller, 1957) as well as Kost's 'Influence of Geopolitics on the Research and Theory of Political Geography. From the Beginnings until 1945' (Kost 1988). In his very comprehensive work, Kost rejects Troll's conclusion that geopolitical problems were the cause of the Haushofer family tragedy , but maintains the separation of geopolitics and political geography.

By describing a great number 'pseudo-scientific' examples of geopolitical argumentation, he tries to show the basic problems of geodeterministic approaches. Thus he states: 'To summarise, it is absolutely certain that the problems of geopolitics are to be found in its lack of theoretical content and obvious pseudo-scientific character' (Kost 1988, p.403).

His conclusions are discussed here in some detail, since they represent the current state of discourse within (German) geography. 'Not to mention geodeterminism and its nationalist use and abuse, geopolitics has disqualified itself and proven unsuitable as a scientific term or as teaching applicable within a liberal democracy' (Kost 1988, p.403). Then he describes the minimum requirements for political geography in the future:

(1) The position of political geography can only be established in relation to the present state of research in anthropogeography and political science.
(2) Pluralistic scientific discussions guarantee innovative possibilities in research and theory in political geography.

(3) Absolute neutrality of values cannot be achieved, but should nevertheless be the guiding principle of a historically aware geographer.
(4) Scientific political analyses, also from the geographical point of view, have to be committed to the values of democracy and human rights.
(5) Political geography is incompatible with military research for the one-sided maintenance of political power for individual countries or political groups.
(6) As an international science German political geography provides a contribution to peaceful conflict-settlement and to the adjustment of interests, where national and bilateral problems concerning land rights exist.

Neither change in society nor preservation of society are the tasks of political geography, even if German academics very often went exceeded limits of scientific activity up to 1945. Adherence to these minimum conditions, here rather presented in an incomplete and unsystematic manner, develops from a knowledge of the history of the discipline (Kost, 1988, p.404).

In the context of postmodern approaches, especially Foucault' s concept of sovereignty, these demands fall short of satisfaction. Even if these goals are desirable as norms, political geography hereby deprives itself of its central object of research: the connection of power, politics and space. The establishment of a quasi-objective political geography, guided by 'good' values, is a paradoxical attempt, equivalent to a prohibition of thought. The basic differentiation between political geography and geopolitics constructed in this manner is very problematic. The 'everyday stories of space' have to be told and deconstructed. The National Socialists or today's 'New Right', were not the ones to constitute themselves on a basis of spatial organisation. Construing these as a bugbear of the dangers of space, disguises the true issues. Characteristic of this trend is a highly simplified materialist geodeterminism. Geopolitics, geodeterminism and fascism, in a linear relationship with each other, are also objects with paradoxical qualities. Even at the peak of geopolitical National-Socialist entanglement, contradictory ideas at different levels were integrated under the heading of geopolitics:

> In fact the geopolitical dispute involved searching for an adequate term for geopolitics, so that the relationship between the earth, space and humanity, on which geopolitics is based, should be interpreted somewhere between a determinist and a non-determinist understanding. Each author dealing with this subject set different

> emphases, which however drifted away from a deterministic self-understanding (Sprengel 1996, p.171).

Therefore, geopolitics does not have to be determinist, and neither was it entirely so in Haushofer's work. 'Since the pioneers of geographic materialism believed in their method of exposing the laws of the historical process, their descendants have become more modest. They are satisfied with 25 per cent according to Haushofer' (Wittfogel 1930, p.500).

Haushofer's son Albrecht was also an ardent supporter of geopolitics. Nevertheless, his form of geopolitics was not in any way geodeterminist. Rather, he sought the limiting and enabling structurations provided by spatial relations. In many ways his geopolitics resembles the much later considerations of Foucault (1999). The latter is primarily interested in the spatially constructed practices of the exercise of power and disciplining: '... Haushofer did not forget that ultimately history is not made by the land but by the people who inhabit the land. Geography provides possibilities, but it is up to people to exploit them'(Weizsäcker 1948, p.19).

This ambivalence is manifested in the discussion concerning the evaluation of the different roles of geodeterminism and racial determinism. Drawing a simple equation – Ratzel-Kjellén-Haushofer = a fascistic space/racial dispute – simplifies the respective works of construction. The reproach was directed to the lack of consideration of the racial aspect of geopolitics (see Sprengel 1996).

Accordingly, it seems difficult to see the spatial/racial discourse portrayed as contrary to Herder's picture of nature and culture in Ratzel's *Political Geography* (see Schultz 1998). On the one hand, in Herder's works the unfortunate mixture of space and race is already to be found: 'Nothing seems to be so much against the purpose of governments as the unnatural increase in size of countries, the wild interbreeding of human races and nations under one ruler' (Herder, cited by Schultz 1998). On the other hand Schultz demonstrates that Ratzel, by dynamising his political geography through the 'law of expanding spaces', gave the decisive impetus for the origin of *Lebensraum* ideology. While in Herder's works the natural homogeneity between a nation and space still dominated, Ratzel regarded the fight for the limited resource of space as a central starting point for the conflicts between nations. According to Schultz this shift had far-reaching consequences. 'Ratzel's theory was applicable not only to the classical concept of geography, but also to the *Lebensraum* ideology of the Third Reich. Classifying race as the decisive power in history grows out of his thinking' (Schultz 1998). It may seem confusing that Haushofer's geopolitics lost its relevance within the National-Socialist power structure as a result of its incoherent geodeterminism. In turning to the ideas of the

Führer and of race, a restriction as a result of spatial conditions proved no longer to be acceptable. It was held possible for men and women of a Germanic racial background to rise beyond all these structural limitations. In this respect politicians defending the geodeterministic viewpoint were to be rejected.

Scientists directly connected to the national-socialist organisation, such as Walther Jantzen, who was responsible for geopolitics in the German Central Institute for Education and Studies, saw in geodeterminism an astonishing person-related problem. 'For a people like the Germans, possessing a great racial heritage and with the good fortune of being ruled by the proper leaders, the thought of becoming enslaved by spatial factors is unlikely. While one can consider the Oriental as a typical son of his landscape, the German however is without doubt the master and shaper of his living space. The German landscape is a single great image of German workmanship. There are no rivers or streams in this country which these hardworking people did not dam up and regulate using protective and industrial structures' (Jantzen 1939, cited by Sprengel 1996, p.178).

This reads like a manifestation of all great -isms of this century. The emphasis shifts from the structural factors to the conviction inherent to the theory of modernisation 'of being able to achieve everything'. These comments are not intended to relativise the entanglement of geopolitics in National Socialism. The purpose is rather to examine closely the common way of constructing the relationship between space and race.

Conclusion

Although it had been Schöller's instinct to reconstruct political geography against the fatal developments of geopolitics, the attitude within geography in the German universities was characterised by a total taboo concerning the relations of power, politics and space. That this sudden retreat after an unpleasant experience is a typical result for geography was shown by Lacoste (1985). He refers to the participation of geographers at the peace negotiations of Versailles (Bowman, de Martonne), and shows how conflicts of power politics are treated in discussions. De Martonne drew up the maps for the Peace Treaty, but insisted afterwards that geography be kept free of all power-political entanglements, and turned to the safer discourses of physical geography. In post-war Germany this favouring of physical geography can also be observed, as well as an increased interest in microgeographical areas, which can be kept free of any geopolitical or political-geographical questions. The former geopoliticians and political geographers have now become transport geographers and research morphogenetic settlement or the social geography of the ubiquitous

maintenance of basic services. This attitude characterises geography in German universities up to today; interest in political backgrounds is usually denied or suppressed. In various areas an extreme form of geographical specialisation originated dealing primarily with the totally 'safe' field of local microplanning.

Not until the renaissance of the 'region' in the form of various methodical and theoretical conceptualisations (Blotevogel, Danielzyk, Krueger, Ossenbruegge, Wood) did a first turnaround take place in German-speaking areas. Also the various discussions concerning the term 'place/space', with which German geography in the universities has been involved for the last few years, enables a greater engagement with political-geographical questions (see Werlen). Viewing the different kind of concepts of the term 'space/place' one learns how redundant the fixing of a space-deterministic matrix-space is. This applies even more to the recourse to physical-geographical evidence, very often found in geopolitical models. Various forms of geographical materialism, from Huntington's ideas of 'cultural plate tectonics' to the image of ethnic cleansing, thrive on this basis. Nevertheless, the discursive identity problem of post-war German political geography is an issue even today and leads to a voluntary taboo. In this respect German geopolitical discourse presents in an almost ideal-typical manner the following situation as described by Foucault.

> The truth is not of this world. In this world truth is produced on the basis of various compulsions and disposes of regulated effects of power. Each society has its own system of truth, its 'general politics' of truth, i.e. certain discourses are accepted, which are allowed to function as true discourses; there are mechanisms and instances enabling a differentiation between true and false statements, and which set the pattern in which one or the other is sanctioned; there is a status for those who have to judge what is true and what is not' (Foucault 1981, p.74).

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NOTES

1. The German quotations were translated by the author.
2. 'Der Vater – Ein tiefes Märchen aus dem Morgenland – erzählt uns, daβ die Geister böser Macht – gefangen sitzen in des Meeres Nacht – versiegelt von besorgter Gotteshand – bis einmal im Jahrtausend wohl -das Glück dem ein Fischer die Entscheidung gönne, – der die

Gefesselten entsiegeln könne, – wirft er den Fund nicht gleich ins Meer zurück. – Für meinen Vater war das Los gesprochen. – Es lag einmal in seines Willens Kraft – den Dämon heimzustoßen in die Haft. – Mein Vater hat das Siegel aufgebrochen. – Den Hauch des Bösen hat er nicht gesehen. – Den Dämon ließ er in die Welt entwehen'.

Albrecht Haushofer wrote this sonnet shortly before his execution by the Gestapo on 23 April 1945. He had been arrested in December 1944, having been associated with the assassination attempt on Hitler of 20 July 1944.

3. 1,269 essays and discussion contributions, which were written by 619 persons (see Sprengel 1996).