

THE POWER OF RHETORIC:
A CASE STUDY OF THE GERMAN GENERALS OF WWII

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ABSTRACT

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During World War II, Hitler employed a lot of tactical rhetoric and the use of this rhetoric is often noted as being extraordinarily persuasive, but I wanted to know if there is rhetorical evidence to suggest that this was the case. In order to do this, I looked at five of Hitler's most prominent rhetorical topoi and examined the end-of-war/post-war rhetoric of German generals in both private and public settings for evidence of the repetition of these topoi in their deliberations.

By looking at this rhetorical evidence more closely it became clear that the answer to whether Hitler was truly persuasive was maybe. The topoi that are found in the rhetoric of both the public and private generals and in Hitler are those with a basis in the German culture, thus while this repetition of topoi may be a result of Hitler's rhetorical power, it is also possible that this power was overstated and that what looks like persuasion is rather the weaponization of these beliefs by Hitler.

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INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2016, I took a class based in the history of rhetoric and tellingly entitled *Deliberating War*. We discussed, broadly, how people throughout history debated the many issues that surround war, and how people had answered questions such as how to convince people of the worth of a war, how to keep nations from going to war, and what strategies to employ in the war. These questions, and more, were discussed in the context of two wars in particular: the Peloponnesian War and World War II. This more recent war immediately transfixed me.

In the final paper for the class, I explored how Hitler's generals could have persuaded him, and I found it almost impossible to find a way. So what of the opposite? Did Hitler persuade his generals? Many people say yes. William Shirer, an allied reporter, described hearing Hitler speak and being convinced in the moment of ideas he did not truly believe ("The Rise and Fall of The Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany"). Hitler is often described as a master rhetorician and almost hypnotic speaker. But is this persuasion real or only apparent? This is where my research began.

In order to explore this question I delve into two collections of transcripts. The first of these transcripts is that of the private conversations that occurred between high-ranking German generals, many of whom had been stationed and captured in Northern Africa, who were being held as prisoners of war at an estate just outside of London called Trent Park (Neitzel 13-29). These generals were essentially given free rein of the estate, and left to mingle amongst themselves, but

they were constantly under careful surveillance and unknowingly manipulated into expressing more information through the use of stool pigeons, an undercover interpreter named Lord Aberfeldy, and the placement of officers from different branches of the German military together to garner more detailed explanations (Neitzel, 20-21). Whenever a topic of interest was brought up by the generals and identified as potentially significant by those monitoring the conversations in secret, the gramophone recording would be started and could record up to seven minutes of conversation.

The other text I explore for evidence of the influence of Hitler's topoi is that of *Eichmann Interrogated: Transcripts from the Archives of the Israeli Police*. Adolf Eichmann was one of the major organizers of the Holocaust and after the war was over, he fled to Argentina to avoid punishment for war crimes (Von Lang v-xxii). However, on May 23, 1960, Eichmann was arrested and taken to be tried in Israel (Von Lang xiii, xiv). A day later, Avner W. Less, a German Jew and Israeli police officer, was asked to help create the case against Eichmann through a months-long interrogation. It is the transcripts of these interrogations that I will also be searching for rhetorical evidence of Hitler's persuasion.

It is important to note that whether we see evidence of a correlation between the proposed rhetoric of Hitler and the end-of-war/post-war rhetoric of his generals, we will not be making any sort of claim regarding the intentionalist theory of the Holocaust. Rather the data will suggest whether or not Hitler's rhetoric correlated with a short-term persuasion in the post-war rhetoric of his generals.

One reason I chose these two specific texts is the fact that both deal with end-of-war/post-war rhetoric. This means that the evidence shown in this paper and the conclusions they suggest do not serve as commentary on the true beliefs and motives of these generals and others during the war itself, but rather on the choices they made in trying to create their alibis. The transcripts in *Tapping Hitler's Generals* occur almost entirely after what is often deemed the turning point in the war: Stalingrad (Neitzel) . This means that the generals that are speaking have a fairly universal belief that Germany is going to lose the war. Thus they come at these deliberations from a similar but less distant perspective than that of Eichmann. Eichmann's interrogation occurred in late May of 1960, well after the war had ended, but he is also attempting to create an alibi (Von Lang). Thus, by looking at these two texts, it is possible to explore evidence of the effect of Hitler's rhetoric on the explanative reasoning of his generals.

The second reason I chose to look at these two specific texts is because they provide us with, not only a variety of generals from a variety of different situations in the war, but they provide us with two sides of one important distinction that could potentially affect the replication of specific topoi: private versus public deliberations. The captured generals are unaware that they are being recorded. Their guard is down, and they are amongst others in a similar position to their own. This sense of safety leads to less self-regulated deliberations and less outside influence of other's opinions on their statements. These Trent Park generals are not immune to lying because of their situation, but when they lie it is much more likely that they are lying to themselves which suggests some sort of short-term persuasion

rather than a long-term convincing. Eichmann, on the other hand, is very aware that every word he speaks will be public information that is poured over. His interrogation transcripts are much more carefully worded, guarded, and scripted. There is an obvious motive of saving his own life within Eichmann's deliberations in the pre-trial interrogations. Whereas the captured generals do not believe themselves to have an audience and lack as strong motive to say anything other than what they feel, whether historically accurate or not, Eichmann has the complete opposite. What he says will determine whether he lives or dies. I wish to know whether Hitler's rhetorical topoi were persuasive enough to hold up against this immense added pressure, and I want to explore whether this public versus private distinction will make a difference in the topoi we see repeated.

One potential concern that many may have about this choice of transcripts is that of the wide variety of different experiences of the war between each of the captured generals themselves and in comparison to Eichmann. However, if Hitler's rhetoric were truly persuasive, we should see repetitions of what Hitler was attempting to persuade others of regardless of their experiences. Hitler's rhetorical influence should be able to be seen through the repetition of his specific topoi despite a difference in what these topoi are being specifically used to explain. In essence, we will be testing a list a topoi against the post-war/late-war rhetoric of these generals in order to see if we can find any sort of repetition that can suggest a correlation between the original rhetoric of Hitler and that of his generals. A truly persuasive and pervasive message should span across most of Hitler's generals and not be subject to the whims of one's personal experiences. To be affected by shared

experience only would be evidence of a shared sense of truth rather than evidence of rhetorical persuasion. It is expected that those who experience the same things will explain them similarly, but for those who experienced these things differently to speak of them similarly suggests an outside influence of some kind. In order to answer these questions regarding the extent of Hitler's rhetorical power, we must first determine what it is we are looking for.

HITLER'S MOST PROMINENT TOPOI

Hitler is often discussed as a “master rhetorician.” Even his home was a piece of rhetoric used to cultivate a specific image and message to others, and we know from the historical record that his generals were very devoted to him, but is there evidence that Hitler’s rhetoric had a significant effect on how Hitler’s generals rationalized their actions and behaviors? In essence, how well did his rhetoric actually work? In order to answer this question, we must analyze a comparison of reactions and rationalizations of Hitler’s rhetoric and the rhetoric of those who may have been affected by testing the hypothesized topoi of Hitler provided to us by O’Shaughnessy and Kershaw in order to determine whether Hitler’s generals and everyday citizens were repeating Hitler’s words. In turn, we hope to uncover evidence as to the extent of the effect of Hitler’s use of rhetoric.

What the rhetorical evidence seems to suggest is that Hitler’s topoi were not directly persuasive new ideas that were promoted and spread through Hitler’s rhetoric itself. Rather, when we test the hypothesis of O’Shaughnessy’s and Kershaw’s five topoi common to Hitler in these two sets of transcripts, we see evidence to suggest a strong correlation between some of these topoi and the generals’ deliberations and for others it is harder to tell. We see the most strong correlation in the topoi that already had a cultural basis in the society which allowed Hitler to more easily weaponize and use them to his advantage. It is difficult, if not impossible to say whether Hitler changed the minds of those who were persuaded by his rhetoric, but it is far more possible to make the claim that there seems to be a

correlation between these hypothesized topoi common to Hitler's rhetoric and that of the end-of-war/post-war rhetoric of Eichmann and the generals captured at Trent Park.

First, we must define Hitler's rhetorical topoi so we know what we are looking for as evidence of the effectiveness of his rhetoric. Many texts are capable of make such claims, but for this text we will focus on Nicholas O'Shaughnessy's book, *Selling Hitler: Propaganda and the Nazi Brand* and Ian Kershaw's *The "Hitler Myth": Image and Reality in the Third Reich*, while looking to Kenneth Burke's essay, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle'" and Neil Gregor's book, *How to Read Hitler* as support for these rhetorical topoi. These four texts will provide us with a codex of topoi that we will then be able to search for in the rhetoric of those who are often claimed as being persuaded by Hitler's words: his own generals.

As was previously established, many people believe that Hitler was one of the greatest persuaders who ever lived, but why was his propaganda, in general, so successful? According to Nicholas O'Shaughnessy, there are four main factors that aided the spread of such propaganda and its related ideas and Kershaw will provide us with the basis for the fifth.

As human beings, we instinctually compartmentalize our lives. It is important to note that when we talk about compartmentalization, in this case, we are talking about the capacity of people "to inhabit one cultural world and yet to work and act in another" not the ability of people to not think about what was happening (O'Shaughnessy 5). Compartmentalization, in this case, is the ability of people to create worlds with different rules and different moral codes that allow them to

contextualize their actions as moral in situations that may be seen as immoral in their other spheres. The majority of the time compartmentalization is benign and harmless. It helps us to multi-task, to be both parent and boss, to help soldiers come back from war and adjust to life back home. However, compartmentalization can also be dangerous. In the hands of the Nazis, it was just that. O'Shaughnessy argues that the Nazis exploited this tendency of our minds to fit their own needs and further Nazi propaganda. The way this tactic was exploited in German Generals was to support the compartmentalization of what they did from the morality of their actions, to separate duty from the soul, and to simply separate work life from home life. This mental separation is what allowed citizens and generals alike to rationalize the paradoxes of the regime and to see certain things as moral in one context but immoral in another (O'Shaughnessy 5).

O'Shaughnessy's second characteristic of Nazi propaganda is one that many scholars note: the creation of an enemy that presented what O'Shaughnessy calls an existential threat (5). Part of the reason the propaganda utilized by the Nazis worked was due to the fact that the war was purported to be "a final global reckoning" between the German people, who were supposedly genetically superior to other races, and everyone else, but specifically the Jewish people (O'Shaughnessy 5). This placed Jews in the position of playing the role of ultimate enemy by constituting a danger to the German people and their way of life. Friedländer himself notes the beliefs of Germans at the time: "The Jew was a lethal and active threat to all nations, to the Aryan race and to the German Volk" (xix). Creating this common enemy allowed Nazi propaganda to have a clear and focused message and

increase its persuasive power. The idea that Jews posed a threat to Germans is one of the factors that eventually allowed for the imprisoning of the Jewish people. This can be seen in the commonly held German belief at the time that "most prisoners in concentration camps were not at all like 'good citizens'" (Gellately 21). But this imprisonment and vilification went beyond the Jewish population in Germany. The idea of a Jewish threat was used to subjugate other groups as well. All other subjugated groups, Roma and Sinti, LGBTQIA+, people of color, etc. were somehow associated with Jewish people and because of this association had to be captured, punished, and protected against as well (Friedländer xviii-xix, xiv-xv).

O'Shaughnessy describes this phenomenon as well. He describes the notion of the "imagined Jew...the enemy behind all other enemies" (O'Shaughnessy 5). Burke quotes Hitler himself discussing the importance of creating a common enemy and notes the effectiveness of such a strategy (193). According to Burke, "Men who can unite on nothing else can unite on the basis of a foe shared by all" (193). This strategy allowed the Nazis to exploit a previously existing and commonly held prejudice against the Jewish people in order to advance the idea of a singular enemy of the people of Germany which could be expanded to allow the subjugation of more than one group of people.

The existence and importance of this topos of the creation of a perceived existential threat is supported by the works of Kenneth Burke and Neil Gregor. According to Burke, Hitler's rhetoric contains many repetitive ideas or topoi, one of which is his reliance on the creation of what Burke referred to as a "devil" (192, 193). Burke noted that Hitler spent a lot of time in his rhetoric attempting to build

up a common enemy for people to rally around. This “devil,” according to Burke, acts as a way to unify. Burke quotes Hitler who once stated, “It is part of the genius of a great leader to make adversaries of different fields appear as always belonging to one category only” (Burke 193). For Hitler, this single enemy was a way to dispel doubt. By labeling the Jewish people as the “devil,” Hitler is able to not only make it easier to identify the “enemy” but also to dehumanize them. If this rhetoric is successful, it makes sure that a Jewish citizen is not seen as someone’s neighbor or friend but rather a part of a larger dangerous group that poses a threat to Germany’s well-being. Burke also delves into the concept of the creation of a “projection device” that allowed people to put all their problems onto an external scapegoat (Burke 202). This again is an aspect of the topos of perceived existential threat. After World War I, Germany was filled with many problems and this scapegoat provided Aryan Germans with the prospect of life going “back to normal” once the created “enemy” was eliminated. “Symbolic rebirth” was another element that Burke discussed and that stemmed from this idea of a threat to the German people and that worked to unify “germans” against the “other” (Burke 203). If the rhetoric of German superiority and the scapegoat were successful, then the almost religious image of German rebirth was a potential possibility that would exist once the “enemy” was eliminated. This non-economic explanation for economic, political, and cultural problems created a beneficial conflict for Hitler’s message. Burke writes, “the ‘Aryan’ to continue his *construction*, must *destroy* the Jewish *destruction*. The Aryan, as the vessel of *love*, must *hate* the Jewish *hate*” (Burke 204). If every

problem is attributed to the Jewish people, then no problem or blame can be placed on himself or those who subscribe to his rhetoric.

Neil Gregor dealt with aspects of this topos as well. Gregor noted Hitler's dichotomous description of Germans and Jews. He explains that Hitler often repeated that all enemies are Jews, and argues that Hitler worked to associate Jews with a number of evil and immoral qualities such as "corruption, materialism, selfishness, mendaciousness, [and] cowardice" (Gregor 8-9). This description is put in contrast with the description of the idealized German citizen. Hitler utilized rhetoric to associate the German people with qualities of virtue and strength such as "honesty, idealism, selflessness, and bravery" (Gregor 9). Hitler believed and often stated that the German people were superior to other "races" (Gregor 9). This creation of a drastic good vs. evil contrast of the German people and the Jewish people that Hitler believed to be biologically determined was picked up on by Gregor in Hitler's writings and speeches.

This emphasis on a biological determinism brings us to another piece of support for the prevalence of the topos of perceived existential threat. The biological and medical metaphors employed by Hitler to solidify the differences between Germans and Jews are this evidence. According to Gregor, Hitler gives a biological explanation for the racial distinction between Germans and Jews. Where previous anti-Semitism saw a solution to the "Jewish problem" in conversion to Christianity, Hitler's brand of anti-Semitism didn't see this as a possibility (Gregor 62). Race, in Hitler's view, was something that is embedded in DNA; it is not something that can be changed. This inherently biological difference that Hitler

imagined meant that assimilation, in his mind, was the very opposite of a solution and instead increased “contamination” (Gregor 63). This contamination is where we again see this connection to the creation of a perceived existential threat. Because Hitler defined these differences in such a fixed way, he could not employ what had previously been seen as a “solution” and, instead, had to find a different “solution.” In retrospect, we can see this as a precursor to the genocide that was to come. This topos of a biological, “unfixable” quality of racial difference could very possibly have been used to justify future actions; therefore, it will be useful to see if this topos appears in the justifications and explanations of Hitler’s generals.

This biological metaphor was extended to also encompass comparisons between Jews and disease, something that you eradicate or cleanse yourself of and again a recognizable threat (Gregor 65). Hitler’s biological metaphor, once again, places genocide as the outcome of such beliefs, and further prompts us to look out for this topos. Gregor also saw this related element of the perception of the “threat” the Jewish people posed in Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* through his discussion of the Darwinian struggle for survival (Gregor 41). It is important to emphasize that race was central to Hitler’s rhetoric and ideology. Hitler described each country’s people as a single race, and these races as competing against one another for resources such as land and food and power. He did not believe in the artificial borders that were drawn by governments and instead seemed to hold the belief that you took the land you needed for your people. Gregor explains Hitler’s thinking, “As a people grew in strength, so its needs grew, which would inevitably lead to the expansion of its borders” (Gregor 41). Hitler held the belief “that success or failure in the eternal

struggle for space depended not on superficial issues such as military strategy or the relative size of armies and navies but rested instead on the underlying health of the races involved in the struggle” (Gregor 44). Here we see Hitler trying to further create the topos of fear of the existential threat through the presentation of a geographical/ political threat. On top of this, Gregor notes that Hitler, in *Mein Kampf*, claims that “Germany had gone to war weakened by internal problems and divisions that had fatally undermined her capacity to resist and had thus made defeat inevitable” claiming that these internal divisions resulted in Germany’s “unpreparedness to fight” (Gregor 49). These internal divisions included problems such as the weakening of the peasant class, the press undermining Germany’s unity, and Marxism. But Hitler didn’t stop by identifying these potential problems within Germany that led to its downfall. He already established that the German people were supposedly superior and practically infallible, so blame could not be their own. According to Hitler, this was all the result of the Jewish people. It was the Jewish people who benefited most from the stock exchange, who ran the press, who supported Marxism and whom Marxism benefitted (Gregor 49-50). Here, again, we see an instance of Hitler using Jews as a scapegoat to further solidify his creation of a single enemy force (Gregor 49). By blaming the Jews for economic and political problems, Hitler harnessed all the contempt and anger the German people had for a variety of issues and a variety of people and placed it on to a single, identifiable enemy.

According to Gregor, Hitler also made claims throughout *Mein Kampf* of a Jewish plot to profit systematically from World War I and also claimed that the

Jewish people did not do their part in the war effort (Gregor 58). Both of these claims are blatantly and statistically proven to be untrue; however, the claims aided Hitler's effort to further demonize the Jewish people. According to Gregor Hitler "conjured up the crude vision of a Germany slowly, inexorably being taken over by the Jewish world conspiracy" (Gregor 60). Hitler created this topos of a perceived existential threat thoroughly and he reinforced it as often as he could. This is a topos that would have had an extreme effect on the war if it is shown to be persuasive. It will be interesting to see if there is rhetorical evidence to suggest that Hitler's generals were convicted of this topos.

A third factor results from the fact that the Nazis, the men pushing these ideas were, at their roots, opportunists. These Nazis had elections they had to win in order to gain power. For this reason, O'Shaughnessy notes, the Nazis acted as "traditional operators, opportunists, political in the gut sense" (O'Shaughnessy 5). Hitler and the Nazis, according to O'Shaughnessy, employed a strategy of being "all things to all men" (5). There was an effort to always have the right thing to say to fit the person or group of people of concern. They "possessed of a chameleon like capacity to address the different needs of different and antithetical groups in the language those groups recognized" (O'Shaughnessy 5). The Nazis were capable of molding themselves into the shape of whatever it is others wanted to see. They did so out of a hope for political survival. This tendency to evolve into the person that best fits the situation is an extremely important rhetorical technique. If it is unclear that this person is constantly changing their behaviors and convictions, the belief that a person holds your same values, uses your language, and wants to address

your concerns increases ethos, logos, and pathos claims and increases the probability that the propaganda coming from the person will be more convincing.

Burke also mentions this political opportunism when he discusses the importance of Hitler's "attack upon the *parliamentary*" (Burke 199). Parliament was extremely chaotic and Hitler used this chaos to create a dichotomy between the instability that existed and his plan for implementing a system with stability; this chaos was the kind of thing that he claimed he would fix (Burke 200). This is an excellent example of Hitler using this strategy of political opportunism. Though these goals were ones he actually believed to be necessary to the success of Germany, the way they paved the way to more extreme policies is an excellent example of this *topoi* of opportunism. He noticed a problem that others were complaining about, often one he too wished to fix, and he claimed to have an answer and be the solution.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler spends a great deal of time talking about the problems within the current and past government. Gregor states "Hitler spent as much time describing what was wrong with past policy decisions as he did outlining his own prescriptions" (Gregor 14). He uses his discussion of Germany's history to make comparisons between Germany's former glory and potential and the Weimar Republic's current decline (Gregor 15). This is a *topos* we also found within the Burke piece which describes Hitler's utilization of this history and current decline to promote his own plan for greatness. Here we see him beginning to do so. Gregor states, "He looked back to an ill-defined mythical golden past as a source of inspiration" (Gregor 17). As Gregor explains, Hitler was not utilizing Germany's

former glory as a blueprint for how he would run Germany, but rather as a vague encouraging force to remind Germany of its potential. This was politically opportunistic as it leads in to Hitler's goal of national rebirth and renewal (Gregor 54). Hitler wanted to create an idealistic, egalitarian, unified Germany (Gregor 55). He claimed he would raise the status of the working class and reunite a broken people. Hitler's preoccupation with the creation of a single, unified voice of the German people was also politically opportunistic (Burke 207). Coming out of WWI and existing in a world defined by the ensuing chaos that comes from losing a war, the idea of unity and peace would be one that appealed to many people. Hitler was disappointed by the parliament of the Weimar Republic, but also had a more specific concern. Gregor states, "He saw in the more recent German past a process of decline set in train by the advent of industrial modernity and the emergence of a commerce-driven world" (Gregor 17) Hitler viewed "politics and the daily life of individuals as being excessively driven by commercial or materialistic prerogatives" and in the vein of creating a single enemy and scapegoat, again blamed Jews for this decline (Gregor 17). Hitler utilized the weakened government to push his own agenda, and this is a clear use of political opportunism. Hitler's staunch belief that it was Germany's right to expand in order to meet its needs was key to his foreign policy goals (Gregor 91). This idea of "living-space" would determine a lot. In order to expand, Hitler would be forced to take land from other people, but due to his notion of racial identity, these non-ethnically German people, for example the Poles, would not just become German once under German rule; therefore, according to Hitler, they would need to be expelled in order to keep the country "pure" (Gregor 98). This

expansion was also targeted toward the East due to Hitler's obsession with the downfall of Marxism and the Soviet Union (Gregor 96). Again here, we see the utilization of the topos of political opportunism and the grand effects it was eventually able to have.

Another important aspect of the topoi of political opportunism is the idea of German superiority. It is a wonderful example of the chameleon-like, always-have-the-answer opportunism that the Nazis took advantage of. According to Burke, Hitler often made claims of the inborn dignity/superiority of the German people. Much of Hitler's rhetoric involves discussion regarding the superiority and merits of the German people not just over those peoples who were to be persecuted but to all of the world. The dichotomy Hitler created when discussing "Aryan 'heroism' and 'sacrifice' vs. Jewish 'cunning' and 'arrogance'" is one example of him telling people what they wanted to hear, in this case while also strongly believing it himself (208). Focusing on the Aryan sacrifice is extremely important to his message. This employment of pathos would be potentially extremely effective with the citizens of Germany who have experienced personal loss. By invoking this emotion in the person experiencing the rhetoric while also presenting them with someone to blame for your hurt could be very successful in further demonizing Jews.

Another factor noted by O'Shaughnessy is that of Hitler's charismatic aura. He makes the almost mystical-seeming claim that "Hitler projected a charisma which impressed, or even mesmerized, a substantial number of German voters" and he notes the extraordinary power of such ability (O'Shaughnessy 4). O'Shaughnessy describes the extent of this aspect of Hitler's rhetorical capability through a

comparison of this persuasion to religiosity. He claims that being persuaded by Hitler left people with “not only the experience of conviction but of religious conversion” (O’Shaughnessy 4). One who was persuaded by Hitler was left with a certitude and assurance that rivaled that of being persuaded by an ancient institution that claims to know the intangible and unknowable and that claims to have an understanding of this greater truth. This is what Hitler and his government were able to achieve in just a few years. Hitler’s charisma, O’Shaughnessy claims, was able to create a uniquely powerful level of conviction and with it a certain level of devotion in those who encountered it. O’Shaughnessy describes Hitler as “both the monarch and the high priest of a faith in which the nation was the core article of belief” and also as “a dramaturgy of performance, a physical act” (O’Shaughnessy 4 and 5). This vision of Hitler as a god-like figure who was the sole knower of a greater truth automatically elevates the man in the eyes of those persuaded. He presented himself as more than just a man, and instead, presented himself as a figure deserving of reverence. This is dangerous because it makes the words of the man gospel, it turns his beliefs into law, and it puts this single person in the position of an entire country’s moral compass.

The topos of propaganda of the deed was also very prevalent in Hitler’s and the Reich’s rhetoric. After World War I, Germany existed in a state of upheaval and its citizens had felt the effects of this. Hitler was a promise of a new Germany, a united Germany that would not only be restored but renewed. In the beginning, this seemed to hold true. There was a constructed view that Hitler was single handedly responsible for fixing all of the countries problems (Kershaw 66). In the short time

after Hitler took office, the government was seemingly up and running efficiently once again with a drive to be better (Kershaw 46). The people of Germany were seeing a government that was “energetically combating the great problems of unemployment, rural indebtedness, and poverty” and doing so fairly successfully (Kershaw 61).

Whether these improvements could actually be attributed entirely to Hitler himself is doubtful, but he was a man who had been underestimated, so his quick mastery of the political situation was surprising (Kershaw 46). This perception of adeptness helped create this mythological view of Hitler’s achievements in the early days of the Reich. Any improvements were systematically attributed to Hitler through small local newspapers that Nazi editors used to spread such propaganda (Kershaw 61). This belief in all the good Hitler supposedly did for Germany in these early days created a larger platform that was made available for the propagation of future and more radical policies (Kershaw 61). This platform was widened and became even less regulated by the creation in Germany of a sense that, even if there were “temporary hardships and cares, the Führer was in control and knew the way forward to better times” (Kershaw 65-66).

A very similar concept to propaganda of the deed is also addressed by Kenneth Burke’s recognition of a Hitler’s creation of a “cult of war” that claimed to be based on reason and claimed to be created out of a want of peace and humility (Burke 199). This positive interpretation of the message of Hitler’s Germany may have been extremely popular to those generals and citizens trying to explain away their behavior after the war. It will be interesting to note who utilizes this topos and

when this topos is employed in the rhetoric of others. This propaganda of the early deeds of the Reich helped to establish a citizenship that was unconcerned with the actual facts and reasons why and how these early improvements were being made. According to Kershaw, “The most important thing was the feeling that things were improving again” (62). This focus on the initial good that occurred in the early days of the Reich is not only an aspect of Hitler’s and the Reich’s rhetorical practices, but also an aspect of that rhetoric that we may see replicated and repeated in deliberations and rationalizations of German generals both publicly and privately.

As we can see from these four authorities on the rhetoric of Hitler and the Reich, there is a solid compilation of features of Hitler’s rhetoric that he both implemented and encouraged. O’Shaunessy and Kershaw, with support from Burke and Gregor, provide evidence to suggest a codex of these five repetitive and replicable features of Hitler’s rhetoric that it may be possible to see evidence of in the rationalizations of Hitler’s generals. These five potentially replicable topoi are exploitation of capacity to compartmentalize, perceived existential threat, opportunism, charisma, and propaganda of the deed.

INVESTIGATION OF TRANSCRIPTS

Exploitation Of The Capacity To Compartmentalize

Private

The first major topoi that we will discuss is that of the exploitation of the capacity to compartmentalize that often manifests in other's deliberations as an argument about 'just following orders.' Again, it is important to note that the compartmentalization O'Shaunessy is talking about here is not one's ability to ignore the unpleasant but rather the ability of people to create separate worlds with separate moral codes that inevitably justify behavior in those worlds. In both public and private discussions, German generals of various ranks cite this as one of the major reasons and excuses for some of the major atrocities of the war. In a way this makes sense. From a strictly rhetorical perspective, this is a fairly effective strategy. By claiming that they were just following orders they utilize pathos to present themselves as another victim of a higher power. They provide themselves with the opportunity to retrospectively and selectively disavow prior action or beliefs and paint them in their own light entirely. They also bring the observer into their narrative and unconsciously get them asking, what would I have done in this scenario. This serves to create a potentially more lenient audience if they are convinced.

Many of the generals captured and held at Trent Park used this topoi in discussion with one another suggesting that there could be some reality to the

claim; however, many others outrightly protest anyone using this excuse. There does seem to have been a very strong sense of the importance of blind loyalty to the cause, however, that is exemplified in the Hitler Oath. This establishes a culture of problematic levels of allegiance and an almost religious devotion to country and to Hitler himself.

In regards to the oath and the blind loyalty required, there was much debate. The recordings that address this topos occurred towards the end of the war when it was becoming clear that Germany was losing. This prompted wide disagreement between those captured on what loyalty was still required and acceptable in these conditions. For many, Hitler's more erratic conduct and growing incompetence meant the oath no longer held power. Bruhn¹ in April of 1945 and in conversation with Fischer² discussed their outrage at the deception of the German government. Bruhn states, "Oh, that oath is rubbish. Hitler has released us from our oath by his whole behavior. One is only constantly astounded that we all ran after this will o' the wisp as we did" (Neitzel 147).

¹ Generalmajor Johannes Bruhn entered the army during WWI and thus entered WWII at the outbreak. He was captured and taken to Trent Park in December of 1944. According to the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre, or CSDIC (UK), who collected these transcripts, while at Trent Park he was "considered 'anti-Nazi'" (Neitzel 284).

² Generalmajor Gerhard Fischer entered the Army in WWI and entered WWII in August of 1939. He was at Trent Park from April to July of 1945. According to CSDIC (UK), while at Trent Park "he [had] a very low opinion of Nazi rule and is thoroughly defeatist" (Neitzel 292-293).

³ Major Hasso Viebig entered the army in May of 1934, and during the war he served in Poland, Russia, and France. He was captured in August of 1944. In an assessment for Generalmajor Gerhard Fischer entered the Army in WWI and entered WWII in August of 1939. He was at Trent Park from April to July of 1945. According to CSDIC (UK), while at Trent Park "he [had] a very low opinion of Nazi rule and is thoroughly defeatist" (Neitzel 292-293).

This dismissal of any remaining allegiance was common among many, but other generals were unable to consider breaking either the oath itself or purely their loyalty to country due to an ingrained sense of principle and honor. This is best expressed by Vieberg³ who states, “ I have always held the view that as a soldier one is bound to obey one’s supreme commander under all circumstances” (Neitzel 255). He goes on to explain specifically that, "for me to revolt against my supreme commander would be something that I could not reconcile with my honour. That has nothing whatever to do with my political views" (Neitzel 256). The “revolt against my supreme commander” he is discussing here is the July 20th plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler.

The fact that he sees this as something he could never do, but does not morally or politically condemn is huge. This ability to compartmentalize was a significant tool Hitler and the Reich used to propagate their worldview and the actions they took to attain it. Vieberg’s statement suggests that he is aware of how big a problem Hitler is to the state of Germany, not morally, but politically and economically. The fact that he still feels that it is his responsibility as a soldier to rebuke the assassination attempt of a man he worries could bring down the country and lose them the war is extraordinary. To Viebig, and to many, it does not matter what they believe to be right and wrong politically, morally, socially, etc., what matters is the promise that they made. Some took this loyalty to Hitler even further,

³ Major Hasso Viebig entered the army in May of 1934, and during the war he served in Poland, Russia, and France. He was captured in August of 1944. In an assessment from the German army in 1943 he was described as having a “great awareness of duty” and as a “convinced National Socialist who knows how to disseminate his belief” (Neitzel 317).

Spang⁴, another captured general at one point states "I have a very clear opinion on it, too, but the Führer is my Commander-in-Chief. I ought not to speak about it" (Neitzel 252). There is a sense that Hitler and the party do not only decide and have control over the actions of these generals, but also their opinions. Crüwell⁵ at one point states in regards to Hess who had recently been deemed a traitor because of a failed mission to arrange peace with the British behind the back of Hitler, "No one but his superior officer, the Führer, can decide about that. If the Führer repudiates him, I also repudiate him" (Neitzel 65). This is an extremely intense, all-encompassing kind of devotion to a leader.

One of the really interesting divisions that was brought up by a number of generals was the separation between the Party and the Army. They claimed that there was an abuse of blind loyalty that resulted in bad orders getting passed down because of this separation. Thoma⁶ states, "I mean, it's a psychological disease which has spread throughout the Party, not the Army, that everything Jewish must be exterminated -- they have orders to do it" (Neitzel 181). They all seem to agree that

⁴ Generalleutnant Karl Spang entered the army in August of 1905 and served throughout WWII. He was at Trent Park from August of 1944 to September of 1944. In an assessment from April of 1941 he was described as "a difficult man" and "very nervous, almost morbidly ambitious," and the CSDIC (UK) described him as "mentally deranged and show[ing] signs of suicidal tendencies" and also as "very anti-Nazi" (Neitzel 314-315).

⁵ General Der Panzertruppe Ludwig Crüwell entered the army in March of 1911. He was held at Trent Park from August of 1942 to June of 1944. According to the CSDIC (UK), "he headed the 'Nazi clique', and was a follower and admirer of Hitler" and was described as "an ignorant, stupid, sentimental, narrow-minded, conceited, vain and self-satisfied type of Prussian senior officer" (Neitzel 287).

⁶ General Der Panzertruppen Wilhelm Ritter Von Thoma entered the army in September of 1912 and was brought to Trent Park in November of 1942. According to the CSDIC (UK), he portrayed himself as "violently anti-Nazi" during his time at Trent Park (Neitzel 315-316).

the root of the problem comes from the top down. To them, the army is just following the bad orders of the government. There seemed to be this idea of a corruption and pull for power that existed at the top that was to blame for all the problems they now faced. By placing the blame for all of the actual problematic behaviors and ideologies on the Party and playing up the fact that they answered to the Party, they were able to make the claim that they were just doing what they were told. It is reminiscent of younger sibling arguing that his older brother made him throw the ball inside and, therefore, his fault that the lamp is now broken. In essence, the act itself is bad, but they don't see themselves as bad.

From all of this data, it is clear that there is a major split on what carrying out orders entails and where one is allowed to draw the line for oneself. The fact that this divide occurs in private deliberations after it is clear that Germany is going to lose is quite interesting. It suggests that there is a natural and potentially genuine quality of self-preservation that this excuse provides to oneself that doesn't require the interaction of others to be effective; however, that is not to say that there was no discussion between these generals on what benefits the topos of just following orders could provide in the public eye. In a conversation between Wildermuth⁷ and Heim⁸, they discuss the possibility of using this topos as the party line in trials

⁷ Oberst Eberhard Wildermuth served in both WWI and WWII in which he was stationed all over. He was brought to Trent Park in November of 1944 and while there was described by the CSDIC (UK) as "fundamentally liberal but...a staunch German patriot [who was] violently opposed to the present regime." He was particularly close to von der Heydte, Eberbach, and Heim while at Trent Park (Neitzel 319-320).

⁸ Generalleutnant Ferdinand Heim entered the army in June of 1914. He was brought to Trent Park in September of 1944, but prior to this he was assessed as

regarding their guilt or innocence. Heim asks, "The only question is: what shall be our attitude when we are put before one of those Courts of Inquiry?" and continues with an idea; "In my opinion our conduct must be uniform, we must uphold the principle of only having carried out orders" (Neitzel 224). He is aware of the benefits that utilizing this topos in a public setting will provide. And he understands that this will need to be a universal narrative in order to be effective, which prompts Heim to suggest that they "ought to discuss these matter at a larger gathering in order to create a basis of defense, and a fairly sound one at that" (Neitzel 225).

One of the more interesting things about this topos is how the generals use it to excuse themselves from the repudiation of the law, but truly do not see it as excusing their behavior morally. They believe that because they were doing nothing more than following orders they cannot be tried and punished, but nothing more than this. Wildermuth, a general who was given an order to "have a hundred [Serbs] shot for every German killed and fifty for every German wounded, and who chose to pass this order along stated in conversation with Heim, "I'll answer: 'Well I had to, otherwise I'd have been shot.' That is my defense, but it doesn't excuse me morally" (Neitzel 224). Here, we see a deeply entrenched utilization of compartmentalization, and an excellent example of the Nazi's rhetorical strategy of exploiting people's capacity to compartmentalize.

Public

In the public setting in which he works to defend himself against accusations

having a "cool personality, difficult to penetrate" and as "need[ing] the occasional severe prod to get him going" (Neitzel 296).

of war crimes, Eichmann utilizes this topos of compartmentalization and ‘just following orders’ in a bit more of a direct way. What is interesting here is, instead of seeing generals utilize this topos in their discussions of motivations privately and with others in the same situation, we see a man leaning heavily on a topos he believes has the best chance of saving his life. It seems as if this chain of command aspect of the compartmentalization topos is one of his primary strategies of defense.

Eichmann claims that the Holocaust was not his idea, nor his responsibility. In order to back this argument up he often lays out a hierarchical map of those stationed above him in all situations by making quick statements such as “the Central Office for Jewish Emigration was a first in the German administrative machine” (Von Lang 56). When asked about specific instances of his own involvement there seems to be a recognizable pattern. He first states how horrible he thought whatever accusation was made to be, then states “I was given orders.” (Von Lang 84).

Whether it was a visit to Treblinka, or an instance of planning an aspect of the Holocaust such as organizing deportations to the death camps, Eichmann makes the same argument. He even uses this hierarchical topos to explain why he didn’t stop the deportation of Jews when confronted with the horrible conditions under which these deportations were taking place. Eichmann was read a report from Dr. Kastner of the Jewish Rescue Committee, who had met with Eichmann to discuss and negotiate the conditions of the Jewish ghettos and deportation practices during the war. Dr. Kastner was met with what he depicts as a very harsh and unyielding “no” to his appeal for assistance that blatantly disregarded and showed no ounce of

care for the people affected. Eichmann responds to this accusation by saying, “What I probably said was: I can't stop them, because I didn't order them” (Von Lang 208). It is especially important to note that Eichmann was unafraid to point fingers. He would often state, in order to build credibility, where his orders came from. He once offered, “I had to set up the guidelines for implementation [of forced “deportation” of Jews], because those were the Reichsführer's orders” (Von Lang 102). Though he is probably telling the truth in that he was given these orders, it is most definitely a post-war strategy that he is intentionally deployed to give himself an alibi because as we know, he had been very eager to find ways to deport Jews at this time due to the fact that he was both an anti-semite and saw it as a way to advance his career (Cesarani 32-33, 57-58).

A lack of intention to question authority is clear in Eichmann's statement, “The loyalty oath in itself called for unquestioning obedience. So naturally we had to comply with the laws and regulations” (Von Lang 124). This is an obvious example of the effect of the Nazis' propensity for exploiting one's ability to compartmentalize morality and duty. We see the seriousness with which Eichmann was able to justify his behavior with the statement “I regarded my work as a binding duty” and though we do not necessarily see a division between his moral code at the time and his definition of duty now, we do see this clash between what he claims as his morality in these interrogations and what he claims to be his duty (Von Lang 156). This is where we see Eichmann employ the strategy of compartmentalization.

However, we also see Eichmann deal with the question of why he did not revolt during the war in these interrogations. It seems that for Eichmann, loyalty

was embedded not just in his own system of beliefs but in those of all that surrounded him. This meant that, for Eichmann, no matter what it may be that he wanted to do, he claimed to feel forced to continue forward due to what is, at its essence, peer pressure. Eichmann states, "I had orders to deport. And when my colleague Wisliceny writes in his confessions that there were ways of circumventing Hitler's orders. I'd be glad to know what those ways were. I say: There was one way and only one way: to take a pistol and shoot yourself. That's obvious. I didn't." (Von Lang 197). Though this scenario ends with death the only option, the point here is not whether there would be punishment but whether or not a rebellion would be futile or not. He later states, "I never noticed any resistance, either on the part of Wisliceny or of Krumei." (Von Lang 198). Eichmann, here, is claiming that he was unaware of any of sort of internal resistance and is making the argument that his unawareness made it seem like a impossibility to him and this is why he did not even try to revolt. This is further evidence of the topos of compartmentalization. Though Eichmann sees outside resistance, he is claiming that his lack of knowledge of internal resistance is what is key. Again, we see Eichmann here create a dichotomy in which each sphere that he has constructed for this interrogation has its own rules.

Eichmann utilizes this compartmentalization and the aspect of 'just following orders' to his advantage. He does an excellent job of creating these scenes of his own disgust by utilizing pathos to manipulate the audience into agreement. He presents bold statements regarding his emotional state at the time of horrific orders being given, and compartmentalizes these emotional states against his duty of following

the order. At one point, he states, “The Führer has ordered physical extermination.’...I’d never thought of a ... of such a thing, of that sort of violent solution” (Von Lang 75). This paints Eichmann in the best possible light. It paints him as morally upright and yet also leaves space open for him to have committed these atrocities without rebuke. Eichmann is stating that he did nothing but follow orders, which he seems to believe, as many do in different contexts, holds a sort of moral righteousness in its own right. In another instance, Eichmann is describing his experience seeing a truck full of Jews being transported. When asked specifics he remembers the horrifying. He describes it as “the most horrible sight I had seen in all my life” (Von Lang 77). It is a description that reads true to other accounts of the Holocaust given by those who saw, but had no power to rebel. However, Eichmann had the power. Yet when asked, “Did you report on this in writing?” Eichmann responds with “No, I couldn’t do that. I was expressly forbidden to; by Heydrich, I believe.” (Von Lang 78). This massive ability to present an almost completely compartmentalized self is reminiscent of what Hitler had shown in his rhetoric, and it is with good reason that Eichmann might try to employ this strategy in order to protect himself from the death penalty.

No audience is going to disagree or not connect in some way with this depiction of disgust with what are objectively horrific crimes. It is inherently more believable that a human being would have such an emotional and disgusted reaction to such horrific mistreatment of another person than it is that this person would present as perfectly calm and normal. It is this normalcy of his argument that makes it so hard to refute. As human beings we have a tendency to see ourselves in others’

positions when thinking about their actions, and, for most people, it is this reaction of disgust that rings more true than anything else. In this instance, Eichmann is able to get more people on his side. By creating this narrative of his own disgust, Eichmann may have hoped to create a relationship with his audience, a relatability that would allow him to convince them of other things, not least of which being his own innocence. He knows he is too far up in command to play the victim, but he utilizes aspects of this strategy to grasp any little thread of connection he can believably create between himself and his audience in order to gain sympathy and save himself from punishment, in this case, to save himself from death.

In his attempt to utilize the topos of following orders, Eichmann also makes sure that he does not deny his involvement to an unbelievable degree in order to remain a sympathetic figure. He has crafted a version of himself who was disgusted by the orders he received and yet also carried them out, so now he must explain to his audience how he reconciles these two things within himself. In yet another effort to conjure sympathy with this topos, Eichmann martyrs himself through the use of this Nazi topos of compartmentalization. He takes moral responsibility without taking punishable responsibility. He states, "I'm not calling anyone else to account for the evacuations. I was responsible. I'm ready to take my punishment. I'm not short on courage. Of course, it's a... sad kind of courage I need now. But in those days I had the gumption to say "Yes, sir!" and today I have the gumption to say: "All right. I'm ready. Here's my head...ready to go where it belongs" (Von Lang 97).

This is an excellent representation of an adoption of Hitler and the Reich's rhetoric. Hitler played on the ability of people to compartmentalize. As we discussed

in regards to the generals, this compartmentalization is what, consciously or unconsciously, allowed many of the captured generals to justify their actions. They make the claim that yes, they may have been morally wrong, but that their actions are not punishable. They try to explain that morality and the actions they took are not equivalent due to the fact that they were under orders to take such action. Eichmann admitted "I am guilty of complicity," and I think this is an excellent example of this compartmentalized moral versus duty driven mindset (Von Lang 104). Even if, morally, he sees himself as responsible for these deaths, he truly seems to believe that the only thing he can be guilty of in a court of law is complicity because he was just following orders. Whether, as we see here with Eichmann, he is making this argument either consciously or unconsciously, we see an excellent example of a traceable ideology between Hitler's rhetoric and those who served him.

Perceived Existential Threat

Private

When it comes to the topos of perceived existential threat, the generals that were held at Trent Park provide us with a lot of evidence of the adoption of this feature of Hitler's rhetoric. This ingrained sense of fear of the Jewish people, this common, single enemy as an explanation of the motivations of the Reich is exemplified in a quote by captured general Ramcke⁹:

One day history will say the Führer was right in recognizing this great Jewish danger threatening all nations and in realizing the Jewish communist threat to Europe from the East. At one time it was Genghis Khan and at another Attila. This time it is the Jewish Bolshevism spreading over Europe from the Asiatic steppes, a tide we had to stem. Perhaps future history will realize it and that France, Belgium, and Germany quarreled among themselves, with England at the back of it all because of their petty opposing interests, on account of a ridiculous little Czechoslovakia and Sudetenland and a lousy Danzig Corridor and such rubbish, and that we failed to realize the threat from the east. (Neitzel 130)

⁹ General Der Fallschirmtruppen Bernhard Ramcke entered the navy in 1905, transferred to the army in March of 1919, and again transferred to Luftwaffe paratroop arm in August of 1940, during WWII. He was held at Trent Park from September of 1944 until April of 1945. He was then transferred to the French who imprisoned him for various war crimes committed at Brest. The CSDIC (UK) described Ramcke while he was at Trent Park as "inordinately vain...ambitious, ruthless yet naïve, [and] an opportunist" and as having "a most extensive knowledge of distorted history" (Neitzel 309).

Even in the last few months of the war, when Germany is clearly losing, this belief of the Jewish enemy remains. This is not something that waivers, which suggests a truly lasting and powerful belief in it by those who make such claims. We see this topos repeated over and over again by the captured generals at Trent Park. Crüwell, one of these generals, blatantly states, “It is the *Jews* who want to destroy us *down to the last man*. They know that the National Socialist doctrine will spread all over the world and they want to save themselves by hook or by crook from their inevitable extinction” (Neitzel 79).

In a discussion about Himmler’s reason for ordering the extermination of all of the Jews, a general named Meyer¹⁰ states that the reason Himmler did it was because of his loyalty and faithfulness to Hitler and his orders. Meyer seemed to think Himmler ordering such a thing was inevitable because “The Führer used to say: ‘Should the Jews succeed once again in involving Europe in a war, it will not mean the destruction of the German people, but the annihilation of the Jewish race’” (Neitzel 199). Here we see an example of Hitler’s rhetorical topos of this Jewish threat being claimed to be directly responsible for the actions of one of his generals.

We can even see this topos translated onto ‘enemies’ other than Jews. This common singular enemy is expanded to encompass the East as a whole as a “Jewish” threat. In these transcripts from Trent Park we hear a captured general state his

¹⁰ SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS Kurt Meyer entered the SS in October of 1931. He was held at Trent Park from November of 1944 until April of 1945. In December of 1945 he was sentenced to death but this was then downgraded to life in prison, and he was eventually released in September of 1954. He was assessed by the SS in April of 1943 as having a “fanatical fighting spirit” (Neitzel 306).

concerns in regards to talk of a partition plan and the Russians gaining control over the land east of the Elbe river: "We know that the Russians can be just as ruthless with people as they would be with the clearing of a forest" (Neitzel 119). This statement that is stated towards the end of the war is indicative of the intense ingrained bias against those associated with this 'Jewish threat'. These external groups are manipulated to add to the concept of a omnipresent threat to the German Aryan man, and nothing else is taken into consideration.

The original topos of this perceived existential 'Jewish threat' to the German race was transformed as the war went on and the Holocaust took place. After these atrocities began this perceived existential threat did not decrease as one might expect, instead it increased. There was an idea that since the Jewish population was treated so poorly, were they to become free once again, they would want revenge and this seemed to pose an even more worrisome threat that furthered the topos of a perceived existential threat. In a particularly awful conversation between a few generals at Trent Park who had been witnesses to and participants in the killing of Jews, a man named Rothkirch¹¹ stated, "If those people, the Jews, come to the helm and take revenge, it will of course be terrible" (Neitzel 221).

This common element of Hitler's rhetoric of the existence of a perceived existential threat seems to be sufficiently found in the rhetoric of Hitler's generals to

¹¹ General der Kavallerie Edwin Graf von Rothkirch und Trach entered the army in March of 1908. He was held in Trent Park from March of 1945 to July of 1945. According to the CSDIC (UK), he was "the typical Prussian regular officer aristocrat" while at Trent Park, and he portrayed himself as "violently anti-Nazi" to the allied officers with whom he came into contact which the CSDIC (UK) attributed to "his attitude that his class [had] been ousted by upstarts from its rightful place in the German sun." He was described by a fellow prisoner as "lacking the least conscience" (Neitzel 311).

suggest some sort of influence was occurring either from the Hitler himself or from a common cultural belief that resulted in a meeting of minds between Hitler and his generals. This perception of the threat of the Jewish people, as correlated to Hitler's rhetoric, is extraordinarily important, as it is responsible for much of the private rationalization of many war crimes.

Public

Unlike in the private forum in which the captured generals expressed their conviction in the belief that the Jewish people posed an ultimate threat to the German people and thus validated the actions they took against these people, no matter how atrocious, Eichmann in this public forum, after the war, and in which he is fighting for his life does not utilize this topos of Hitler's rhetoric as an argument.

On various occasions, Eichmann actually denies any belief in this threat of the Jewish people. Less reads him a report in which he is quoted as having said, "Typical of the total incapacity of Jews to maintain an orderly economy is the fact that Jerusalem alone there are said to be forty Jewish banks, which live by cheating their fellow Jews" (Von Lang 44). Eichmann fervently denies ever saying such a thing. This seems to be a common thread throughout his interrogation. He refuses to say anything bad about the Jewish people or admit to ever believing such things. For Eichmann's argument, everything remotely bad he did, he did because of an order not because of an ideology. He directly says to Less, "I am neither a Jew-hater nor an anti-Semite...I think I said it to everyone" (Von Lang 149). It must be mentioned that Eichmann is on trial for his life in Jerusalem, so for him to say any differently would

be in direct opposition to his case. It is this choice to so strongly rely on a claim of not being anti-semitic despite the resounding evidence that tells us he was an anti-semitic that gives us such strong evidence of the topoi of opportunism which we will get to later. However, when it comes to perceived existential threat we see Eichmann claim that throughout the war, throughout every order for deportation, every order for extermination, every order for every horrible crime committed against the Jewish people who were outrightly and openly hated by the leaders of the Nazi party and who were consistently labeled as the enemy of the German people in the doctrine of the Nazi regime, the only reason he gave those orders was because the orders were given to him to do so. This is just not convincing given all of the evidence to the contrary. However, though it may not be convincing, it is at least not directly incriminating. Were he to admit that he was swayed and that he did believe that the Jewish people posed a threat to his nation or to his "race," he would be admitting to a motive and thus incriminating himself. On top of this, he would lose any small amount of sympathy he was able to gain by framing himself as the victim of his superiors orders.

I cannot make any claims as to whether or not Eichmann is telling the truth based on this evidence, but David Cesarani in a book entitled *Becoming Hitler* can make a claim as to Eichmann's anti semitism. According to Cesarani, Eichmann, growing up in Austria, would have been surrounded by anti semitism (32). Though he makes only minor claims as to Eichmann's anti semetism prior to the war, he emphasizes that by mid-1942 "Eichmann's attitude towards the Jews had assumed a cold inhumanity" beyond what was normal for a "warrior towards an enemy"

(Cesarani 157). Cesarani notes that “[Eichmann’s] species of anti semitism was so radical that it assumed buisness like features, like the pose of a doctor facing a disease. Doctors don’t get emotional about cancer cells. Eichmann didn’t get sentimental about Jews” and Eichmann ultimately admitted to this Nazi view of the Jews as a germ or a disease that threatened Germany in his trial (157). Given Eichmann’s deep anti semetism, omitting such a topos would not only be beneficial but necessary. Thus, the fact that we do not see Eichmann repeat this topos neither proves or disproves that he was affected by Hitler’s rhetoric of this perceived existential threat of the Jew.

Opportunism

Private

The generals held at Trent Park did their fair share of complaining about the conditions that Germany was in politically after World War I and before the start of Hitler's rule, and there seems to be a strong correlation between the topics of opportunism seen in the rhetoric of Adolf Hitler and the Reich itself and these generals use of opportunism. There is a sense of always having the right thing to say to the right people to get them on your side, and this is seen in the general's discussion of Germany's political and economic state prior to the war and the promise of a better future wanted and needed by all. This is not to say that everything that was claimed by the Nazi's on this subject was a blatant lie, but rather that the things they said to relate to others were opportunistically applied to increase their persuasive power. Hitler and the Reich were experts at becoming the thing that any specific group of people needed at any given time and we see that chameleon-like quality repeated in these captured General's rationalizations for the necessity of the war.

Most prominently this is seen in the acceptance of the exploitation of Germany's downtrodden attitude, political and economic state prior to the war, and perceived 'right' to fight back against WWI reparations. Hitler and the Reich painted Germany as a victim of World War I, and we see these generals repeat this point. Crüwell, a German general being held at Trent Park states, "Don't forget that in the first place we were swindled by those miserable Fourteen Points" (Neitzel 68). The

war here and all the actions taken thereafter are rationalized as a reaction to the perceived mistreatment of Germany by the rest of the world after World War I. On top of this statement, Krause¹², in having this discussion asks the question, “But why is it that Germany always has been hated by all the rest of the world?” (Neitzel 68). This is indicative of the Reich’s ability to utilize the power of the citizens’ and generals’ feelings of insufficiency and unpopularity to push their own agenda: war. The German people did not want war initially, but were happy with it as long as they were winning. They were understandably weary of any such thing after World War I, but this need to be free of the Treaty of Versailles was used against them. As one German general named Broich¹³ stated, “We obviously all wanted to free ourselves from the Versailles Treaty and see a free Germany reinstated, but never– I remember the time when everyone was saying: ‘Heavens, a war would be the greatest possible madness!’ I am quite pleased to be here for the time being!” (Neitzel 247). The generals captured and held at Trent Park seem to ascribe this to the placement of Germany in the victim role after WWI. This is significant evidence of Hitler and the Reich’s rhetorical prowess in this topos and evidence for how they

¹² Generalmajor Fritz Krause entered the army in November of 1913. He was stationed in North Africa, and held prisoner of war at Trent Park from May of 1943 until September of 1944. Rommel described him as having a “positive attitude to National Socialism, and described by the CSDIC (UK) during his time at Trent Park as “a pleasant rather unintelligent man, [and] anti-Nazi” (Neitzel 303-304).

¹³ Generalleutnant Friedrich (Fritz) Freiherr von Broich entered the army in July of 1914 and was consistently praised by those above him. He was held at Trent Park starting in June of 1943 where CSDIC (UK) described him as having a broader perspective than many of the other generals due to his substantial travels around Europe and as “anti-Nazi, defeatist and monarchist.” This anti-Nazism was matched by a deeply entrenched hatred of communism. It is reported that in correspondence with his wife, she warned him to be more careful in stating his anti-Nazi opinions” (Neitzel 283-284).

utilized this topos to get Germany into a war it did not necessarily want to be in. There was a sense from some that this political opportunism was the only way to handle the solution: "Today of course one can say -- as quite a number here are doing-- that we should never have started the war but, in my opinion, how else were we to get rid of the Versailles Treaty?" (Neitzel 118-119). There is a repetition of this ultimately political motivation behind the war seen here.

This topos also evolved to fit the conditions of the later war in which it began to become clear that Germany would lose again. The political motivation to continue the war because of Germany's perceived victimization after WWI is a continuation of this focus on the post-WWI conditions in Germany as motivation for the start of the war. Heyking¹⁴, one of the generals captured stated, "We've experienced the 'fourteenpoints' once, we either die or ---Either we shall die, or they will collapse in the process too" (Neitzel 122). This is further rhetorical evidence of the power of the topos of political opportunism.

With this topos we see political motives being placed on a people that did not want to see a repeat of WWI and who were weary of going back to war initially. We see evidence of an encoded need to become the victor rather than the victim. This was also an element of Hitler and the Reich's rhetoric. They were able to politically manipulate a situation into a need for war and these complaints are an example of that.

¹⁴ Generalleutnant Rüdiger von Heyking entered the army in March of 1914 and transferred to the Luftwaffe in April of 1934. He was taken to Trent Park in September of 1944 where he was described by the CSDIC (UK) as being "cooperative," believing Germany to have already lost the war, and feeling "disillusioned and disgusted by the commands of Higher HQ" (Neitzel 298-299).

Another thing we must look at in regards to testing this hypothesis of opportunism is the fact that we see a pattern of the people who believe the war to be lost to also be the people who are more critical of Hitler and the Nazis. Within Trent Park there were two major cliques. The first of these cliques generally leaned towards a more critical attitude of Hitler and the regime and were often described as “anti-Nazi” by those who secretly monitored their conversations (Neitzel 30-37). This group was led by Thoma, and was also a group described by Neitzel to have “considered the war lost” (37). The other big group at Trent Park was led by Crüwell and was considered to be the “Nazi clique” by the those listening in (Neitzel 30-37). Neitzel also made a note that this group “though critical of the war situation, considered it by no means hopeless” (37). We can see evidence of this connection in the generals conversations as well.

Thoma, who was described as “violently anti-Nazi” during his time at Trent Park stated in September of 1943, that “the collapse of Germany is inevitable” and that he had “been expecting it” (Neitzel 79). Broich, another member of this anti-Nazi clique stated in June of 1943 that “our [the German’s] position is hopeless, there is no sense in carrying on the war any longer” (Neitzel 74). Another prominent member of this anti-Nazi group used the phrase “once the war is lost” in September of 1944 and with this phrase spoke to his belief in the inevitability of defeat. This is all contrasted with the statements made by those in the pro-Nazi clique. Crüwell, the leader of this group, in discussing the benefits of monarchy stated that he only thought it could be possible “is we were to lose the war completely, and I set no store by that” (Neitzel 67). Here we see a stark contrast to those in the anti-Nazi

clique. In June of 1943, Crüwell was still holding on to this belief that Germany could win the war. He stated "I find it so unseemly to paint everything in its worst colours now...I don't think that things are as serious or as desperate as all that" (Neitzel 75). Another one of the generals in this clique, was also optimistic about the prospects of the war. In September of 1943, he stated "I believe that we shall clear out of Italy according to plan." This contrast between how the generals who are pro-Nazi and anti-Nazi see the prospects of the war is extremely important evidence of opportunism.

This contrast in opinions on the prospects of the war show us a correlational pattern that indicates those who show a belief that the war is going well also show stronger support of the Nazi regime. The opposite is also true, a belief that Germany will lose the war correlates with statements of anti-Nazism. We cannot claim causation for a number of reasons one of which being that even if causation were to be proven, directionality of the causation would be complicated. However, this correlation is enough to make an argument about the clearly opportunist strategy that is taking place. If one believes that the war is being lost, there is a benefit to also stop claiming belief in the ideals of the Nazi party. There is an incentive to begin, whether consciously or unconsciously, creating a defense. However, if one believes the war is going well, there is no need to unsubscribe to Nazism because there would be no repercussions to holding such beliefs. This is yet another support within the generals' rhetoric of the hypothesized topoi of opportunism common to Hitler's rhetoric.

Public

We do not see Eichmann make any real claims of opportunist motivations directly in his public interrogations; however, we do see an indirect appeal to opportunism. I think that this is very telling. During the war, Germany was able to claim motivations from a victim's standpoint; but years after the war had ended, the atrocities uncovered, and Germany no longer the victim but the undeniable perpetrator of criminal policies, Eichmann is no longer able to rely on this common topos as a method of explaining away his and the Reich's behavior. He cannot play the victim in this case. To do so would ruin his credibility and it would make him an even more unsympathetic character. To play the sore loser of World War I would do nothing to save his life under these circumstances in a situation run by people unsympathetic to Germany's plight after WWI and who will determine his fate. They are prosecuting him for his actions in World War II, not whether he was in the right because his country was hurt by the handling of the repercussions of World War I. Again, it is possible that Eichmann did not see this opportunist argument as a legitimate reason why he took the actions he did and thus excluded it from his testimony out of legitimate irrelevance to his own actions and a piece of Hitler's rhetoric that never resonated with him. Eichmann had sufficient cause to not include this topos were it something that had resonated with him.

The way we see Eichmann appeal to this hypothesized topos of opportunism is through his claims of never being an anti semite. As we discussed in the previous section regarding perception of an existential threat, Eichmann was extremely anti-semitic, but in his interrogations, he claims otherwise. This retraction of previously

held beliefs is clearly opportunistic for Eichmann. It is an example of him saying the right thing to the right people, and of this chameleon-like strategy of projecting oneself as what the audience wants. From what we have looked at, it seems as though Eichmann only openly subscribes to Nazism as long as Nazism is winning and this is an important example of a correlational relationship between O'Shaughnessy's hypothesized Hitler topoi and the rhetoric of his generals.

Overall, we see that this topos of political opportunism can be found in the public forum of generals captured and held at Trent Park in their recorded discussions, and we see evidence of its replication in the rhetoric of Adolf Eichmann indirectly in the public forum of his interrogations. This difference in how the hypothesized topoi appears in each setting tells us that there is probably some difference in the public and private forums and changes that occurred between the times they occurred that led to the specific inclusion or exclusion of this topos from one's argument.

Charisma

Private

Among the generals captured and held at Trent Park, one of the common topos that came up time and time again in their discussions was that of Hitler's charisma and his almost magical ability to persuade those in his presence.

Heim, one of the generals held at Trent Park noted in private conversation, "It isn't true that all our leaders are spineless...Who creep and crawl to him the moment they come before him, as one likes to picture it, but on the contrary he has a *remarkable* hypnotic power" (Neitzel 135). This hypnotic power did not just affect those who viewed Hitler from a distance, who were never directly in contact with the man. It was not an effect of media power and careful, practiced execution, but rather an enthralling power of the man himself.

Another high-ranking German prisoner of war, Crüwell, was also very aware of this power. The POW is recorded as saying, "I am convinced that a great part of the Führer's success as Party Leader is accounted for by pure mass suggestion. It's bound up with a kind of hypnotism, and he can exercise this on a great many people. I know people who are undoubtedly superior to him mentally and who yet fall under this spell" (Neitzel 67).

This charismatic persona was also elevated a step further and created this magical persona of Hitler that was idolized in an almost religious matter. This was more the case for those who were not close to the man, those who did not have access to him regularly. One general noted the religiosity of Hitler and the Reich and

discussed the effect of such a transcendent depiction of the leader as follows:

“German propaganda made Hitler into a sort of God, and now the people expect a miracle” (Neitzel 131). There was a feeling that he was somehow more than human that pervaded so many depictions and descriptions of Adolf Hitler. This ties back to the charisma and mysticism that those who experienced it claimed resulted in a certain blind obedience. When discussing the July 20th plot to assassinate Hitler, Sponeck¹⁵, a general held at Trent Park, who was discussing how those who committed the attempt were being punished, and in response to another general noting that the method of execution of the would-be assassins seemed unfair and that their executions should be more honorable stated, “Yes, but he (Hitler) is a ‘God’. It is a crime against ‘God’” (Neitzel 250).

This belief that Hitler himself was somehow more than human, whether that be through his extraordinary charisma and powers of persuasion or, when taken to the extreme, his godliness, is a clear example of the same topos common to Hitler’s own rhetoric. However, it was not a belief held by all of the generals at Trent Park. Bruhn states in April of 1945, “one is only constantly astounded that we all ran after this will o’ the wisp as we did” (Neitzel 147). This sentiment of anti-Hitlerism was strong amongst many of the generals. Heim attributes problems of the war to the fact that “it is in the hands of a *madman*, a *criminal*” (Neitzel 144). Thoma described Hitler by saying “mentally, he is ill, very ill” (Neitzel 94). One general went so far as to say the following: “I went there and Hitler made me a speech for three-quarters of

¹⁵ Generalleutnant Theodor Graf von Sponeck entered the army in August of 1914 and was held at Trent Park from June to September of 1944. He was described by the CSDIC (UK) as “neurotic and very moody” and “defeatist, anti-Nazi, and a monarchist” during his time at Trent Park (Neitzel 315).

an hour, as though I were a public meeting. He gets drunk with his own speeches! I went into the room and there he stood, a fat, broken-down old man with festering hands." (Neitzel 94) Hitler portrayed himself as this extra-human leader, but one's view of this seems to be dependent on some other factor. The establishment of Hitler's charisma was a two way street that required a certain predisposition to belief. It seems that there is rhetorical evidence in the private sphere to suggest some support for the hypothesized topoi of charisma in Hitler's generals' private deliberations, but the fact that it was less universal than expected decreases the strength of this hypothesized topoi.

Public

This claim of charisma and hypnotic abilities of Hitler, however, is not something we see in the Eichmann interrogations. Eichmann never describes Hitler in this way nor does he attempt to excuse his own crimes by claiming this influence. It is possible that Eichmann did not have these sort of hypnotic interactions with Hitler. However, I also believe there are a few reasons he might have omitted discussing this hypnotic power of Hitler in a public trial scenario.

First, in a public setting, suggesting an almost mystical or magical capability of a leader who has been so strongly vilified for causing horrible atrocities is not going to help his case. Secondly, claiming that someone was particularly convincing that an entire race of people is evil is also not beneficial to his case as it proves that this is something he once believed. Eichmann's strategy, throughout the interrogation is to deny everything. Then, if that does not work he claims it didn't

happen exactly in the way described. And when these two attempts fail, he falls back on the explanation that he was only following orders. There is powerlessness here, but a powerlessness that is caused by a theoretically moral act: duty and loyalty. There is no morality to simply being legitimately convinced by a persuasive person to kill millions of people, no matter how mystical their powers of persuasion may have been, and that which did not invoke sympathy in the audience would not aid Eichmann. Eichmann claims, throughout, that he was not an anti-Semite and to claim that he had been affected by Hitler's rhetoric to believe differently despite his initial feelings would contradict this statement (Von Lang 57). Whether he was aware of Hitler's charisma and whether or not he felt he had been affected by this sort of mystical power of persuasion, Eichmann could not and would not admit to it because to do so could potentially put his life at stake.

Propaganda Of The Deed

Private

In the captured generals from Trent Park, we see a good amount of evidence to suggest that there was potentially some successful rhetorical replication of this topos which is suggestive of Hitler's rhetorical impact. There is a focus on the initial good of Hitler's regime that these generals seem to recognize as the reason why rebellion didn't take place when it could have made a difference or been successful. There is a sense of willful blindness due to the initial improvements that occurred for the general welfare of Germany after Hitler took over.

These generals discussed retrospectively and on multiple occasions, their slow build to supposed disagreement with the ideals of the Reich. In this private setting, German Admiral Hennecke¹⁶ made the statement in regards to higher-ranking members of the Reich: "They...found themselves more and more in opposition to the attitude of the Party, but they never opened their mouths when it was necessary...that was the great mistake." (Neitzel 90). Here we see him claim a growing disagreement with the practices of the Reich and a complaint about the lack of early rebellion. Hennecke seems to see this as what would have been the solution. We see here recognition of the effects of the Reich's practice of reeling in supporters through initial improvements and a slow build up to more radical policies that left rebellion off the table. Once one has agreed to so much, it is much harder to find

¹⁶ Konteradmiral Walter Hennecke entered the Imperial Navy in October of 1915 during WWI. He was held at Trent Park from July of 1944 until September of 1944. The CSDIC (UK) described him during this time as "being by no means 100 percent Nazi...[but] not pro-British and out for himself" (Neitzel 297).

obvious and clear fault in the next step further. This propaganda of the initial deeds, Hennecke is arguing, prevented these high-ranking officials from being able to fully recognize and act on their oppositional attitudes. Hennecke states, "It [rebellion] should have been done in 1933 or in 1934 when things started" (Neitzel 90). This is right at the beginning of Hitler's rule and the period in which so much of this propaganda of the initial deeds was taking place, and Hennecke believes that rebellion needed to be recognized as necessary at this time point to have been effective. We see these generals' claim a powerlessness to rebel in the early days of the Reich that they attribute to an overpowering agreement and contentment with the improvements that Hitler was making, and this is exemplified in a quote from one of the captured generals, Köhn¹⁷. Köhn states "I regarded National Socialism idealistically and in my opinion it offered the only possibility for the German people at the time; I also saw its successes. In my opinion nobody will deny the successes it achieved." (Neitzel 90). When he is talking about successes we see even further evidence of the exactness of this propaganda of the deed. Köhn clarifies, "[National Socialism] got rid of the unemployed for us...history would have to grant it this one achievement, that it solved the problem of unemployment" (Neitzel 90). Even now, in this conversation Köhn is having in which he is so strongly convicted about the wrongness of the Reich that he is discussing the necessity of rebellion, he is unable

¹⁷ Oberst Walter Köhn entered the army in March of 1913, was discharged in 1920, went on to join the Prussian Landespolizei, and re-entered the army in October of 1935. He was at Trent Park from July to August of 1944. The CSDIC (UK) described him as "a Nazi at heart and one of those who had believed in Hitler." They also believe he took Germany's defeats and the July 20th attack on Hitler very hard, and saw him as very critical of high-ranking Party officials who he seemed to believe were only keeping the war going in order to to keep themselves alive (Neitzel 302-303).

to deny what he sees as the good Hitler did at the beginning. Another captured general, in reminiscing on what Hitler once was and what was to come for Germany now that Hitler had died just a few days previous states, "It's just another dictatorship now...[Hitler] impressed us. Actually he once had very good ideas." (Neitzel 158) In all of these general's comments, there is an overwhelming sense of a downward trajectory of the Reich's ideals that could only be carried out because the initial good that was done created a sense of security and was seen as evidence of its ability to implement policies that would better the country. This rationalization for the later policies that resulted in countless atrocities is an excellent example of the potential effect of Hitler's rhetorical use of propaganda of the deed on his generals.

Public

This is not a topos of Hitler's rhetoric that is only seen replicated in the private forum, there also seems to be evidence of its persuasive effects in the public forum setting of the interrogation of Adolf Eichmann. Eichmann utilizes this topos in a much more direct way. For Eichmann, because he was so high ranking, Hitler's and the Reich's goals, were his goals, so we see Eichmann utilize these initial deeds of improvement as evidence of his own initial mission for good in his role in the Reich. Eichmann states that it was these initial deeds that attracted him to Hitler and the government. "In those first years, what mattered to me, as I've already said, was work and bread for seven million people, an Autobahn, and the fight against Versailles –in those matters my attitude was unconditional" (Von Lang 40). These were the things he claims he believed were Hitler's goals in full. He talks about how

this is the doctrine that he believed in and that he signed up to support. He claims that he was hopeful for change under this doctrine and leadership (Von Lang 36). Eichmann, on multiple occasions aims to convince his interrogator that “in the early period, the Jewish problem wasn’t the main thing. What interested us in Austria was work and bread, freedom, an end to servitude” (Von Lang 41). There is a repetition of this simplified goal of providing basic necessities. Later in the same conversation Eichmann again states his goals for those first few years: “work and bread for seven million people, an Autobahn, and the fight against Versailles” (Von Lang 40). There is a sense of a singular, almost blinding focus that he attempts to utilize in order to deny his involvement in the creation of policies that would inevitably lead to the Holocaust. He states in his interrogation with Less, “I saw a nationalism that appealed to me. Hitler fulminated against Versailles, work and bread were promised, and the promise was kept later on...But this would take us too far” (Von Lang 36). Eichmann frames this initial propaganda of the deed as a sort of manipulation of his true hopes and goals for the country that inspired his dedication to the Reich and that was later exploited to create and implement more radical policies that he did not believe in.

This claim of the intensity of propaganda of the deed is suggestive of the extent of the reach of the Reich’s propaganda if true. But it also tells us a lot even if Eichmann is utilizing this topos for his own benefit. This would suggest that the propaganda of the initial deeds of the Reich was so widely utilized and known that Eichmann feels it was so entrenched in the German society that there is a chance he can believably utilize it to save his life.

COMMON NON-HITLER TOPOI

There are a few topoi found in both the public and private deliberations of Eichmann and the generals at Trent Park that are not aspects of Hitler or the Reich's rhetoric in any way but that are important to our overall understanding of the rhetorical power and reach of Hitler's propaganda. These topoi include a fear of internal punishment, a denial of knowledge, and a belief that Germany should have taken action against the 'Jewish problem' but should have done so differently.

Fear of Internal Punishment

This first topos of a fear of internal punishment is largely found as an explanation for crimes committed. The idea that Nazi Germany was cruel is an established one, so why wouldn't this be the case for its generals as well as those being persecuted. This thought process allows the explanation of "fear of punishment" to come off as sincere. In reality, many of these generals argue that they were never truly under any threat for non-compliance. Nonetheless the topos was utilized.

In the private forum of the captured generals living at Trent Park we see this appeal often. Pfuhlstein¹⁸, one of these generals, when asked why Germany was still fighting in April of 1945 stated, "Orders now are always worded as follows: 'I order

¹⁸ Generalmajor Alexander von Pfuhlstein entered the Prussian army during WWI in March of 1917. In September of 1944, he was arrested by the Gestapo and released in January of 1945 under the condition that he proved himself on the war front. Neitzel explains, "Pfuhlstein had close contacts to the military conspiracy." He was held in Trent Park from April until August of 1945.

this and that. If it should not succeed, you will be shot" (Neitzel 148). This topos takes Hitler's topos of following orders to a higher level. Not only do these generals rationalize their actions through following orders, but they disavow themselves from any obligation to revolt by noting the harshness of punishment they would receive were they to do so. In a discussion between a father and a son at Trent Park, we see the father explain to his son why a general who thought Hitler was mad would follow him. He explained, "it was like this: you could say that all the Generals were given the choice of either...or you are all involved; your wives and children will be shot and you yourselves will be hanged." (Neitzel 265) But this was blatantly untrue. According to Christopher Browning, a professor of history and contributor to Yad Vashem's official history of the Holocaust, "in the the past forty-five years no defense attorney or defendant in any of the hundreds of postwar trials has been able to document a single case in which the refusal to obey an order to kill unarmed civilians resulted in the allegedly inevitable dire punishment" (170).

It is interesting that we see this sort of appeal to fear of punishment in the private sphere before the war ended. This suggests that there was not only a practical reason to utilize this topos, but rather that some of these generals might have truly believed in that they could be punished physically despite the fact that this sort of punishment is not historically accurate. To give such a reason for your actions in a private setting doesn't do much to exonerate you from anyone other than your peers. This however also cannot be overlooked. No one wants to look like the monster. Even amongst their peers.

Eichmann also utilized this topos, and he had reason to do so. This was a useful means of claiming his own innocence of crimes. He stated in response to questions as to whether or not he was opposed to the killing of Jews, "If I hadn't obeyed then, I'd have been punished then" (Von Lang 198). Here we see Eichmann again utilize this topos of a fear of punishment to explain away his actions. He again does this when he stated, "There was one way and only one way [to circumvent Hitler's order]: to take a pistol and shoot yourself" (Von Lang 197). Eichmann here utilizes a fear of punishment to paint himself as a helpless victim of the orders of the Reich.

Denial of Knowledge

The second topos that comes up a lot in the private and public deliberations of Hitler's generals is a denial of knowledge. In the captured generals, we see disagreement between what was known and not known. We see Hennecke talk about the internal confusion as to what was going on and his own reasons for initial skepticism, "I never heard much about those things before I came here. At first I wouldn't believe them. There is such a lot of silly talk! Whenever you ask: 'Did you see it yourself?' or 'Do you really know someone?', you got the answer: 'No, an uncle of Mrs so-and-so told me'" (Neitzel 99). According to Hennecke, this was information that was informally rather than officially spread which allowed for a level of uncertainty and potentially differing levels of knowledge between German

generals. When Schlieben¹⁹ talks about just how much was known about the realities of concentration camps, we see a repetition of this seemingly less official transmission of information, but a different conclusion. Schlieben claimed, "Everybody knew that dreadful things happened in them -- not exactly what, but just that dreadful things happened in them -- every one of us knew that as far back as '35" (Neitzel 232). This is simply the same argument that Hennecke made, but instead of taking the information provided and assuming it must be false, Schlieben made the assumption it was true. It seems clear that it was not the information being spread that differed, but rather how one chose to interpret that information. We see another general discuss war crimes that occurred in Russia in a more personal way and make a denial that again removes him from blame. Kittel²⁰ denies his own involvement in the massacre of Jews at Rostov when he says "18,000 Jews were killed at Rostov. Of course I had nothing to do with the whole affair! But it is down on my account because I was the only known 'General' there" (Neitzel 214). This denial of involvement but acceptance of punishment is interesting. There was a mix of admission of knowledge in these generals. Some claimed that they knew

¹⁹ Generalleutnant Kurt Wilhelm von Schlieben entered the army in August of 1914 and held at Trent Park from July of 1944 to August of 1945. According to CSDIC (UK), during this time, Schlieben "[had] more bluff than guts," was "much inclined to self-pity," and "revealed colossal ignorance" (Neitzel 312-313).

²⁰ Generalleutnant Heinrich Kittel entered the army in July of 1911 and was brought as prisoner to Trent Park in January of 1945. In his final assessment by the army, he was described as a "convinced National Socialist," and according to CSDIC (UK), Kittel was "connected with most major political happenings in Germany" throughout his career. He is also described during his time at Trent Park as being "strongly opposed to the Nazi 'State within the State'," "detest[ing] the Police, SS, SD and administration camarilla" but seeing it as his duty to Germany to "not do or say anything which might damage the war effort of the Reich" (Neitzel 301-302).

nothing of what occurred in concentration camps or of the war crimes committed throughout Europe by the Germans, but others claimed that this ignorance could not be true. According to these generals, everyone was aware that *something* was going on. It is the denial of legally actionable knowledge of crimes that seems to be the common thread.

Eichmann however, was even more prolific in his denial of knowledge of the war crimes he was blamed for. When confronted with the mass murders of Jews that took place in Riga and in Minsk in the autumn of 1941 and evidence of his involvement in the transportation of Jews to these places and his involvement with the action groups who carried out the crimes, Eichmann made the claim, "I didn't know about it at the time, but of course I heard about it later." (Von Lang 81). This is not the only instance of him claiming ignorance of a war crime. When confronted with a statement from the former head of the "technical disinfection service" of the SS that claimed that prussic acid, a poison, had been ordered by Günther, Eichmann's permanent representative, and who had asked whether the former head had a poison for killing people in Theresienstadt ghetto, Eichmann claimed to know nothing about it. He stated, "He didn't get the order from me. I know nothing about it." (Von Lang 87). Eichmann also claimed that he did not know the fate of 17,000 Slovakian Jews in Poland who had been murdered (Von Lang 161). These are just a few instances of the denial of knowledge of these crimes that occur throughout the interrogation. Eichmann claims to have known so little about anything that occurred that it is almost entirely unbelievable in the face of all the evidence provided to the contrary. However, this was a one of Eichmann's only defense strategies. He denied

knowledge about everything he believably could and even some he couldn't. His perceived innocence would be the thing that determined whether or not he would live or die, and to deny knowledge of the crimes he was being tried for was the ultimate, last hope defense.

“Should Have Been Done Differently”

The final common topos between Eichmann and the captured generals that is worth noting is that of the claim that these events did occur, but that they believe it should have been done differently. This is interesting because it reveals a lot about the deeply ingrained ideologies of these generals. In *Tapping Hitler's Generals* we see this topos throughout multiple discussions. One former general named Jösting²¹ said, "I quite agree that the Jews had to be turned out, that was obvious, but the manner in which it was done was absolutely wrong, and the present hatred is the result" (Neitzel 229). This perception of a need to do something about Jewish people, but retrospectively disagreeing with the way it was handled is extremely prevalent in these private conversations and also extremely jarring at times. Quotes such as this one from a former general named Hellwig that begin with a statement rebuking the Nazis' actions but then evolve into a statement that does not reject the original ideology of the Nazi party, just renounces its methodology were common: "The manner in which we treated the Jews was wrong....They should have been able

²¹ Oberst Erwin Jösting entered the army in 1911, was discharged in 1920, and rejoined through the Luftwaffe in 1934. He was brought to Trent Park as a prisoner in April of 1945. The CSDIC (UK) describes him during this time at Trent Park as being a "Nazi of the Prussian type" and being "outspokenly anti-Semitic" (Neitzel 300).

to leave the country with all their money" (Neitzel 188). This methodological disagreement was common amongst many of the captured generals, though what piece of the method was varied. The elder Eberbach²² found fault with the specific demographic of the Jews that were killed: "In my opinion, one can go so far as to say that the killing of those million Jews or however many it was, was necessary in the interests of our people. But to kill the women and children wasn't necessary. That is going to far" (Neitzel 103). Others, like Hellwig and Klenk thought the killing unnecessary: "Send them out of the country; get rid of them in a decent way, but not..." (Neitzel 188). Others found fault not with the murder itself, but with how public that murder was. Another former general is quoting as having said, "The business with the Jews in Germany was quite right, only it should have been done quietly" (Neitzel 107).

This topos presents itself a little differently in Eichmann's interrogations. Eichmann portrays his disillusion with the way Jews were treated without claiming that they should have been left alone through descriptions of his disgust with what he witnessed. Eichmann said things such as "I was horrified. My nerves aren't strong enough... I can't listen to such things... such things, without their affecting me" in

²² General der Panzertruppe Heinrich Eberbach (Father) entered the army in July of 1914. He was severely wounded in WWI, subsequently joined the police in December of 1919, and transferred back into the army in August of 1935. He was brought to Trent Park in September of 1944. In March of 1944, he was described by his superior as "one of our best." The CSDIC (UK) noted that he "supported Nazis some years, although never [was] a Party member" and that though he found some fault with the regime he would not get involved with spreading this idea among the German people. His oldest son, Oberleutnant zur See Heinz Eugen Eberbach, followed his father's footsteps, joined the army in August of 1939 and was held at Trent Park from September to November of 1944 (Neitzel 288-289).

regards to his visit to a concentration camp (Von Lang 76). I believe that this claim of disgust with the way the Jews were being treated and murdered is a less direct but still relevant appeal to the topos of 'things should have been done differently.' Eichmann used this topos throughout his interrogations and it comes across as fairly sincere. I believe that he was disgusted by the things he saw, but I also do not believe he was against the extermination. In regards to his visit to Auschwitz, Eichmann made the claim, "I never got any further than the command post at the main entrance" (Von Lang 83). Eichmann does not say here or anywhere that the genocide should not have happened. He does not claim that this idea of the "Jewish problem" did not require a solution; he only indirectly indicates that he doesn't think it should've been done in that way.

CONCLUSION

Evidence of all five of O'Shaughnessy and Kershaw's hypothesized topoi common to Hitler's rhetoric can be seen in the private forum of the captured generals at Trent Park. However, there is a major difference in the strength of each of these especially when their use or non-use by Eichmann is taken into consideration.

When it came to testing the hypothetical topoi O'Shaughnessy and Kershaw presented, compartmentalization, or the ability live in multiple separate worlds with different moral codes, showed a strong correlation to both the public and private end-of-war/post-war deliberations of Hitler's generals, but not the strongest. We can see this correlation in the generals' and Eichmann's justifying statements that they were "just following orders," but there is too strong an incentive to make such an argument when trying to justify one's actions as evidenced throughout history for this correlation to be viewed as strongly influenced by the rhetoric of Hitler himself.

The second hypothesis we were testing was that of O'Shaughnessy's perceived existential threat. This topos has a less strong correlation to the rhetoric of these generals. Like compartmentalization, perceived existential threat was born out of a common cultural idea so much so that it is impossible to tell whether the evidence of the topos in the Trent Park generals is a result of Hitler's rhetoric or the culture itself. However, the topos was too strongly correlated with the ideas of the Nazi party for us to be able to make any overarching claims. Though we see much of

this topos in the captured generals at Trent Park, we do not see it in Eichmann's interrogation. Eichmann faces too strong an incentive to deny this topos; therefore, we cannot make any strong claims as to the overall strength of its correlation to Hitler's rhetoric between both the private and public setting.

The next hypothesis we looked at was what O'Shaughnessy referred to as opportunism. This is one of two of Hitler's topos most strongly correlated with the end-of-war/post-war rhetoric of his generals. This topos is seen in the Trent Park generals very clearly and directly through their discussions of the reasons why they felt the war was justified in the first place and through a correlation of those who saw the war as lost also being those with more anti-Nazi rhetoric. In the public setting of Eichmann's trial, we don't see Eichmann talk about Germany as a victim of WWI as we do with the captured generals, but we do see Eichmann claim that he is not an anti-semite. This is evidence of Eichmann's utilization of opportunism because we know he was a fierce anti-semite, and thus we can infer that his decision not to expose his belief now that Nazism and the attached antisemitism are condemned as an act of opportunism.

The fourth hypothesis of O'Shaughnessy is that of Charisma. This aspect of Hitler's rhetoric can be seen very strongly in the private setting, but some of these generals also discuss strong evidence to the contrary. In the public setting, Eichmann does not mention Hitler's claimed charisma. Thus, this topos, though not entirely invalid, seems to show a much weaker correlation to the rhetoric of Hitler's generals than the previous topoi do.

Finally, Kershaw's proposed topos of propaganda of the deed that is found in Hitler's rhetoric, has a very strong correlational strength to Hitler's generals rhetoric. This is a topos that was based in a common cultural belief and weaponized by Hitler. We see strong evidence of this topos in the Trent Park generals and we see evidence of Eichmann utilizing this topos as well. The Trent Park generals and Eichmann both make strong claims as to the initial goals and appeal of solving the economic and political problems they faced. Therefore, this topos is the second of the two most strongly correlated topos.

There is evidence in these end-of-war/post-war deliberations, both public and private to support O'Shaughnessy and Kershaw's topos to different extents, but we see the strongest correlation between Hitler's and the generals' rhetoric in topos that have a basis in common cultural beliefs. These two topos of propaganda of the deed and opportunism are both strategies that utilize previously held beliefs in the population and leverage them. We cannot say whether any of these correlations between Hitler and his generals' rhetoric are a result of Hitler's own persuasive power or are purely a result of cultural phenomena. Causation is too complex to determine by examining this historical data for rhetorical evidence. We cannot make a claim that Hitler changed the minds of people, rather it seems that those who were predisposed to believe the basis of these arguments were those most affected by his rhetoric.

The fact that we see less evidence of this rhetorical influence in the private setting is complex. Not only do we deal with the aspects of Hitler and the Reich's arguments that are relatable to a single person, but we are dealing with what will

benefit this man as he attempts to save his own life. He must be very cautious as to what he admits to agreeing with, being influenced by, etc., which is not necessarily going to be indicative of his entire catalog of influences. The rhetorical decisions he makes are going to be very selective and self-serving. They will lean more on the side of caution than of truth and thus give us evidence of something that doesn't necessarily show whether or not Hitler's rhetoric was successful or not, but rather tells us much more about the environment and opinions of those being tried and those holding the trial of Adolf Eichmann. It tells us what Eichmann thought would benefit him and what he thought would incriminate him. It reveals to us evidence of what he may have potentially found to be irredeemable qualities of the Reich's rhetoric that would prevent him from going free.

I think it is fair to say that there is a strong enough correlation of the proposed rhetoric of Hitler and that of his generals to suggest that, at some level, Hitler's rhetoric did have an influence on the way these generals created their alibis. However, I'm not convinced that there is enough evidence to conclusively prove that this was a real rather than apparent influence. There is no way to prove whether or not the rhetorical evidence itself is indicative of a larger true influence of Hitler's ideas on his generals, but the repetition of rhetoric in both the private and public deliberations itself does suggest, at the very least, a cultural influence and creation of a selection of talking points from which those who were searching for explanations of their own motivations whether for themselves or in the public eye were able to pick and choose at their own discretion.

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BIOGRAPHY

Madeline Ward Buschang was born in Corpus Christi, Texas on December 27, 1995, and moved with her family to Austin, Texas in 2012. She enrolled in the Plan II Honors program at The University of Texas at Austin in 2014 and studied Rhetoric & Writing and Psychology. In her free time, she enjoys organizing her bookshelves, hiking, and putting clothing she will never purchase in online shopping carts. She currently works in politics and is excited to see where both her academic and career interests will take her.