

REVIEWS

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NĚMEC, RICHARD. *DIE ÖKONOMISIERUNG DES RAUMS. PLANEN UND BAUEN IN MITTEL- UND OSTEUROPA UNTER DEN NATIONALSOZIALISTEN, 1938 BIS 1945*. BERLIN: DOM PUBLISHERS, 2020, 498 PP. ISBN 978-3-86922-168-7

Richard Němec's monograph is an extensive, multidisciplinary comparative study of spatial planning, urbanism and architecture in Central and Eastern Europe under the power "baton" of Nazi Germany. With its multidisciplinary character, it sits on the borders of the history of urbanism and architecture and urban history as well as political and partly economic and cultural history. The comparative framework of the work utilizes the research examples of the cities of Liberec, Karlovy Vary, Prague, Bratislava, Warsaw, Krakow and partly Poznań. Their choice was conditioned by the different contrasting statuses of the territories and especially by the form of power administration as well as the relationship with Nazi Germany as the governing political and ideological centre. The aim of the work is the analysis and interpretation of urbanism, urban planning and architecture as a special form of visualization and instrumentalization of Nazi power in the public space. Special attention is paid to the internal structure of the power apparatus, from the control centre, through the administration of each territory, to the municipal administration. Among other things, the analysis of relations within the professional community at the level of architects and urban planners, their hierarchy, competencies and relations with politicians and political representatives of the Nazi regime is clearly observable on this basis. In this context, the author also describes the specific personnel background of key political and professional actors, as well as the degree of their professionalism and ambitions or, on the other hand, profit-driven as well as ideologically oriented degree of collaboration with the Nazi regime. On this basis, it can be stated that the monograph far exceeds the positivist framework limited to the description of urban planning or architectural solutions of the surveyed places. The work opens up numerous research problems as well as aspects or levels of the researched

issues, which have so far been only partially elaborated in European historiography.

The research core of the monograph consists of six main chapters. The introductory chapter introduces several key theoretical and methodological starting points. The primary is the definition of the expansive occupation, settlement and cultural policy of Nazi Germany in connection with the conceptualization of the acquisition of "living space" (Lebensraum) in Eastern European territories. This is directly related to the self-reflection of Nazi Germany as the centre of the planned "new Europe". In this context, the author also includes a set of theoretical considerations about the very perception and concepts of "space" as a multi-layered entity. The author distinguishes between the character of the territory in relation to the political administration into annexed (Sudetenland), occupied (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Poland) and satellite (Slovak state). He follows from this basis also the relationship to the centre of power on which the nature of spatial planning, planned urban solutions and interventions in the specific cities surveyed depended. A special theoretical starting point is the city as a "projection area" (Projektionsfläche) for the instrumentalization of power, ideology and its aspects, such as "Germanization" or the complex "construction" of new identities in accordance with the concepts of Nazi cultural policy. The issues monitored also include the principles of spatial planning, the role of experts (architects, urban planners) in this process, the transfer of outlined concepts, the influence of the power centre and, last but not least, the issue of model templates. In the case of models, it is primarily Berlin, but the role as a model of Rome and the architects of fascist Italy does not remain outside the author's viewfinder. The author pays special attention to the role of Albert Speer, who created a connection between the Nazi authorities and planning within the studied areas. In addition to the theoretical background, the chapter also contains insights into the development of the political situation, context or ethnic and cultural structure of Czechoslovakia and Poland after 1938. The focus here is primarily on the impact of the results of the Munich Agreement in the context of the Nazi

ideological construct of the “new Europe”. The author pays special attention to the conceptualization of issues in historiography, focusing primarily on its processing in the field of urban history. He presents the topic as a research challenge, not only for the history of urbanism and architecture, but also for urban history itself, while in the elaboration of the topic, according to the author, a greater emphasis is placed on Germany. According to the author, the complexification of the issue for Czechoslovakia and Poland was related to the long-term limited availability of archival sources (they had been classified as top secret for a long time) or to the socialist regime, which tabooed these topics. This had a special impact on the delayed onset of research trends in Czech, Slovak and Polish historiography.

Within the five application chapters, separate case studies of the cities of Liberec, Karlovy Vary, Prague, Bratislava and in a separate chapter Warsaw, Krakow and partly Poznań are presented.

As a starting point for the case study of Liberec is its appointment to serve as the capital of the Sudetenland, which, according to the author, largely determined the scope and form of the planned urban planning in terms of political significance. According to the author, a significant stimulus was also the inclusion of Liberec in the list of “cities of the imperial programme built for German cities”, which demonstrates the strong politicization of the whole process. Subsequently, the author opens numerous questions related to technical assumptions and budget, but also actors. It brings in the areas of possible interventions, such as creation of the so-called “Greater Liberec” by the annexation of the surrounding municipalities or interventions in the transport infrastructure, which was an aspect valid for all the cities surveyed in the set comparative framework. A special problem was the identity of the city, which was already multi-layered during the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The “multi-identity” of the city persisted even during the 1st Czechoslovakia and the “competition” itself, with respect to the conflict between German and Czech identity, was also reflected in public space and architecture. As examples, the author uses, among others, the buildings of the *Brouk & Babka* shopping mall of architect Jan Gillar and the *Bata* shopping mall of architect

Vladimír Kafřík, as opposed to the building of the Danube General Insurance Company by the German architect Adolf Foehr (pp. 112–114). Against this background, several partial problems can be observed, such as tension between Sudeten German and Reich German architects. According to the author, Liberec was a “theoretical example” because, despite the ability to enforce the plans, they were not implemented. According to the author, the final crash was due to professional inconsistencies and competence disputes.

In the case study of Karlovy Vary, the author emphasizes the special influence of National Socialist policy, especially in the context of its importance in the field of spas and tourism. The author considers the ambition to rehabilitate a large part of the city centre in accordance with the critique of the original Czechoslovak, but also Austro-Hungarian architecture, as a “pioneering” intention of communal politics. The concept of “new Karlovy Vary” included a spa, but also included the concept of the city as the economic, administrative and cultural centre of the region with an active connection to housing and trade. The mechanism of architectural competition is also described in detail, as well as its personnel, technical and economic background in association with the question of the influence of Nazi ideology and propaganda in connection with the creation of a new, Nazi, “world spa” identity. At the end of the chapter, the author states that the reconstruction began as an ambitious vision and ended as an administrative and technical act of the short-term existence of the National Socialist government.

Prague was of special importance as the capital of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. The author pays special attention to the conceptualization of the topic in historiography, but also approaches and evaluates the source base. The aim of this part of the work is to “conceptualize and outline the outlines of the principles and approaches of national socialist measures in the city through micro-studies tied to objects and persons” (p. 169). On this basis, the author addresses several key issues. One of them is, for example, the importance of Albert Speer in the politics and mechanisms of urban planning and construction activities and his relationship to Prague, which

reflected for example also his personal visit in December 1941. Another issue monitored is the activities of the Planning Commission for Prague and its legislative, technical-organizational and personnel background, as well as its relationship to the managing German centre and its minimal independent decision-making competencies. Separate attention is paid to issues of transport infrastructure, Aryanization, preparation of construction projects and their personnel background, as well as the relationship of municipal policy to the policy of "Reich" or construction of the "Germanized" identity of the city. The author demonstrates this relationship in particular through individual examples of building solutions or buildings, among others, for example, the construction of educational institutions under national socialist doctrines (buildings for the needs of Hitlerjugend, Bund deutscher Mädel, etc.). Special attention is also paid to media coverage and methods of presentation and promotion of Nazi construction policy. Strong media support from the beginning of the occupation can be traced through a probe into the focus of professional periodicals and magazines.

A specific example is Bratislava as the capital of the Slovak state, which figured as a satellite in the structure of relations with Germany. The starting point is the approach and characteristics of the authoritarian political regime in the state and the definition of the issue in historiography. Also relevant is the extent to which Bratislava, as the capital of the new state, located on the political axis of the Nazi and fascist power centres, was to be expressed in urbanism itself, urban development and architecture. On this basis, therefore, the main concept of urban planning comes to the fore, but also the question of patterns. According to the author, two directions were presented, namely the classicist according to the Prussian and Bavarian model and the new identity of a sovereign state, which would present its youth, dynamism and, of course, its relationship to the German Reich. The postulate of Bratislava as the capital city, but also as a university city, was formulated as a key starting point, at which the individual architectural and urban projects presented by the author also aimed. The German

authorities promoted the participation of German, Italian, Swiss and Slovak architects in this process. The author pays special attention to the highly publicized project proposals of the government district and the university town from the 1940s. The projects were located in the area of the castle hill, with a special problem posed by the Bratislava castle itself and the castle complex as a national symbol. The projects provided for either its incorporation or demolition. This set of questions is followed by the Aryanization and displacement of Jews in accordance with the Jewish Code, as the district below the castle was inhabited mainly by Jews. The author also approaches the concept of "state-building architecture" in connection with a wide range of projects, the concept of a new identity of the city, but he encounters the problem of "identification" with Nazi ideology. He states that in the whole spectrum of projects and styles drawing either from older interwar forms or under German or Italian influence, no "specified" national socialist or fascist style can be identified. According to the author, the representation of Bratislava as a reflective surface of a young, dynamic state, reflecting both its own new identity and that of the "new Europe" in the grip of Nazi ideology, hit the limits of its own political instrumentalization.

In the case studies dealing with Warsaw and Krakow, the author proceeds from the approximation of the conceptual framework of the so-called Generalplan Ost, which can be understood as the authoritative starting point of the German settlement programme in the given area. The author understands the idea of radical colonization and the creation of type models of towns, villages and settlements of various sizes as a key starting point. He draws particular attention to the fact that at the time of the creation of these concepts, or rather their legislative and project framework, the area in question still had to be occupied. However, individual concepts of spatial planning of the "new east" were intensively pushed through Nazi propaganda channels such as through the professional architectural magazine *Die Baukunst*. In the case studies, in addition to the above-mentioned starting points, the author also presents the input to the elaboration of the topic in historiography and the historical

context of the Nazi invasion and occupation of Poland. The Warsaw case study is based on the basic premises of its forthcoming urban planning, namely the dismantling of the Polish city, the construction of the German city and the displacement of Jews and Poles. According to the author, the individual projects that were submitted within the technical and organizational background of the city's reconstruction also included extensive modifications to the transport infrastructure at various levels in the context of Warsaw's strategic position as a "gateway to the east". Once again, competence disputes have emerged as a problem, and the Warsaw Uprising and its suppression, which have had fatal consequences for the city and its overall urban identity, can be identified as a separate key moment in development.

This is followed by a case study of Krakow, which, according to the author, took on the role of "model" and capital of occupied Poland. The loss of this postulate for the city of Warsaw serves as a starting point, which also affected the political administration. In this connection, as well as in the methodological frameworks set out in this work, Krakow is a key city for the application of urban interventions and reconstruction reflecting the relationship to Nazi Germany, as well as the newly defined relationship of "old Krakow" to "German" roots. The deconstruction of the old and the construction of the new identity of the city is therefore decisive. At this point, the author re-emphasizes the function and role of propaganda to present the given background and its practical implementation. In this context, attention is paid to the temporary influence and position of the architect Hubert Ritter, who presented a complete urban plan for the reconstruction of Krakow. However, it was only partially implemented. A relevant topic of Ritter's plan was also the issue of infrastructure and the new construction of the government district, the project of which is described and analysed in detail in the monograph. In the context of the relations between the political centre and communal politics, the author also presents Ritter's tense relationship with the Governor-General, which ultimately led to the loss of Ritter's influence. As an example, the author cites the project of rebuilding Wawel Castle as the seat of the governor.

According to the author, the division of the city's construction programme among several actors led to ambiguities and disagreements over competence. However, the author emphasizes that it is very problematic and at the same time inconsistent to reduce the topic of research for the city of Krakow only to individual projects, concepts or architects.

In a separate summary, the author interprets occupied Poland as an "experiment" in German settlement policy. An important feature that is pointed out is the approach of the Nazi power apparatus to Poland. He developed an unprecedented and highly aggressive anti-Slavic and anti-Semitic campaign, which was interspersed, among other things, in the context of settlement policy, urbanism and spatial planning. The author's addition on the post-war period is very critical because key professional actors referred to their allegedly non-political, professional side of spatial planning in the monitored area.

The monograph is a comprehensive high-quality comparative work that can be recommended to historians in the field of political history of totalitarian regimes, as well as urban historians and historians of architecture, but also economic and social historians.

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