

Niels Gutschow

Preface

Notes on tracing documents and tangible heritage testifying to the Germanization of Polish territory

It has never been a secret that I am the son of the architect Konstanty Gutschow, who played a major role in Nazi planning and architecture. He is usually listed as one of the Architects of the Führer [*Führerarchitektur*]¹ who in 1944 acted as a kind of deputy beside Rudolf Wolters, the head of the Task Force for the Rebuilding of Bombed Cities [*Arbeitsstab Wiederaufbau bombenzerstörter Städte*]. His offices were in Hamburg and at Wriezen at the River Oder. There the offices of the Reichsministerium Speer had taken refuge in 1944 in temporary shelter. He was certainly a Nazi, not because he joined the Nazi Party in 1937, similar to his colleagues Rudolf Hillebrecht, Hans Stosberg and Wilhelm Wortmann, but because he was convinced that rendering service to the Third Reich needed a formal affirmation. It was an avowal and also a token of the sharing in power. Recently, Magnus Brechtken made it a point to answer the question “Who is a Nationalsocialist?” by saying: “A Nazi is the one who acts nationalsocialistic”.² Joining the party was in no way an opportunistic act and it was also not required, as is often asserted. Architects such as Rudolf Wolters and Friedrich Tamms, for example, never joined the party. Tamms even reached the rank of “divinely gifted” [*gottbegnadet*] in order to be freed of any military service, in the company of Ernst Neufert and Clemens Klotz. Nationalsocialism is not easily defined but the fiery nucleus of the *Bewegung* as a secular religion was no doubt the *Führer* who enjoyed a kind of sacrocanctity. Beside its racist nature Nationalsocialism developed many facets and remained largely undefined till 1939. This very character allowed the elite and among them the architects to be engaged and to receive in turn the expected appreciation by the party. This rather short characterization of Nationalsocialism may sound daring but it explains the unquestioned preparedness of planners to design in

an undreamt-of scale and to join and materialize the will of the SS to Germanize occupied territories.

During the war my father negotiated with the *Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt* of the SS regarding the supply of bricks by the Concentration Camp at Neuengamme in Hamburg, his brother in fact signed the contract to establish the brick factory with the SS ex officio as a high officer of the local government. My father was a staunch opponent of Robert Ley’s *Reichskommissar für den Sozialen Wohnungsbau* but absolutely loyal to Albert Speer, whom he admired.

After my father died in 1978, I started to study his files. For my first interview I met Wolters in Coesfeld in September 1978 and in my last interview the son of Hubert Ritter, Hans Ritter, a member of my generation, on May 23, 1996 in Munich. Almost twenty years of searching and finding the protagonists of Nazi planning was quite fruitful because for everybody I was “the son” and that ensured from the beginning a credit of trust. I was invariably welcomed to listen to personal stories and to take along documents. Hans Stosberg, the planner of the city of Auschwitz, was the only one who rejected any personal contact but seven weeks before he died in October 1989 he sent his Auschwitz file as a kind of legacy. No doubt, he was - like all the other architects - proud of his work.

In 1986 I first established contact with architects in Poland with the help of Barbara Klain: I met Zygmunt Skibniewski, Stanisław Dziewulski, Stanisław Jankowski and even Bohdan Lachert in his celebrated house in Praga. In 1989 I started to work at the State Archive in Warsaw and in 1990 to 1992 at the archives in Poznań, Łódź, Katowice, Ciechanów, Białystok, Oświęcim and Cracow as well as at the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz. The chapter on Auschwitz in *Ordnungswahn* was written in November 1991 at my desk in Bhaktapur Nepal.³ The distance was chosen intentionally.

The final book publication gained form in 2001 only because Peter Neitzke, the editor of the *Bauwelt Fundamente* was insisting. The book ended up as a remainder in a few bookshops and I bought hundred copies to be given away to interested friends. When I lectured for the first time on the issue of Germanization on February 23, 2012 at the Bayerische Akademie der Schönen Künste at Munich in the context of “Architecture and Crime”, I was utterly speechless because the large auditorium was filled with an audience. Something must have happened to open up one more window into an unknown and often ignored past.

Similarly, interest in the legacy of Germanization grew in Poland, with Hanna Grzeszczuk-Brendel, publishing on wartime housing estates in Poznań (since 2004)⁴ and Jacek Purchla (2005) focussing on Hubert Ritter and his plans for Cracow.⁵ I met Hanna first in Wrocław on 27th May 2003 and again in 2015. Aleksandra Paradowska and Karolina Jara were guests at my tiny little village near Heidelberg, with unhindered access to my files and my library.

Having said that I have to admit that I feel like a veteran, only too happy to see the next generation filling the present publication with the results of recent research, now not only covering the Germanization of Polish territories but in an obvious logic the architectural heritage of the Third Reich in a territory that in 1945 emerged as a new Poland.

I have to add that I created files since 1978 in continuation of files my father started in 1938. Occasionally I worked with that material.

Since 1978 I devoted much of my energy and time to the field of town planning in Europe during the Second World War. But since 1970 I spent much and in the early 1990s most of my time far away from the haunting German past, the world of my father and his colleagues. I turned to Japan, India and Nepal as an architectural historian and a self-proclaimed architectural anthropologist. At the core of my interest stands Urban Space and Ritual - the city used as a stage for meaningful performances.

I take the liberty to present this personal background at length in order to demonstrate how my generation struggles with the Nazi legacy and to explain why I, with two great-grandmothers from Łódź, felt

obliged to trace documents that testify to the process of Germanization.

Actors in the field of Germanization [*Eindeutschung*], 1939

The first fanatically optimistic yet private announcement regarding the new formation of German land [*Neugestaltung deutschen Landes*] may be considered the personal statement of Ewald Liedecke, who was in charge of regional planning at the office of the governor [*Oberpräsident*] of East Prussia [*Ostpreußen*]. On 1st September 1939 he wrote with the beginning of the Second World War:

“Instead of the usual partial approach, a total act of colonization is asked for, which embraces the entire territory [of Poland]. It will have to be reallocated and newly settled along German visions. This will have to hazard the consequence to sacrifice, where necessary, so-called economic assets as represented by buildings and farms, in the interest of a definite German creation of this territory”.⁶

Liedecke became a prominent exponent of Germanization, publishing his drastic hate speech in architectural magazines and books. In December 1939 he was invested with the task of regional planning [*Generalreferent für Raumordnung*] in the newly created Gau Danzig-Westpreußen and established his office at Gdynia [*Gotenhafen*].

Three weeks later Heinrich Lauter asked Rudolf Wolters in a letter dated 22nd September 1939: „Are you already working on an urban plan for Warsaw?”⁷ Lauter met Wolters first 1932 in Nowosibirsk where both of them were working as architects in the service of the Soviet Union. In 1939 Lauter was acting as the city architect in Stade. His friend Wolters was departmental chief at the office of the *Generalbauinspektor* for the capital of the Reich. With “you” he addressed the staff of the office of Albert Speer which was provided with extraordinary power and planning mandates. Lauter’s question was much more than a jocular comment in advance of the city’s capitulation on 27th September. The profession of planners obviously enjoyed a rapture in September 1939. Lauter’s question can indeed be understood as a warning: Be alert and ready to capture new mandates before other

power centres around Heinrich Himmler or Robert Ley would occupy such promising assignments.

In her contribution, Jagoda Załęska-Kaczko argues that at Gdańsk [*Danzig*] „architects loyal to the Nazis strove to appeal to their taste“. I do not know an opposition of architects, being either “loyal” or “disloyal”. At least I have never met anyone in person admitting a former disloyalty and I never came across a document stating disloyalty - apart from the few prominent emigrants and architects of Jewish origin who were forced to emigrate in order to preempt their deportation.

I radically maintain that architects in general did not “strive” to “appeal” to any of the authorities. They were rather acting in conformity with the goals of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, based on Nazi ideology. It is often said that the comrade [*Volksgenosse*] of this privileged Nazi community was dwarfed to an ant in the context of the representative architecture. I rather imagine that the members of the *Volksgemeinschaft* felt great to be part of a community that could be envisioned in great architecture which in hindsight are call “outsized”.

After all, the “Nazis” were not aliens, not the “others”. They were common Germans, compliant with Nazi ideology, certainly in contrast to non-Nazis such as those groups who were terrorized, enslaved or killed. As I said before: *acting* in the system turned an individual into a Nazi, without feeling guilt but enjoying to be appreciated for his contribution if not collaboration.

The East: a welcome laboratory for planners

Reconstructing the design and enactment of the Germanization one should always keep in mind that planners did not “go east” with a high expectation of profit. They were no soldiers of fortune [*Glücksritter*] as is often surmised. Liedecke was in the service of the Office for Regional Planning [*Reichsstelle für Raumordnung*], Lauter was transferred to Königsberg in the fall of 1940, and in charge of the urban plan for Mława [*Mielau*] in 1941, before he was conscripted to the army a year later. Prendel was employed by the Prussian State Building Office [*Preußisches Staats-hochbauamt*] before he was conscripted in August

1943 to complete a military basic training at Modlin, Hubert Groß was deputed from the army to work for the German Building Administration [*Deutsche Bauverwaltung*] in Warsaw in December 1939 to produce his infamous plan for the deconstruction [*Abbau der Polenstadt*] of the city.

Decisive for further deputations was a letter from the Ministry of Interior dated September 2, 1939, asking the provincial governments to ask the municipalities to provide expert personal for the administration of the municipalities of the “occupied territories in the east”.⁸ As a consequence, the head of the town planning office of Wilhelmshaven, Wilhelm Hallbauer, was deputed to Łódź [*Litzmannstadt*] in January 1940 and Georg Salzmann to Gniezno [*Gnesen*] in February 1940. Born in 1889 and 1891, both could be sure never to be conscripted to the army. Freelance architects were searching for commissions but within the Warthegau they had to apply for admission. For example, Georg Münter and Klaus Tippel were admitted and Godber Nissen and the duo Max Säume/Günther Hafemann were seeking admission.⁹ By summer 1941 for the governorate [*Regierungsbezirk*] of Poznań [*Posen*] plans were completed for 26 cities, for Inowrocław [*Hohensalza*] 26 cities and for Łódź 33 cities. Where did all the architects in charge of planning come from? Even more important, how were they commissioned, and - equally important - who, that is which institution paid them. To quote an example, Hans Stosberg always signed his plan “Breslau/Auschwitz” as he retained his office in Breslau and entertained a branch office at Auschwitz. He was commissioned by Gerhard Ziegler, head of the office for regional planning [*Landesplanungsamt*] of Silesia, to prepare the regional plans [*Raumordnungsskizze*] for 14 municipalities in Upper Silesia but the ensuing *Generalbebauungsplan* for Auschwitz was funded by the Ministry of Labour which was in charge of planning [*Städtebau*] and building law [*Baupolizei*]. It was in fact considered to be a model exercise.

Another example may be referred to: Hermann Jansen (1869-1945), who appears in the article of Aleksandra Paradowska. I assume that the 72-years old celebrated planner probably never knew where “Welungen” (Wieluń) was located. It was his assistant, Alfred Cuda, who prepared the plan which was signed

also by Jansen and Walter Moest. The illustrative drawing of the main square [*Hauptplatz*] was certainly prepared by Cuda, who made similar drawings for Jansen's Ankara Plans in 1930. Jansen's plan for the estate Łagiewniki near Łódź dated 1930 was not much different.¹⁰ And in 1938 Cuda had designed for the office of Jansen the Hansaplatz in Dortmund. The magazine *Die Baukunst* presented the oeuvre of Jansen in May 1944 by one of Albert Speer's department chiefs, Hans Stephan. The article was illustrated, among others, with a design by Walter Moest for Plowdiv (Bulgaria).¹¹ A good example to show, how since the early 1920s German planners established an international practice which almost "naturally" included rendering service in the process of Germanization of Poland. The question remains: which institution commissioned Jansen to plan for a number of municipalities in the Warthegau and where did the funds come from? I am aware of the difficulties in the wake of missing files. But the understanding and reconstruction of administrative working styles and the flow of funds is of preeminent importance for the evaluation of the complex plan to Germanize Polish territory.

Karolina Jara is looking forward to "a detailed examination of the architects active in Silesia who later travelled to the occupied territories". Indeed, the question is: who turned east, not simply in search for a lucrative job but seeking a task worth to dedicate oneself to in fulfillment of high expectations. Such general assertions must be verified. Hans Stosberg retained his office in Breslau while planning for Auschwitz from 1941 to 1943. Herbert Böhm shifted from Breslau to Gdynia [*Gotenhafen*] to become the city architect [*Stadtbauführer*] in 1941. More actors will have to be identified to create an all-encompassing notion of staffing offices and engaging freelancing architects as *Vertrauensarchitekten*.

The body [*Volkskörper*, *Stadtkörper*]

Loyalty as a virtue demonstrated by members of the elite such as planners and architects culminated in an "allegiance until death", as Hanna Grzeszszuk-Brendel points out. The body was indeed the "property of the nation". To fulfill the "reproductive obligations in a homely environment of his dwelling" the members of

the *Volksgemeinschaft* needed a comfortable conjugal bed. This was demonstrated in the context of a number of exhibitions initiated by the German Labour Front [*Deutsche Arbeitsfront*, *DAF*]. A cot was always placed next to the conjugal bed. The bedroom became the stage to procreate more bodies in order to add to a powerful body of people [*Volkskörper*]. The growing body of people needed a conducive environment in the shape of an urban body [*Stadtkörper*]. In the East, this urban body had to be Germanized and for that a vernacular style had to be invented, which pretended to be rooted in the soil [*bodenständig*]. This rootedness was identified in 1941 by prominent planners such as Fritz Schumacher as the peculiarity of ethnicity [*Volkstum*]. All German tribes [*deutsche Stämme*] are therefore identifiable by their specific character of architecture [*Baucharakter*].¹² For the new German East a variety of styles had to be created to produce a background for *Heimat*, to turn the East into a homeland.

I took the liberty to put a number of German terms in brackets because it is almost impossible to convey the nuances of the specific national-socialist language which developed from a conservative world view in the 1920s, into English. The example of the conjugal bed and the bedroom reminds us of the wide range of Germanization. For example in Koło [*Warthbrücken*] in a former Polish Fayence factory, the „Steingutfabrik C. Freudenreich“, from 1940 to 1944 were produced „civi-lized“ [*anständige*] objects for the households of those who from the Baltic, Volhynia and Bessarabia "returned home" [*Heim ins Reich*], such as ashtrays, alepots and bowls. Such traces of Germanization may one day add to a more holistic exhibition documenting an infamous chapter of the 20th century history: from urban planning to bedroom and alepots.

Endnotes

1. Necker 2012, Konstanty Gutschow; Diefendorf 1985, Konstanty Gutschow.
2. „Ein Nazi ist der, der nationalsozialistisch handelt.“ See: Brechtken 2017, Albert Speer, p. 577.
3. Gutschow 2001, Ordnungswahn.
4. List of publications in: Grzeszczuk-Brendel 2012, Miasto do mieszkania; Grzeszczuk-Brendel 2018, Eine Stadt zum Leben.
5. Purchla 2005, Hubert Ritter.
6. "Statt diesem partiellen Vorgehen ist ein totaler kolonialisatorischer Akt nötig, der das ganze Gebiet erfaßt, neu umlegt und aus deutschen Vorstellungen heraus neu besiedelt. Dabei muß in Kauf genommen werden, dass, wo nötig, auch sogenannte wirtschaftliche Werte wie sie etwa in Gebäuden und Hofanlagen investiert sind, dem höheren Interesse einer endgültigen deutschen Gestaltung dieses Gebietes geopfert wird.", Ewald Lieddecke, Kolonialisatorische Aufgaben der Raum-Ordnung im Nordosten des Deutschen Reiches, Königsberg /Pr., 1. 9. 1939 (Auszug). I owe this reference to Katja Bernhardt. Source: Bundesarchiv Berlin, item no. R 113/41.
7. Habt ihr schon den Bebauungsplan für Warschau in Arbeit?, Letter by Heinrich Lauter to Rudolf Wolters, 22. September 1939. Source: Estate of Rudolf Wolters, Coesfeld.
8. Vertraulicher Schnellbrief, Reichsminister d. Innern, an die Landesregierungen, 2. September 1939. Source: Stadtarchiv Freiberg, Sign. I XI 481, quoted by: Düsing 2018, Georg Salzmann.
9. Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu [State Archive in Poznań], Reichsstatthalter, item no. 3356.
10. Source: Architekturmuseum Berlin, item no. 20685.
11. Stephan 1944, Hermann Jansen.
12. Schumacher 1941, Lesebuch für Baumeister, p. 287.

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- Gutschow 2001, Ordnungswahn
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