

New Construction or Reconstruction: Town Planning in the Administrative District of Zichenau (1939-1945)

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ABSTRACT

Using Ciechanów and Plock as examples, this article discusses the different strategies German urban planners pursued in occupied Poland to adapt the existing cities in terms of infrastructure, aesthetics, and ideology. Characteristic here is the multitude of actors involved and the far-reaching consequences of their decisions on the reality of occupation for the civilian population. This leads to the question of the extent to which architecture and urban planning should be understood as an integral part of German occupation policy.

KEYWORDS: German occupation in Poland (1939-1945), Administrative District of Zichenau (Ciechanów), Plock, National Socialist town planning, East Prussia (1939-1945), North Masovia

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Introduction

On 17 February 1941 a letter from Zichenau, the capital city of the East Prussian administrative district of the same name, arrived for the Prussian Minister of Finance, Johannes Popitz. The National Socialists had created this organizational entity in October 1939 out of a portion of the Warsaw Voivodeship, which they had annexed to the Reich in violation of international law. As part of doing this, they changed the name of the county town from Ciechanów to Zichenau and turned it into the new administrative center. The district included the northern half of the region of Masovia between the previous East Prussian southern border and the Vistula and Narew rivers.¹ Paul Dargel, who held the office of district president, was the one who sent the above-mentioned letter. In short, his concern was the lack of funds for carrying out the large-scale redevelopment of the town of Zichenau. Specifically, the issue was the green spaces of the “government quarter,” which in addition to getting rid of “Polish filth” were also supposed “to give the landscape in the

¹ To this point there has been no complete overview of the history of the administrative district of Zichenau. Important works are: BOŻENA GÓRCZYŃSKA-PRZYBYŁOWICZ: *Życie społeczno-gospodarcze na ziemiach polskich włączonych do Prus Wschodnich w okresie hitlerowskiej okupacji* [Economy and Society in the Polish Territories Annexed during the German Occupation of East Prussia], Ciechanów 1989; WITOLD PRONOBIS: *Zur Okkupationspolitik des faschistischen deutschen Imperialismus im Regierungsbezirk Zichenau (Ciechanów) 1939–1945*, in: BRUNO SCHRAGE (ed.): *Polen im Bannkreis des Imperialismus 1918–1944*, Rostock 1980, pp. 63–83. This study is based on Pronobis’ dissertation: IDEM: *Polityka narodowościowa okupanta niemieckiego w Rejencji Ciechanowskiej 1939–1945* [The National Identity Politics of the German Occupiers in the Administrative District of Zichenau 1939–1945], PhD thesis Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika Toruń 1976; ELŻBIETA SZUBSKA-BIEROŃ: *Płock na łamach lokalnej prasy NSDAP 1939–1945* [Płock in the Local Press of the NSDAP 1939–1945], Płock 2016; JAN GRABOWSKI: *Die antijüdische Politik im Regierungsbezirk Zichenau*, in: JACEK ANDRZEJ MLYNARCZYK, JOCHEN BÖHLER (eds.): *Der Judenmord in den eingegliederten polnischen Gebieten 1939–1945*, Osnabrück 2010, pp. 99–117; IDEM: *Germans in the Eyes of the Gestapo: The Ciechanów District 1939–1945*, in: *Contemporary European History* 13 (2004), 1, pp. 21–43; MICHAŁ GRYNBERG: *Żydzi w rejencji ciechanowskiej 1939–1942* [Jews in the Administrative District of Zichenau 1939–1942], Warszawa 1984; ANDREAS SCHULZ: *Regierungsbezirk Zichenau*, in: WOLF GRUNER, JÖRG OSTERLOH (eds.): *Das “Großdeutsche Reich” und die Juden: Nationalsozialistische Verfolgung in den “angegliederten” Gebieten*, Frankfurt am Main et al. 2010, pp. 262–280; JAN GRABOWSKI: *The Holocaust in Northern Masovia (Poland) in the Light of the Archive of the Ciechanów Gestapo*, in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 18 (2004), 3, pp. 460–476; JANUSZ SZCZEPAŃSKI: *Regierungsbezirk Zichenau: Peripherie ohne Ghettoarbeit?*, in: JÜRGEN HENSEL, STEPHAN LEHNSTAEDT (eds.): *Arbeit in den nationalsozialistischen Ghettos*, Osnabrück 2013, pp. 195–208; RALF MEINDL: *Ostpreußens Gauleiter: Erich Koch—eine politische Biographie*, Osnabrück 2007; CHRISTHARDT HENSCHL (ed.): *Ostpreußens Kriegsbeute: Der Regierungsbezirk Zichenau unter deutscher Besatzung*, Osnabrück 2021.

government quarter a German look.”² Yet, before the district president raised the issue of requiring a financial subvention of 99,000 Reichsmark, he reminded the minister of the construction activity in Zichenau they had envisioned together the year before:

“During your tour through the district last year, you yourself came to be of the mind that Zichenau was an amorphous, oversized village with the poorest of buildings set in a bleak steppe landscape. The government officials initially had to be housed in primitive emergency accommodations—a state of affairs which one might endure for a short period of time, but over time has had an extremely detrimental effect on the overall mood and has impacted the appetite for and the quality of the work. Your response, Sir, to this state of affairs was to order the building of an initial 86 flats for state officials. [...] Even though the design of the individual residences has unquestionably succeeded, the whole area still comes across as desolate and bleak. The construction activity has completely destroyed what little landscape was there before. The construction site looks like a remote desert devoid of trees and bushes, littered with construction rubble, chunks of debris, and the remnants of the old Polish cottages previously on the site. This dumping place, the government quarter, is supposed to be replaced by gardens and green spaces in spring 1941. Only then, when the construction activity and designed landscaping are brought into harmony with one another, will a truly German settlement coming into being, and then it can become a home for the Reich Germans scheduled to come here. [...] [A failure of the funds to materialize because of a ministerial decision] would mean that the construction site would in fact remain a dump, the buildings surrounded by a mauled landscape, with the overall effect remaining Polish.”³

Dargel’s self-confidently levied demand for money may have called up some less than positive memories among the Berlin ministerial officials about the first phase of construction completed the previous year. In ways quite contrary to bureaucratic orderliness, the ministry had to repeatedly make available additional sums of money for the building project in the remote district capital of Zichenau, a place wholly unfamiliar to those in Berlin.⁴ Dargel was a loyal member of the party and the right-hand man of the East Prussian Gauleiter Erich Koch. To be on the safe side, then, Dargel framed his project in the larger ideological context of the National Socialist transformation of the “German East.” This kind of argument made it difficult for someone like Popitz, a high-level member of the Prussian government, to evade the request.⁵ Dargel’s letter continues:

² District president Dargel to Minister of Finance Popitz, 1941-02-17, in: Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (GStA), Berlin, I. HA, Rep. 151: Finanzministerium, no. 3803: Regierungs- und Dienstgebäude und Präsidialdienstwohngebäude in Zichenau, fol. 147–151, here fol. 149.

³ Ibidem, fol. 147.

⁴ Ibidem, fol. 7, 11, 19–21, 35, 37–38, 53.

⁵ Popitz at this point was already under surveillance by the Secret State Police (Gestapo), because he maintained contacts with the national conservative opposition and the conspirators around Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg; GERHARD SCHULZ: Popitz, Jo-

“I ask you, Sir, to allocate the remaining 99,000 RM for completing the green landscaping in the government quarter. I see [...] the speedy and satisfactory completing of the overall design of the government quarter as a political task. This very word ‘to design’ [Gestalten], encompasses everything connoted in the ideas of German capability and German strength.”⁶

Dargel’s letter is interesting from today’s perspective because he is conjoining several central facets of the building activity in the administrative district of Zichenau. After the annexation of North Masovia, the German authorities reported a significant need for space within which to build up their bureaucracy; the existing infrastructure was not suitable for such or had been destroyed as a consequence of the war, or it did not meet their needs for a proper public display of their authority and prestige. The letter also illustrates the enormous ideological weight given to construction activity, especially in relation to the local Polish and Jewish populations and their architectural legacy, making the planned Germanization of the region all the more important. And finally, by mentioning the significant financial needs, even though in this case it was only in relation to laying out green areas, Dargel was addressing the main problem facing the building projects in the district, namely, the lack of appropriate financial resources and building materials.

The administrative district of Zichenau provides, as such, a wealth of illustrative material for the history of National Socialist building activity in the occupied territories. In what follows, I will present the towns of Ciechanów/Zichenau and Płock/Schröttersburg as representing two ways of how the existing building structures and urban spaces were dealt with during the German occupation of North Masovia. These will show how the planning and implementation of municipal projects were an integral part of German rule and reveal how these overlapped in many ways with other elements of occupation policies. The consequences for the populations in the affected towns were in each case drastic. And even though within the limits of this article these can only be alluded to and not adequately examined, this sketch is an effort to focus attention on the consequential entanglement of National Socialist occupation policies and town planning in occupied Poland.

hannes, in: *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 20 (2001), pp. 620–622, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118741497.html#ndbcontent> (2021-06-30).

⁶ District president Dargel to Minister of Finance Popitz in: GStA, I. HA, Rep. 151, no. 2843, fol. 147–151, here fol. 151.

Ciechanów/Zichenau: Tabula Rasa and New Construction

At the beginning of October 1939, the Gauleiter of the German eastern provinces held a meeting in the Reich Ministry of the Interior to tackle dividing the conquered Polish territories into districts. In this setting, Erich Koch, the Gauleiter of East Prussia, secured for himself a part of the war booty. However, expanding the area under his purview to include the North Masovia and Suwałki regions brought with it a bitter pill: these were economically unimportant peripheral regions. This reality was exacerbated even further by the measures the Germans took after 1939: the newly drawn border cut off the administrative district of Zichenau from the General Government and the nearby capital city Warsaw, which to that point had been the economic, administrative, and cultural center (Fig. 1). This made the economic and demographic policy aspirations which the East Prussian Gauleiter initially had in mind for his new administrative district all the more ambitious. When Koch was appointed Reich Commissioner for Ukraine on 1 September 1941, his interest in Zichenau waned noticeably.⁷ Nonetheless, being really no different in this regard from his ministerial colleagues in the other annexed regions, his goal was to make out of the new district an exemplar of National Socialist redesign. Consequently, the German rule of North Masovia was (as in other places) also accompanied by reflections on how to carry out town and landscape designs in the future.

The starting point for the decision-makers' deliberations was their own perception of the annexed region and its population. National Socialist racial ideology permeated their views at the deepest possible level. Accordingly, prepackaged explanatory models provided the occupiers with conceptual tropes for how to apprehend the cultural landscape, the ways of life and the economic patterns they found before them.⁸ Moreover, these models paid no attention to the fact that in the end it had been the German air warfare in September 1939 that had resulted in the massive destruction of the North Masovian towns, villages, and roadways. The president of the Higher Regional Court, Max Draeger, was thoroughly convinced that with Zichenau, one was

⁷ MEINDL, pp. 323–397.

⁸ MICHAEL A. HARTENSTEIN: *Neue Dorflandschaften: Nationalsozialistische Siedlungsplanung in den "eingegliederten Ostgebieten" 1939 bis 1944*, Berlin 1998, pp. 254–255. See as well: Bundesarchiv Berlin (BAB), R 113: Reichsstelle für Raumordnung, no. 356: Ostpreußen, Bezirksstellen, passim. The administrative district of Zichenau was located in what was called settlement zone 1a, which the *Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums* (RKF) had selected to be Germanized. Tasked by the RKF, Wolfgang von Auer, as leader of the district planning office, prepared an outline of the regional spatial design by spring 1941. It specified the main municipalities and their sphere of influence; NIELS GUTSCHOW: *Ordnungswahn: Architekten planen im "eingedeutschen Osten" 1939–1945*, Basel et al. 2001, p. 72.



Fig. 1: Administrative division of the Polish territories incorporated to the Reich, and the General Government (1940), in: FRANZ DOUBEK (ed.): Kartenfolge zur Landes- und Wirtschaftskunde der eingegliederten deutschen Ostgebiete und des Generalgouvernements, Berlin 1940/41, fol. 1

administering the “most miserable district in Poland.”⁹ Clemens Roßbach, the assistant and then later the sitting district president, explained his view of the consequences as follows:

“The administrative district of Zichenau, annexed to the Altreich after the Polish campaign and assigned now to the province of East Prussia, is a new construction zone [Neubauzone]. For, shortly after the seizing of the area, an inventory revealed with shocking clarity that there should be absolutely no illusions about the place: 13,000 square kilometers were there, a **monotonous** landscape with sparse stands of trees and shrubs, stretching out into an expanse of **steppe**. In the countryside, with its generally scattered settlements, a **most primitive** form of economic life was the rule, accompanied by a **poverty** about which nothing can be done. The towns were nothing other than **formless** oversized villages which in no way serve to provide the **most primitive** basic necessities. In such a region, rebuilding is impossible, for there is nothing to rebuild. The only way to make progress toward a German living space [Lebensraum] is to start building from the ground up.”¹⁰

Other party functionaries and scientists also expressed similar sentiments.¹¹ Consequently, it became clear that any “new construction” in the western sections of the district (as repeatedly proposed by Dargel, Roßbach, Koch, and others) could take place only after the end of the war; not until then would anyone be able to secure the required finances, labor force, and materials. But for them, this did not apply to the district capital Zichenau: there alone did they persistently push forward with their plans. For the regional centers (Maków/Mackeim, Mława/Mielau, Ostrołęka/Scharfenwiese, Płock/Schröttersburg, Płońsk/Plöhnen, Przasnysz/Praschnitz, Pułtusk/Ostenburg, Sierpc/Schirps or Sichelberg), plans involving substantial renovation work as well as the expansion and rebuilding of already standing structures, were seen clearly as preliminary steps. The primary focus of the initial efforts was the construction of living spaces for those officials streaming into the area, along with the erection of buildings to house various kinds of regional authorities such as administrative district offices, land registry offices and post offices, as well as

⁹ Report of the OLG presidents from 1940-01-05, in: CHRISTIAN TILITZKI: *Alltag in Ostpreußen 1940–45: Die geheimen Lageberichte der Königsberger Justiz*, Leer 1991, pp. 98–101, here p. 98.

¹⁰ CLEMENS ROSSBACH: Vorwort, in: *Handbuch für den Regierungsbezirk Zichenau mit Ortschaftsverzeichnis: Behördenanschriften, Parteidienststellen, Postämtern, Schulen, Einwohnerzahlen*, Allenstein 1943, p. 3 [emphasis in the original].

¹¹ GUTSCHOW, p. 72; cf. for example: WOLFGANG VON AUER: *Aufgaben der Planung als Voraussetzung für den Wohnungsbau im Regierungsbezirk Zichenau*, in: *Der soziale Wohnungsbau in Deutschland 1* (1941), 14, pp. 506–510; ERNST KEIT: *Zichenau—die Wandlung einer ostdeutschen Landschaft*, in: *Volk und Reich* 18 (1942), 4, pp. 241–244; WALTHER KIESER: *Der Aufbau im Gebiet um Zichenau*, Berlin 1942 (*Die wirtschaftlichen Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten in den eingegliederten Ostgebieten des Deutschen Reiches*, 2).

savings banks, co-op banks, and buildings for the Nazi mass organizations.¹² Parallel with these efforts, general planning for future permanent accommodations of the offices began across the board. To accomplish this, the authorities started calculating the planned number of personnel and the space needs for the post-war period.¹³ Using these estimations, they developed a kind of model house that was supposed to fit the needs of all the important officials in the regional town centers.¹⁴

The opening of offices and institutions in the towns of the district was not just for administrative purposes; they were also supposed to manifest the permanent character of the annexation of the region both to the German Reich as well as to the province of East Prussia. But this did not necessarily mean in every case highlighting this architecturally with a new building. In other cases, simply new lettering, signs, smaller redesigns, new German names for places and streets, or even just controlling which entrances non-Germans were allowed to use, all served to announce the occupier's claim to power.¹⁵ However, the situation was different in Ciechanów; it was a county town that was, in fact, politically and economically unimportant. Actually, the decision to name Ciechanów as the governmental capital Zichenau was primarily owing to its accessible and central location. This new role meant that it would

¹² See for example the establishment of the land registry offices in the county towns, in: GStA, I. HA, Rep. 151, no. 2843: Regierungsbezirk Zichenau. Katasteramt Mielau (Mława), fol. 2–5; no. 2844: Regierungsbezirk Zichenau. Katasteramt Ostenburg (Pultusk), fol. 2–5; no. 2847: Regierungsbezirk Zichenau. Katasteramt Scharfenwiese (Ostrolenka), fol. 2–7; see also: Bundesarchiv Bayreuth, Ost-Dok. 13/56: Dr. Brand, Regierungsbaudirektor Brand aus Arnberg, vormalig Generaldezernent für das Hochbauwesen bei der Regierung in Zichenau, 1960-09-17. Regarding the justice buildings: GStA, I. HA, Rep. 151, no. 4085: Gerichts- und Gefängnisgebäude im Regierungsbezirk Zichenau, andere Behörden; no. 3792: Regierungsbezirk Zichenau. Einzelne Grundstücke und Liegenschaften in Zichenau. Certain functions were assigned to the towns in the administrative district by the plans of the Upper Presidium and Reich Department for Spatial Planning (Reichsstelle für Raumplanung, RfR): Plock was intended as an industrial location; Zichenau as the government capital and location for the food industry; the county towns, depending on their location, as centers of construction, services, wood processing, leather processing and agricultural processing; Interim report of the Upper Presidium Königsberg to RfR, 1941-05-07, in: BAB, R 113, no. 1308: Ostpreußen.

¹³ Governmental building commissioner Lämmerhirt to the governmental presidium Zichenau, 1940-10-14, in: GStA, I. HA, Rep. 151, no. 3792, fol. 68; Raumprogramm-entwürfe für die Behördenhäuser in den Kreisen Zichenau, Mława und Pultusk, *ibidem*, fol. 69–80, 109–125, for the health offices *ibidem*, fol. 14–67.

¹⁴ Models for official buildings in the administrative district of Zichenau, 1940-10-18, *ibidem*, fol. 1. See also the following pages for the regional clearing bank Ostrolenka and the layout of the different offices; *ibidem*, pp. 14–67.

¹⁵ See the photo collection of the NSDAP Gau archives, in: GStA, XX. HA, Rep. 240: NSDAP-Gauarchiv, C 87 a-k: Regierungsbezirk Südostpreußen (photos) as well as C 88 a-h: Regierungsbezirk Südostpreußen (photos).

be the base for many new jobs and institutions serving the state, the party, and various associations.¹⁶

However, this town, which had experienced heavy fighting in 1915 and 1920, lacked the appropriate buildings, accommodation, and infrastructure.¹⁷ It was characterized by what could hardly be seen as impressive wooden residential buildings in the town center and only a few historically relevant buildings on the edges of town. Even the pre-war administration of the Warsaw Voivodeship had recognized the need for action on town planning and had decided on a complete rebuilding of the town.¹⁸

For the new German rulers, the conditions were favorable for adding new structures to the town; with relatively little effort, they could create a *tabula rasa*. Indeed, that fact may also have played a role in the selection of Zichenau as the administrative capital.¹⁹ What crystalized rather quickly was the notion that a town should arise here that was wholly in accord with the ideas and needs of the National Socialists and which could also serve as a demonstration of the German claim to power. Added to the idea of newly constructing the town was the vision of linking Zichenau to a modern, trans-European transportation infrastructure, especially the highway system.²⁰ Additionally, at a regional level, an upgraded connection to the rail and road networks could follow.²¹

The town planning project for Zichenau had resided since the middle of 1940 as a “special task” in the Building Department (Hochbauamt) of the Prussian Ministry of Finance.²² From this office, Arthur Reck led a small ambitious team close to the governmental building commissioner Jan Wilhelm Prendel, and his regional counterpart von Auer, who were directing their attention to the town planning and spatial design in the administrative district,

¹⁶ A listing is found in: Deutsches Reichs-Adressbuch: Die Ostgebiete, Berlin 1941, p. 669; Handbuch für den Regierungsbezirk Zichenau, pp. 109–110.

¹⁷ The heavy battles between the Germans and Russians in 1915 and the Polish-Soviet war in 1920 had already severely affected the whole region; JANUSZ SZCZEPAŃSKI: *Wojna 1920 roku na Mazowszu i Podlasiu* [The 1920 War in Masovia and Podlachia], Warszawa—Pułtusk 1995.

¹⁸ MICHAŁ OCHNIO: Ciechanów, in: *Architektura i Budownictwo* 14 (1938), 1, pp. 6–9; DARIUSZ PIOTROWICZ: *Ciechanów w latach Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* [Ciechanów in the Second Republic], Ciechanów 1998, pp. 33–41.

¹⁹ See an undated report (but surely issued in 1940) in the Prussian Ministry of Finance about the “available building site” that was clear and where one could quite easily organize a “quick and thorough removal of the Polish buildings:” *Stadtplanung Zichenau* (undated), in: BAB, R 4606: Generalbauinspektor für die Reichshauptstadt, no. 625: Zichenau, Neugestaltung der Stadt.

²⁰ HARTENSTEIN, p. 254; ARTUR RECK: Städtebau im deutschen Osten, in: *Die Baukunst* (1941), 4, pp. 220–230, here p. 222; there one can find Fig. 1 of this article.

²¹ KIESER, pp. 16, 35–36.

²² HARTENSTEIN, pp. 435–439.

but above all to the administrative capital Zichenau.²³ At the end of 1942, Prendel succeeded Kurt Fiebelkorn as leader of the Zichenau building department, but in 1943 he was conscripted into the German army.²⁴ The planning for the intended government quarter in the center of Zichenau had been up to that point Prendel's responsibility, and the same was true for the planning for the county towns of Mielau and Ostenburg. Prendel was in contact with Albert Speer, to whom he sent the plans in November 1940.²⁵ As the General Building Inspector for the Reich Capital, Speer was responsible for the largest urban development projects in the Reich. Even before the war, he had decided not only to exploit the labor of concentration camp prisoners, but also to expropriate and expel the Jews living in the neighborhoods scheduled for rebuilding. He reacted positively to Prendel's Zichenau designs²⁶ and afforded them some attention by including them in his in-house journal *Die Baukunst* in 1941 (Fig. 2).

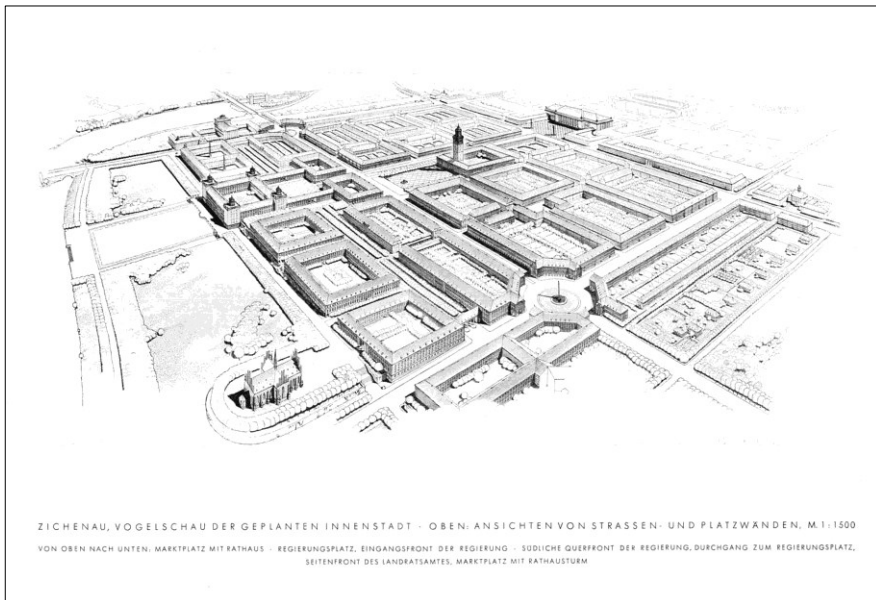


Fig. 2: Zichenau, bird's eye view of the planned city center (1941), in: RECK, p. 225

²³ GUTSCHOW, p. 73. Here there are also further biographical details about Prendel, who actually had no experience with town planning (pp. 73–75).

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 75.

²⁵ File memo Wolff, 1940-11-04, in: BAB, R 4606, no. 625.

²⁶ Prussian Ministry of Finance to Reich Ministry of Labor, 1940-12-20, in: GStA, I. HA, Rep. 151, no. 3526: Verwaltungs- und Beamtenangelegenheiten der Ortsbauämter der Regierung Zichenau, fol. 1 (as well in no. 4085, fol. 213–214).

This was all one part of a jurisdictional argument between the building department of the Prussian Ministry of Finance and the Reich Department for Spatial Planning (Reichsstelle für Raumordnung). Dargel, the district president, had given the Zichenau General Department for Spatial Planning (Generaldezernat für Raumordnung) the final authority for the building plans for the governmental capital in August 1940 and he re-confirmed this on 5 November.²⁷ Speer, on the other hand, in a letter to Koch from 15 November 1940, urged him instead to locate the town planning project solely in the Prussian Office of Building Administration (Preußische Hochbauverwaltung).²⁸ Speer sent a blind copy of the written missive to Reck.²⁹ Koch settled the matter in accordance with Speer's wishes and supported Reck.³⁰ Dargel thereupon limited the jurisdiction of the General Department specifically to "traffic connections" and "the partitioning of the total area," meaning that the resolution of "architectural design" matters and "technical issues of construction" would "solely be for the town planners."³¹

Speer ended his involvement with Zichenau by the spring of 1941. In the year previous, Heinrich Himmler had visited Zichenau and made several demands for an SS residential area and barracks for the Waffen-SS and the police, as well as a national-political educational establishment, and these were then incorporated into the plans.³² The head of the Central Office for Budget and Building (Hauptamt Haushalt und Bauten) was Oswald Pohl, and he proposed transferring the Zichenau town planning to the Reichsführer SS.³³ Speer answered a month later, writing that because of his responsibilities in Berlin and Nuremberg he was being relieved of any further planning activities. He recommended that Pohl clarify the participation of the SS with the Prussian Ministry of Finance directly.³⁴ This, it would seem, now put to

²⁷ Decree of the district president Dargel, 1941-11-05, in: BAB, R 4606, no. 3358: Neugestaltung Ostpreußen. The General Department was involved along with the Office of Culture (Kulturamt) Zichenau and the East Prussian Regional Planning Commission (Landungsplanungsgemeinschaft Ostpreußen) in the preparation of the regional spatial design plans; HARTENSTEIN, p. 254.

²⁸ Speer to Koch, 1941-11-15, in: BAB, R 4606, no. 625. For Speer "the gentlemen of the Reich Department for Spatial Planning [were] pure theoreticians with an inability for any artistic sensibilities." The cause of Speer's intervention might have been a discussion that regional planner Görres had with Speer's co-worker Wolters about "the whole course of events in the construction plans for Zichenau;" file memo Wolters, 1940-11-04, *ibidem*.

²⁹ Speer to Reck, 1940-11-16, in: BAB, R 4606, no. 3358.

³⁰ Koch to Speer, 1940-11-20, *ibidem*.

³¹ Dargel to Speer, 1940-11-26, *ibidem*.

³² Oswald Pohl, Central Office for Budget and Building, to Speer, 1941-03-13, in: BAB, R 4606, no. 3424: Zichenau, Neugestaltung der Stadt.

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ Speer to Pohl, 1941-04-17, *ibidem* (as well in BAB, R 4606, no. 3425: Zichenau, Planung).

rest the jurisdictional quarrels over town planning in the administrative district, leaving Speer and Himmler to seek out other arenas for carrying on their rivalry.

It is noteworthy that Prendel's drafts do not draw on the historical motifs present in the town planning that existed in East Prussia; indeed, they veer away from the original intention, which in Reck's view was supposed to draw on a regional connection reminiscent of a "Prussian-Classical building ethos."³⁵ The reason for, and possible ways of, relying on such a local bond were within easy reach in the region's history: first, there was the medieval State of the Teutonic Order and, secondly, the Prussian dominion over Masovia (1793/95–1807), two moments which German propaganda at the time was prominently emphasizing. As it was, the Gau leadership construed a historical continuity out of this to serve as the justification for the annexation of North Masovia. Koch had for years emphasized the special history of East Prussia as the "German bulwark" in the East and sought to expand this myth to "East Prussia's *Vorwerk*" Zichenau. The designation of the administrative district as *Vorwerk* was quite ambiguous. Koch and his epigones initially referred to its intended role in terms of transport and economy.³⁶ According to its etymology, the term *Vorwerk* could be understood both in the sense of a military outwork and in the sense of an extensive estate.³⁷

Following this colonial rhetoric, the East Prussian National Socialists interpreted any architectural testimonies in the district of Zichenau as proof of close cultural ties with East Prussia. The press (as steered by Koch) never tired of celebrating this re-acquisition of land as a return of former Prussian territory with its numerous East Prussian vestiges. In Zichenau these were, for example, the medieval castle and the parish church, now reinterpreted to vouch for the activity of the Teutonic Order in the region. Moreover, these were now supposed to be preserved and given a new function.³⁸ Another pos-

³⁵ GUTSCHOW, p. 73.

³⁶ MEINDL, p. 276.

³⁷ Unlike his Gauleiter colleague Arthur Greiser in neighboring Wartheland, Koch did not understand Polish, and so the meaning of the Polish loanword *folwark*, which goes back to *Vorwerk*, would have escaped him. It refers to estates that mainly produced grain and were based on the labor of serfs and later agricultural laborers.

³⁸ ERICH KOCH: Ostpreußen, in: OTTO H. SPATZ (ed.): Wiedergewonnenes deutsches Land, München—Berlin 1941, pp. 49–63, here pp. 50–51. In a Baedeker travel guide there is talk of the "ruining of a mighty moated castle built by the Order's master building in the fourteenth century." KARL BAEDEKER: Das Generalgouvernement: Reisehandbuch, Leipzig 1943, p. 27. For the architectural history of the castle see: IZABELLA GALICKA, HANNA SYGIETŃSKA (eds.): Katalog zabytków sztuki w Polsce. T. 10: Dawne województwo warszawskie [Catalogue of the Artistic and Cultural Monuments in Poland. Vol. 10: The Former Voivodeship of Warsaw], Warszawa 1977, no. 1: Ciechanów i okolice [Ciechanów and Surroundings], pp. 4–8. These kinds of claims go beyond what the historians and monument preservationists wrote in the spirit of National Socialism about the influence of German architecture in North Masovia. While they see a strong German influence and for that reason deny generally any kind

sible point of reference was the reconstruction of the war-ravaged Masurian cities directly on the border with Poland during the First World War and the interwar period with their characteristic building style.³⁹ The Germans saw this reconstruction program as a manifestation of their own political, economic, and cultural claim to power in the East. Even though there would have been no lack of possible historical and architectural points of reference, Prendel's designs completely lacked regional or ideological references to the older and more recent past.

Prendel's sketches give the town center a strict four-corner outline on the eastern bank of the Łydyńia River, dividing the town up into five-by-five blocks. There was an axis through the town populated with a group of central monumental buildings for the NSDAP and the provincial government, for example, the town hall with its 80-meter tower and the courthouse. In addition, there were buildings for commerce, services, and the skilled crafts, a hospital, and a Protestant church. The buildings were three-storied, except the representative buildings and the town hall tower.⁴⁰ The draft plans for Zichenau are not actually genuinely original designs for town planning from that period, but instead they epitomize the planning and architectural conventions favored by the National Socialists.⁴¹ This may have been owing to Prendel's limited expertise and experience, or to his effort to integrate himself in the politically prescribed planning mainstream. Niels Gutschow characterizes the designs, which also take into account Himmler's demand for an SS-quarter, as "impe-

of architectural finesse on the part of the Poles, they do not, however, reinterpret the known facts to the point that the Teutonic Order in Zichenau had engaged in its own construction activity. See for example: BERNHARD SCHMID: Architektonische Studienfahrten durch das ehemalige Polen, in: *Altpreußische Forschungen* 17 (1940), 1, pp. 4–28; [BERTHOLD] CONRADES: Mittelalterliche deutsche Bauten im Bezirk Zichenau, in: *Soldat im Ordensland Preußen* (1940), 2. Januarheft, pp. 14–16; CARL VON LORCK: Ländliche Haustypen im Zichenauer Bezirk, in: *Der Forschungsbereich der Albertus-Universität* 2 (1943), pp. 3–27. Theodor Schieder and the East Prussian provincial conservator Berthold Conrades held a contrary opinion and were thoroughly impressed with the extant historical structures. The two clearly exchanged views on this topic: Schieder to Papritz, 1941-01-07, in: BAB, R 153: Publikationsstelle Berlin-Dahlem, no. 1045: Weißruthenien: Allgemeines und Beschaffung von Material. Conrades was *ex officio* formally responsible for the historic monuments in the administrative district of Zichenau, and he had 128 documenting photographs made of 33 locations with such buildings (mostly churches but also town squares and views of the localities); Prusy Wschodnie: Dokumentacja historycznej prowincji. Zbiory fotograficzne dawnego Urzędu Konserwatora Zabytków w Królewcu / Ostpreußen: Dokumentation einer historischen Provinz. Die photographische Sammlung des Provinzialdenkmalamtes in Königsberg, Warszawa [2006] (CD-ROM).

³⁹ This architecture refers to the ideas of *Heimatschutz* architecture and an idealization of middle-class towns around 1800, supplemented by aspects of modern building such as the garden city concept. See JAN SALM: *Ostpreußische Städte im Ersten Weltkrieg: Wiederaufbau und Neuerfindung*, München 2012, pp. 59–67.

⁴⁰ GUTSCHOW, p. 73

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

rial fantasies, which drew its set pieces from the planning of the *Gauforen* in years past.”⁴²

The German redevelopment of the town began in the spring of 1940, with the most intensive work happening up to the beginning of the German-Soviet war. An essential prerequisite for implementing the new building plans was the tearing down of the extant structures, and this required the expropriation of the buildings from their present owners. This latter issue, however, had already been resolved in the fall of 1939, immediately after the setting up of the German civil administration. The Main Trustee Office East (Haupttreuhandstelle Ost, HTO) was responsible for taking over and dividing any plundered moveable possessions. Beginning in May 1940, the Real Estate Company of the Main Trustee Office East (Grundstücksgesellschaft der HTO mbH, GHTO) took possession of and administered the confiscated real estate.⁴³ Both offices maintained branches in Zichenau. With such measures, the formal prerequisites for implementing the redevelopment plans were complete, and with much media fanfare, the work started in the spring of 1940.

However, it was not Prendel’s design of the administrative quarter that was first undertaken. Before anything else, work began on the building of a residential quarter on the west bank of the Łydynia on the acreage of the village Tatory; this area (styled as a suburban garden city) was intended to serve as a temporary German center.⁴⁴ It was Kurt Fiebelkorn who prepared the plans for it. After the currently-standing loose structures had been torn down, 120 residential dwellings were constructed, which, depending on the rank of the person who would be living there, were designed as either multi-family houses or villas. The builder-owner was the GHTO; the actual erection of the designed buildings fell to the housing society *Neue Heimat* (New Homeland) within the German Labor Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront, DAF).⁴⁵ That quarter is today almost completely intact and is now called “Błoki”⁴⁶ (Fig. 3).

⁴² *Gauforen* (singular *Gauforum*) were huge complexes of representative administration buildings, event halls parade grounds, and were planned for every capital of a Gau. They were to be used mainly by the NSDAP, e.g., for party congresses. See CHRISTIANE WOLF: *Gauforen: Zentren der Macht. Zur nationalsozialistischen Architektur und Stadtplanung*, Berlin 1999; GUTSCHOW, p. 73.

⁴³ ALEKSANDER KOCISZEWSKI: *Rejencja ciechanowska (Regierungsbezirk Zichenau) 1939–1945: Budowa niemieckiego “Lebensraumu” na Mazowszu Północnym* [Administrative District of Zichenau 1939–1945: The Creation of German “Lebensraum” in North Masovia], in: *Zapiski Ciechanowskie* 9 (1995), pp. 161–194, here pp. 175–176; PRONOBIS, *Polityka narodowościowa*, pp. 224–225; GÓRCZYŃSKA-PRZYBYŁOWICZ, pp. 59–76; BERNHARD ROSENKÖTTER: *Treuhandpolitik: Die “Haupttreuhandstelle Ost” und der Raub polnischer Vermögen 1939–1945*, Essen 2003, p. 97; on GHTO *ibidem*, pp. 102–109.

⁴⁴ KIESER, pp. 32–34; PRONOBIS, *Polityka narodowościowa*, p. 231.

⁴⁵ PRONOBIS, *Polityka narodowościowa*, p. 231; SZUBSKA-BIEROŃ, pp. 33–34.

⁴⁶ This town quarter has been listed under preservation of historical sites since 2015 as “the largest permanent residential settlement in Poland erected during the Second



Fig. 3: German residential area in Zichenau, today Bloki (2021), photograph by the author

In preparation for building the administrative quarter in the town center on the left side of the river, workers began removal of the building structures in the inner town in 1941. The synagogue, already severely damaged in 1939, was torn down by 1941, along with the residential buildings in the ghetto.⁴⁷ The occupiers primarily pressed the Jewish population into service for this. The documentation of the Prussian Ministry of Finance records that the demolition work in Zichenau was being “expedited,” because there was neither work nor living spaces for the officials there. The ministry only reluctantly approved the necessary construction of appropriate barracks and at times not until after the fact.⁴⁸ For the construction of a private home for the district president, a special contract was signed with the Königsberg architect Wilhelm Brackmann.⁴⁹

After the German invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, the majority of the construction firms were pulled out of Zichenau and sent east where they were needed to build installations and bridges for the German army. Although the work in Zichenau continued, it nevertheless encountered ever-greater obstacles. In addition to the growing shortage of building materials, the costs as calculated quickly skyrocketed even with cost-cutting measures, and it became more and more difficult to recruit qualified personnel without then losing them to the German army.⁵⁰ In May 1942, even Reck

World War,” <https://www.mwz.pl/archiwum-aktualnosci-lista/921-historyczny-zespo-budowlany-w-ciechanowie-zabytkiem> (2020-05-27).

⁴⁷ GRABOWSKI, *Die antijüdische Politik*, pp. 82, 85.

⁴⁸ Henninger to Ministry Director Reck, 1941-05-17, in: GStA, I. HA, Rep. 151, no. 3803, fol. 86v; Governmental Presidium Zichenau to Prussian Ministry of Finance, 1941-08-04, *ibidem*, fol. 102.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, fol. 113.

⁵⁰ As to the structure of the costs and attempts at containing them: GStA, I. HA, Rep. 151, no. 2485: Regierungsbezirk Zichenau: Einzelne Grundstücke und Liegenschaften in Zichenau, fol. 1, 7–9; Prussian Ministry of Finance to governmental president, 1940-01-10, in: GStA, I. HA, Rep. 151 IB, no. 1167 (Mf. 19681), fol. 117.



Fig. 4: Aerial photograph of the center of Ciechanów (1958), © Joanna Bogusławska-Klejment (<http://www.architektura-ciechanowa.pl>). It illustrates the extent of the city's reconstruction under German occupation. The large demolition areas can still be seen, while only one square was built with massive residential and commercial buildings (today's Hala Pułtуска)



Fig. 5: Present state of the Hala Pułtуска, northern façade (2021), photograph by the author

complained about the unsatisfactory progress of the projects: “One may also point out that the condition of the accommodations in Zichenau, in spite of all the measures taken so far, remain abysmal and the work in the important con-

struction area suffers greatly from the lack of living quarters.”⁵¹ After the defeat at Stalingrad, for all practical purposes the work in Zichenau came to a halt. In August 1943, Prendel, the department head, was called to the front.⁵² In the end, on the site of the almost completely torn-down Jewish quarter, just the present-day Hala Pułtуска was completed along with a few new neighboring buildings (Fig. 4, Fig. 5).

Płock/Schröttersburg: Re-Interpretation and Reconstruction

In the case of the town of Płock, situated on a steep bank of the Vistula River, the occupiers approached matters in a quite different way. The town, unlike Ciechanów, was of some historical importance and had a corresponding number of buildings of artistic significance. Located in the medieval center of the Piast-Masovian duchies, Płock as an episcopal see was also an intellectual and cultural center, having to some degree a transregional presence. Being the largest town of the region, and because it had a harbor, Płock achieved a level of economic importance at the beginning of the twentieth century, and served as a strategically important transportation hub, but it lay on the periphery of the administrative district. However, this was not the only reason why Ciechanów was chosen over it as the district capital. In the eyes of the National Socialists, Płock was a bastion of Polish nationalism and Catholicism. In fact, in the nineteenth century, a nationally minded, culturally active middle class developed there, and it looked with pride on its commitment to the national cause. Especially vivid in the mind of the population was the fact that Marshal Piłsudski had conferred on the town the Cross of Valor (*Krzyż Walecznych*) for its residents having participated in the successful repelling of the Bolsheviks in 1920.⁵³ At that time, the Red Army was already threatening Warsaw and it was in no way sure whether Poland would be able to win the war. Even more significant for the people was that the town had received this honor from the head of state himself. Only the city of Lwów (Lemberg) had received a higher tribute, and that was for its role in the Polish-Ukrainian war of 1918. In addition to the Polish population, Płock had a significant Jewish populace, for whom the town was not only one of the oldest Jewish settlements in Poland, but also an important spiritual and cultural center.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Reck to branch office Königsberg of the Department for Armament Production of the Reich Ministry for Armaments and War Production), 1942-05-15, in: GStA, I. HA, Rep. 151, no. 2485, fol. 6.

⁵² SZUBSKA-BIEROŃ, p. 34.

⁵³ GRZEGORZ GOŁĘBIEWSKI: Płock w okresie najazdu bolszewickiego w 1920 r. [Płock during the Bolshevik Attack in 1920], in: MARIAN CHUDZYŃSKI, MIROSLAW KRAJEWSKI (eds.): *Dzieje Płocka: Praca zbiorowa*. Vol. 2: *Dzieje miasta w latach 1793–1945*, Płock 2006, pp. 507–580, here pp. 577–578.

⁵⁴ JAN PRZEDPEŁSKI, JERZY STEFAŃSKI: *Żydzi płocki w dziejach miasta* [The Jews of Płock in the History of the Town], Płock 2012.



Fig. 6: Jewish forced laborers redesigning the bank of the Vistula River in Plock (ca. 1940), in: GStA, XX. HA, Rep. 240, C 88 b (2)



Fig. 7: Street scene in front of the Great Synagogue in Plock (ca. 1940), *ibidem*. The building was damaged by the Germans and used as a garage and workshop. In 1951, it was demolished due to danger of collapse

As in all the towns in the administrative district, from the very beginning the German occupation authorities pressed ahead in Płock with the symbolic appropriation (in addition to the physical re-purposing) of public spaces. Examples of the overwriting of the urban space with National Socialist content were visible through the assigning of new street names.⁵⁵ In 1941, the town's name was changed to Schröttersburg. The new "patron" of the town was Friedrich Leopold von Schrötter (1743–1815), who as the leader of the Prussian War and Domain Chamber (Kriegs- und Domänenkammer) for several years was responsible for Płock's development.⁵⁶ Von Schrötter initiated urban planning and building projects, which have left their imprint even today on significant parts of the townscape of Płock.⁵⁷ The National Socialists took advantage of this and interpreted the building structures they found in the town as German, which made it seem either that any major changes to the town plan were not necessary or allowed them to be put off into the distant future. Surely, as in the case with Ciechanów, the Middle Ages were viewed as the beginning of the town's German history; for the "port city of Płock, the old residence town of the dukes of Masovia, already [had] back in the fourteenth century a fully German character."⁵⁸ A significant peculiarity of the National Socialist "interest" in the historical heritage of Płock was the systematic plundering of the town's art and cultural treasures.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ SZUBSKA-BIEROŃ, pp. 83–86.

⁵⁶ CHARLOTTE BUSSENIUS: *Die preußische Verwaltung in Süd- und Neustpreußen 1793–1806*, Heidelberg 1960; JAN WĄSICKI: *Ziemie polskie pod zaborem pruskim: Prusy Nowowschodnie (Neustpreussen) 1795–1806* [Polish Lands under Prussian Partition: New East Prussia 1795–1806], Poznań 1963.

⁵⁷ JOANNA DREIER: *Pruska urbanistyka w Płocku—znaczenie historyczne i aktualne zagrożenia* / *Preußische Stadtbaukunst in Płock—historische Bedeutung und aktuelle Gefährdung*, in: CHRISTOF BAIER, ANDRÉ BISCHOFF (et al.): *Retablisement: Preußische Stadtbaukunst in Polen und Deutschland* / *Urbanistyka pruska w Polsce i w Niemczech*, Berlin 2016, pp. 234–281; TADEUSZ ŻUCHOWSKI: *David Gilly und die Ostgebiete Preußens*, in: EDUARD FÜHR, ANNA TEUT (eds.): *David Gilly—Erneuerer der Baukultur*, Münster et al. 2008, pp. 61–78; KAZIMIERZ ASKANAS: *Sztuka Płocka* [Art in Płock], 3rd ed., Płock 1991, pp. 160–162.

⁵⁸ WALTER GEISLER: *Deutscher, der Osten ruft Dich!*, Berlin 1941 (*Die wirtschaftlichen Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten in den eingegliederten Ostgebieten des Deutschen Reiches*, 1), p. 25. Yet, there does not seem to have been a unified opinion in this regard, about which Theodor Schieder, as director of the East Prussia Office for Post-War History (*Landesstelle Ostpreußen für Nachkriegsgeschichte*), warned the director of the state archives, Johannes Papritz: "I want to tell you with the utmost discretion, that there is talk about tearing down all historic monuments from the Polish period, even the clearly German (as is well known) Romanesque and Gothic churches, i.a. the Płock cathedral. I have already discussed this issue with the local provincial conservator. He is doing all he can to educate all bodies about the character of the historic monuments in [the administrative district of] Zichenau [...]" Schieder to Papritz, 1941-01-07, in: BAB, R 153, no. 1045.

⁵⁹ MIROSLAW R. KRAJEWSKI: *Płock w okresie okupacji 1939–1945* [Płock during the Occupation 1939–1945], Włocławek 2001, pp. 157–158.

This re-interpretation of Płock as a German town and the fact that the Zichenau government quarter was still under construction turned Schröttersburg into the clandestine capital of the administrative district. The Gestapo moved its central office there because in Zichenau appropriate rooms were not available. The National Socialists also developed for Schröttersburg larger economic and infrastructure plans with regard to boat traffic on the Vistula and boat construction.⁶⁰

For Płock, the urban plan was (once again) to give form to a model German town in the “German East.” But in this case, the occupiers did not see new construction as the way to attain their goal; rather, they drew attention to the already present “German character” of Płock.⁶¹ For the local building commissioner Ernst Glatt, the head of town planning and building control, giving prominence to the Prussian vestiges was crucially important.⁶² An example of this is in the renovation of the town hall and the redesigning of the square in front of it.⁶³ The town planners for the most part refrained from removing the historical building structures, that is, if one disregards the systematic tearing down of the Jewish ghetto and selective demolitions in the town center (Fig. 7). In essence, the occupiers limited themselves to re-purposing individual buildings. In this way, they kept most of the public buildings as they were and now simply made them available to the East Prussian administration, the SS and police apparatus, or Nazi organizations. An SS barracks was set up in the Catholic seminary.⁶⁴ Public places and streets, which for special events were “bedecked” with National Socialist symbols, were part of the public staging for the occupation regime.⁶⁵ The green areas and squares in the town were redesigned, as was the steep bank down to the Vistula (Fig. 6).⁶⁶

Unlike with new construction (such as Zichenau’s *tabula rasa*), the renovations in Schröttersburg were premised on expanding the historical town structure around prestigious, National Socialist elements as well as planning new sections of the town. In the center of town, the theater was torn down with a plan to build in its place a large hotel with an attached NSDAP party headquarters so as to display the new power structures now in force in the

⁶⁰ Interim report of the Upper Presidium Königsberg (as in footnote 12).

⁶¹ SZUBSKA-BIEROŃ, p. 87.

⁶² Ibidem, p. 88.

⁶³ Ibidem, pp. 89–90.

⁶⁴ Letter from the Budget Control Office (Preisüberwachungsstelle) of the governmental presidium to the central bureau of the Central Office for Budget and Buildings (Hauptamt Haushalt und Bauten) RF SS, 1942-09-29, as well as the file memo, 1942-05-04, in: BAB, NS 3: SS-Wirtschafts-Verwaltungshauptamt, no. 1680: SS-Kaserne Schröttersburg. Bauprojekt.

⁶⁵ See, for example, the photo collection of the NSDAP-Gauarchiv Ostpreußen, in: GStA, XX. HA, Rep. 240, C 88 b.

⁶⁶ SZUBSKA-BIEROŃ, pp. 94–96; KRAJEWSKI, pp. 176–177.

land. The building (never actually built) would have inserted a conspicuous, new element into the historical town panorama visible from the Vistula. It was supposed to embody the “German spirit” architecturally while also remaining in harmony with the nucleus of the medieval structures (cathedral, castle, churches, and towers). Even Wilhelm Brackmann along with his partner M. Böcking entered the architectural competition. Their sketch shared second place with the project proposed by a builder, Petzold, and an architect, Lange, from Königsberg.⁶⁷ On Sienkiewicz Street, in those days called Hermann Göring Street, a residential building was erected for German officials which still stands today.⁶⁸

Zichenau and Schröttersburg—Town Planning as Occupation Policies

The National Socialists also oscillated between these alternative strategies of “modification” and “new construction” in the other regions they annexed. When modification was chosen, it was supposed to take into account the “historical framework” of the given town and then boast the party’s dominant authority through “state and party buildings;” new construction, on the other hand, meant “replacing” the old towns.⁶⁹ Both approaches pursued the same ideological objective of a “German town in the East,” yet the path taken was different in each case. Actually, the names given to the two towns make plain the different methods used: “Schröttersburg” recalls the Prussian rule at the turn from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century and therefore constructs a historical thread of tradition. In the case of “Zichenau,” it was merely a semi-artificial new creation, which other than a certain phonetical relationship, in no way represents any historical connections.

In the administrative districts in the occupied territories, at least until after 1941, Zichenau was surpassed only by Warthegau in the manner in which the National Socialists pushed ahead with town planning. In the end, these efforts were quite comprehensive and consequential, as apparent in the fact that initial sketches were begun for all the county towns.⁷⁰ So, Arthur Reck in the middle of 1941 could report to the Reich Minister of Justice: “For Makow, Mława and Zichenau the basic outline of the future town development is far enough along that building sites for the justice buildings can now be selected. In the remaining localities—Praschnitz, Plonsk, Schirps and Poltusk [sic]—the drawing up of construction plans is still in its early stages, in part because of unresolved traffic questions and demands from the military, and in part be-

⁶⁷ SZUBSKA-BIEROŃ, pp. 88, 96–98.

⁶⁸ KRAJEWSKI, p. 174.

⁶⁹ GUTSCHOW, p. 65.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 64.

cause of the lack of personnel for processing them.”⁷¹ Zichenau is a quite clear example that implementation of the plans was inconsistently realized and was in no case successfully brought to a conclusion. The primary reason for this was the course of the raging war. Yet in addition to the growing dearth of personnel and resources, not infrequently it was incompetence and a lack of knowledge about special local characteristics which were the stumbling blocks.

The description of the district president's way of working given at the opening of this article is but one example of how the town planning and building activity in the annexed regions always played out within a complicated mesh of relationships and interests involving the local, regional, and central institutions and actors: Gauleiter, Prussian Ministry of Finance, Governmental Presidium, and district and town administration. This also included institutions not classically entrusted with town planning, but which had decision-making competencies or a say in these matters during the occupation. Examples in this context are Heinrich Himmler in his function as Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationhood (Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums), Plenipotentiary for the Regulation of the Construction Industry (Generalbevollmächtigter für die Regelung der Bauwirtschaft), the German army, various party offices, and also Gauleiter Erich Koch as a so to say building-owner.

In addition to the particular perspectives and the stipulations of the actors in the policy decision-making centers in Berlin and Königsberg, a closer look reveals that the actions of the local actors were also consequential. For example, some of the practices and ways of forming arguments by the officials on site can be explained by their perception of the conditions they encountered there (living comfort, the climate, the landscape, the condition of the infrastructure and the towns, health and living standards of the population, etc.).

In search of a familiar normality, they therefore introduced rules and conditions that they knew from their places of origin in the Reich. Changing the townscape was consequently an important part of this process. Moreover, the occupation authorities were competing for the small number of available officials and workers from the Reich and saw attractive living conditions as a possible way to win people over for the unpopular posts. However, the central offices countered this sort of reasoning with suspicion and remained focused on primarily reining in the enormous financial expenditures and abiding by the prescribed approval processes. Their perspectives were often influenced by their limited information and knowledge about the annexed regions, and by the improvisation of the local officials on site, who sometimes presented the central offices with construction projects that were *fait accompli*, angering and exasperating the bureaucrats.

⁷¹ Reck to the Reich Ministry of Justice, 1941-06-03, in: GStA, I. HA, Rep. 151, no. 4085, fol. 28.

This was also the case with the building projects that Gauleiter Koch was pushing for his personal use, primarily the upgrading of his manor in Krasne. This was a large country estate and breeding farm and had previously been the ancestral home of an aristocratic family by the name of Krasiński. On the site of the previous manor house, in the summer of 1940 and within the time-span of a few months, Koch had an equally expensive as well as imposing building constructed and opulently appointed.⁷² Regarding the building, of which today there are but few vestiges of the foundation remaining and hardly any contemporaneous pictures, there were numerous rumors and legends swirling around it already during the war.⁷³ The Gauleiter proceeded here unilaterally with the help of his Erich Koch Foundation, and without involving the relevant authorities.⁷⁴

With this as the backdrop, the question as to the significance of the National Socialist ideology for the occupiers' town planning deserves some attention. It seems clear it offered two things: an apparatus for explaining the actuality of the occupation authority and consequently the legitimacy of its actions; it also served as an argumentation strategy in the struggle among the responsible, higher-ranking governmental agencies over limited financial and material resources. Additionally, the ideology could also camouflage the representational needs of Nazi officials as politically legitimate, for example in the case of Koch's country estate in Krasne. In a similar way, however, this also applied to public buildings such as the state health offices. The costs of their interior decoration were justified by their functioning as role models for "German reconstruction in the administrative district of Zichenau" and the importance of "healthy youth" as the "most precious asset of the people."⁷⁵ The appeal to the Nazi ideology was as such always a form of pragmatism, in order to smooth the way for the implementation of one's own goals.

Using Zichenau and Schröttersburg as examples shows that independently of which town planning model was chosen, its implementation had in either

⁷² MEINDL, pp. 283–284; ARTUR K. F. WOŁOSZ: Willa Ericha Kocha w Krasnem [The Villa of Erich Koch in Krasne], in: *Mazowsze* 6 (1998), 11–12, pp. 159–164. According to Wołosz, "a certain Brachmann" was the head of construction; it is possible that this was about the Königsberg architect Wilhelm Brackmann who was also working in Zichenau.

⁷³ FRANK BAJOHHR: *Parvenüs und Profiteure: Korruption in der NS-Zeit*, Frankfurt am Main 2001, p. 70.

⁷⁴ MEINDL, p. 283. That is also true of the way how the boundaries of the property were set, which Koch on his own authority extended by several thousand hectares, see: file memo Greifelt, 1942-08-10, in: BAB, NS 19: Persönlicher Stab Reichsführer SS, no. 3516: Reichsverteidigung und Mobilmachungsfragen, allgemeine Verwaltung und Organisation der Waffen-SS (außer Feldtruppenteilen) (mit zahlreichen Befehlen und Anordnungen des SS-Führungshauptamtes), fol. 11.

⁷⁵ Die Planung der Staatlichen Gesundheitsämter bei dem Neubau von staatlichen Behördenhäusern in den Kreisstädten des Regierungsbezirks Zichenau, in: GStA, I. HA, Rep. 151, no. 3792, fol. 18–67, here fol. 18–19.

case serious consequences for the population and was an integral part of the Nazi occupation policies. Jews as well as Poles lost their rights to ownership and were excluded to a large degree from the life of both towns. A portion of the population was expelled. In the case of the Jews, the loss of their rights and property were all-encompassing. In both towns they had to live in ghettos until they were deported either to the General Government or to extermination camps.⁷⁶ The Jewish as well as the Polish populations, for whom a law of compulsory work had been in place since the autumn of 1939, were compelled to forced labor on the building projects in Zichenau and Schröttersburg: demolitions, the hauling away of rubble, and actual construction work itself.⁷⁷ The occupiers also brought in many other forced laborers from camps in the vicinity. In most cases, Jews did the heavy work of tearing down buildings but received hardly any remuneration for such. Even though the Poles were likewise inadequately paid, their situation was nevertheless somewhat better as they were required to undertake actual construction work as their primary task.⁷⁸ In Zichenau, the Jews had to demolish their own residential neighborhood, and all the while, the ghetto area was constantly being reduced in size in spite of the influx of Jews from the surrounding region. The furniture and objects previously plundered from the local population were used to outfit the renovated or newly constructed offices and residences for the Germans.⁷⁹

Conclusion

Town planning, architecture, and building activity were consequently not harmless side-shows of the German occupation policies in the Second World War, but instead were an important part of what was transpiring. Other areas such as population policies, traffic and infrastructure planning, military decisions, or economic policies created the context and the framework for the ac-

⁷⁶ Out of approximately 80,000 North Masovian Jews, the estimates are that about six to eight percent survived, mostly in the Soviet Union; GRABOWSKI, *Die antijüdische Politik*, p. 115. Previous estimates suggested that around a quarter of Jewish population survived; WITOLD PRONOBIS: *Zur Okkupationspolitik des faschistischen deutschen Imperialismus im Regierungsbezirk Zichenau (Ciechanów) 1939–1945*, in: BRUNO SCHRAGE (ed.): *Polen im Bannkreis des Imperialismus 1918 bis 1944*, vol. 3, Rostock 1980, pp. 63–83, here p. 68. For an overview of the persecution and murdering of North Masovian Jews, see SCHULZ, *Regierungsbezirk Zichenau*.

⁷⁷ SZUBSKA-BIEROŃ, p. 89; CZESŁAW ŁUCZAK: *Polska i Polacy w drugiej wojnie światowej* [Poland and the Poles during the Second World War], Poznań 1993, p. 277.

⁷⁸ GÓRCZYŃSKA-PRZYBYŁOWICZ, pp. 104–115; DARIUSZ PIOTROWICZ: *Zagłada Żydów ciechanowskich* [The Extermination of the Ciechanów Jews], in: *Rocznik Mazowiecki* 12 (2000), pp. 81–89, here p. 85; PRONOBIS, *Polityka narodowościowa*, p. 247; SZCZEPAŃSKI, *Regierungsbezirk Zichenau*, pp. 205–206.

⁷⁹ SZUBSKA-BIEROŃ, p. 90.

tions of the town planners, officials, and architects. For that reason, it is important in future research not to present architects, landscape and town planners, administrative and ministerial officials, and members of the party apparatus as isolated from one another, but instead to integrate them into the overall context of the German occupation. What also belongs here is to consider the consequences of this for the occupied populations, who were directly and at a fundamental level affected by these processes of forced resettlement, property seizure, and forced labor. There are many other examples of such policies and desiderata for related research. In conclusion, one might mention an especially blatant case that goes beyond the question of town planning, namely, the military training area Mielau. With 650 square kilometers—an area 20 percent larger than that of Warsaw today—it took up a large part of the regional district of Praschnitz. The whole population living there was forced to resettle elsewhere, and their houses served as scenery for the military exercises of the German soldiers.⁸⁰ The army left behind a few structures, such as bunkers or training areas, which have not yet been systematically documented or researched as architectural traces of the occupation.

Translated from the German by Philip Jacobs

⁸⁰ BAB, R 49: Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums, no. 1255: Beschlagnahme von zum Bereich des Truppenübungsplatzes Mielau (Mława) gehörigen landwirtschaftlichen Grundstücken: Erlös für Inventar polnischer bäuerlicher Betriebe; R 3701: Reichsforstamt, no. 2071: Forstamt Janowo: Truppenübungsplatz Mława (Zichenau).

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