

Architectural Competitions as an Avenue of Promotion in the “New German East”

Aleksandra Paradowska 

ABSTRACT

This article deals with architectural competitions as an important element in how German architects pursued careers in occupied Poland. Reports on the competitions were the subject of numerous press articles—both in the daily press and specialist newspapers. Via these channels, information about the projects submitted reached a wide audience—the German settlers—and shaped their ideas about the hitherto alien Polish territories. My analysis is based on examples taken from various competitions in the Warthegau. I examine both the aesthetics of the submissions and how they were presented in the newspapers with textual commentaries. This reveals that press coverage gave the projects a significance similar to that of newly completed buildings and that, in a broad sense, the topic of architecture became an important tool of propaganda. This was also a way to convince the society of the successes achieved by the Germans in the occupied territories and to reinforce a sense of the stability of the new German authorities during the war.

KEYWORDS: German occupation, Nazi architecture, Warthegau, architectural competitions, occupied Poland

Declaration on Possible Conflicts of Interest

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Dr. Aleksandra Paradowska, University of the Arts Poznań, aleksandra.paradowska@uap.edu.pl,
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1970-5003>

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“Through a thorough redevelopment and to a large extent through plentiful new construction, the towns and villages of the new German territories to the East will take on a distinctly German face.”¹

The above sentence, taken from a speech by Heinz Haake, chairman of the German Homeland League (*Deutscher Heimatbund*), and uttered with reference to German urban planning and construction activities on occupied territories, can also be applied to one specific and significant area of those activities: namely, architectural competitions. The sentence expresses the essence of the competition criteria faced by German designers. Even though the criteria were formulated anew with each competition to match the site and subject, the framework remained the same. Architects were supposed to help curate a robust policy of Germanizing German cities and villages through a broadly understood “new construction,” so that the localities would eventually acquire a “German face.”

Even though it might seem that war and the related lack of stability do not make for favorable conditions, the circumstances did not present any obstacles for holding competitions. Quite to the contrary, the contests were used for all kinds of propaganda-related purposes, promoting the activities of civil servants at different levels of the occupation administration as well as building up the position of architects. The two groups were closely linked and their representatives reported to the newly-captured cities and villages shortly after the front line had passed them.² In their activities, German civil servants constantly made sure that the introduction of the new order was promoted in society with the use of propaganda, which included competitions. Communication regarding the competitions appeared mostly in the press, where reproductions of architectural designs (including competition entries) provided an opportunity to strengthen the power of the verbal message on the future of the newly-captured territories.

This article is an expansion of my previous research on the role of architecture and urban planning in the German occupation of Polish lands.³ The topic

¹ HEINZ HAAKE: *Richtlinien zur Pflege und Verbesserung des Ortsbildes im deutschen Osten*, in: *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung* (1940), p. 867, cited by: JEAN-LOUIS COHEN: *Architecture in Uniform: Designing and Building for the Second World War*, Montreal—Paris 2011, p. 353.

² This finds confirmation in statements by the architects themselves, who talked to Niels Gutschow in the 1980s. NIELS GUTSCHOW: *Ordnungswahn: Architekten planen im “eingedeutschten Osten” 1939–1945*, Basel et al. 2001, p. 11.

³ In my previous texts, I focus mostly on portraying the colonial aspect of Nazi architecture and its broad dependence on different forms of power: ALEKSANDRA PARADOWSKA: “Niedoszły Himmlerstadt”: O niemieckich planach przebudowy Zamościa i Zamojszczyzny [“Failed Himmlerstadt”: On German Development Plans for Zamość and the Zamojszczyzna Region], in: *Quart* (2017), 1–2, pp. 55–78; EADEM: “Polskie drogi” w niemieckim kraju: Narodowo-socjalistyczna wizja porządkowania polskiej wsi na terenie Kraju Warty / Polish Roads in a German Land: A National-socialist Vision of Putting the Polish Countryside in Order in the Reichsgau Wartheland, in: WOJCIECH SZYMAŃSKI,

of competitions covers many aspects of the reality of the occupation.⁴ I analyze both the aesthetics of the planned Nazi architecture and the way the projects were presented in articles in the press. I pay particular attention to the social dimension of the impact these images of the future exerted. Accompanied by appropriate verbal commentary, they shaped the minds of German settlers who were brought in in place of the displaced Poles.⁵ In order to understand these propaganda messages, I make reference to visual culture studies, understood here primarily as "the study of the social construction of visual experience."⁶ Although, as some scholars argue, the field can be compared to "rediscovering the wheel,"⁷ I believe it to be a very useful tool for bridging

MAGDALENA UJMA (eds.): *Pany chłopcy chłopcy pany*, Nowy Sącz 2016, pp. 72–87, 142–156; EADEM: "Wyjątkowe zadania" na "nowym niemieckim Wschodzie": Nazistowska urbanistyka i architektura w Kraju Warty jako element okupacji polskich terenów podczas II wojny światowej ["Extraordinary Tasks" in the "New German East": National Socialist Urban Planning and Architecture in the Warthegau as a Means of the Occupation of Polish Lands during the Second World War], in: ANNA WOLFF-POWĘSKA, ROBERT TRABA et al. (eds.): "Fikcyjna rzeczywistość": Codziennosc, światy przeżywane i pamięć niemieckiej okupacji w Polsce, Berlin 2016, pp. 133–160.

⁴ So far, only the Poznań competition has been discussed in scholarly literature: GABRIELA KLAUSE: *Próba nowego spojrzenia na problem odbudowy Starego Rynku w Poznaniu* [An Attempt to Rethink the Issue of the Old Town Square Reconstruction in Poznań], in: *Kronika Miasta Poznania* (2003), 2, pp. 447–460; HANNA GRZESZCZUK-BRENDEL: "Nowy Ratusz" w Poznaniu 1891–1945 [The "New City Hall" in Poznań 1891–1945], *ibidem*, pp. 219–237; EADEM: *Zwischen Gauforum und Ehebett: Das öffentliche und private Leben unter NSDAP-Kontrolle. Das Beispiel Posen 1939–1945*, in: ARNOLD BARTETZKY, MARINA DMITRIEVA et al. (eds.): *Neue Staaten—neue Bilder? Visuelle Kultur im Dienst staatlicher Selbstdarstellung in Zentral- und Osteuropa seit 1918*, Köln et al. 2005, pp. 147–157; Competitions have only been mentioned briefly in broader discussions of the territories occupied by the Third Reich, such as in: COHEN, pp. 361–363, 367.

⁵ Poles were resettled in the General Government, and Germans (former colonists from the Baltic countries, Romania, and present-day Ukraine) were brought in in their place. MARIA RUTOWSKA: *Wysiedlenia ludności polskiej z Kraju Warty do Generalnego Gubernatorstwa 1939–1941* [Resettlements of the Polish Population from the Wartheland to the General Government 1939–1941], Poznań 2003.

⁶ WILLIAM INNES: *Visual Culture: A New Paradigm*, in: *American Art* 12 (1998), 1, pp. 6–9, here p. 6, www.jstor.org/stable/3109288 (2020-05-04). The concept itself functions under different terms and in different discourses, with a different emphasis on the aspects of the relationship between text and image; for instance: W. J. T. MITCHELL: *Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture*, in: *Journal of Visual Culture* 1 (2002), 2, https://monoskop.org/images/f/fe/Mitchell_WJT_2002_Showing_Seeing_a_Critique_of_Visual_Culture.pdf (2021-10-09), pp. 165–181, here p. 166, argues for the use of the term "visual culture" as being more capacious. For a general overview (in Polish) of visual culture studies, see STANISŁAW JUSZCZYK: *Kultura wizualna—Wybrane studia teoretyczne oraz badania empiryczne* [Visual Culture—Selected Theoretical Studies and Empirical Research], in: *Chowanna* 2 (2005), pp. 17–29.

⁷ INNES, p. 8.

art history, architecture, and other disciplines in the humanities in studying the Second World War. It allows us to value the understudied aspects of the occupation reality, playing out between the material, regulated reality and visions of the imagination.⁸

The point here is not to base the argument on a simple observation that images (in the examples below, architectural projects, including press reprints, accompanied by commentary) influence their audience; rather, as W.J.T. Mitchell says in his canonical text, to “refine [...] our estimate of their power and the way it works.” In order to do that, he claims, it is necessary to shift the focus from “what pictures *do* to what they *want*, from power to desire.”⁹ This does not preclude an interpretation of signs, but leads to “a subtle dislocation of the target of interpretation” thanks to the “(1) assent to the constitutive fiction of pictures as ‘animated’ beings, quasi-agents, mock persons; and (2) the construal of pictures not as sovereign subjects or disembodied spirits but as subalterns [...] who function [as] ‘go-betweens’.”¹⁰ It is equally important to remember that pictures “want equal rights with language, not to be turned into language.”¹¹

In line with this statement by the US American scholar, the issues summarized above are not supposed to create a particular method, but rather to encourage a “conversational opening or an improvisation in which the outcome is somewhat indeterminate.”¹² I respond to this invitation in the present article. The subject at hand is the Wartheland:¹³ it was here, on the territory an-

⁸ For a discussion of the inadequate use of the potential of visual studies in reference to the issue of presenting Nazi power in German literature, see TILMAN HARLANDER, WOLFRAM PYTA: NS-Architektur: Macht und Symbolpolitik. Eine Einführung, in: IDEM (eds.): NS-Architektur: Macht und Symbolpolitik, Kultur und Technik, Berlin 2012, pp. 7–20, here p. 10.

⁹ W.J.T. MITCHELL: *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, Chicago 2005, p. 33 [emphasis in the original].

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 46.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 47.

¹² Ibidem, pp. 48–49. A significant book published recently depicts Mitchell’s approach in the broader context of parallel trends in the German scholarly community and their application in the debates of German historians: MAGDALENA SARYUSZ-WOLSKA (ed.): *Historia wizualna: Obrazy w dyskusjach niemieckich historyków* [Visual History: Images in the Debates of German Historians], Warszawa 2020. In reference to the editorial introduction and speaking from the point of view of the German scholarly tradition, I would like to add that my goal is combining “history in pictures” with “pictures in history,” to use Eugen Kotte’s distinction, see EUGEN KOTTE (ed.): *Geschichte in Bildern—Bilder in der Geschichte*, Frankfurt am Main 2014. I treat images in my analyses as a source and a tool for gathering knowledge about the past on the one hand and as “images as such, in their historical context,” on the other, see SARYUSZ-WOLSKA, pp. 17–18.

¹³ In German usage during the occupation, the territory was referred to as “Wartheland” or “Warthegau.” In the present article, I use the former term. For a broader discussion of the German design work in the Wartheland, see ALEKSANDRA PARADOWSKA: Archi-

nexed by the Reich, that the largest number of competitions were staged out of all occupied Polish lands. The contests were set up in 1940–1942, i.e., at the time of the greatest construction boom, related directly to the situation at the front line. Although German troops suffered a loss in the battle of Moscow as early as December 1941, hopes for victory still seemed alive and the design work on new buildings continued. In 1942, a large share of the architects working in the Wartheland went to the front line, and ultimately, few came back.

Press articles clearly show that the conditions of war and occupation were reflected in the belligerent tone of the publications. Day-to-day reality was portrayed as a field of war, with countless successes and anticipation of a German victory. The competitions were discussed among other mundane topics. These discussions formed part of a series of presentations of German projects for the occupied territories which had little chance of being realized and offered merely a projected vision of the future. This fictional character could not have been apparent to all readers, since commentary accompanying the sketches announced the possibility of accomplishing them at that moment or in the near future, after the war. The few negative descriptions of some designs did not overshadow the general sense of enthusiasm regarding the future appearance of particular spaces. In seeing the sketches in newspapers, readers had the opportunity to combine the places they knew well with an attractive vision of the future. The composition of competition entries published in the press was a well-thought-out message, decipherable on its own, regardless of the accompanying text. Illustrations dominated the page layout and reflected the hierarchy of competition results.

Competition topics were set in such a way that entries could become models to be followed in other cities on territories annexed by the Reich. And while parade avenues and *Gauforen* were modeled after solutions taken from big German cities,¹⁴ the issue of transforming existing architecture in the conquered territories was still very much under debate. The aim was to find solutions that would give Polish cities a “German face,” as the opening quotation

ture, History and Their Representations in the (Nazi) Propaganda in the Reichsgau Wartheland, in: kunsttexte.de/ostblick (2019), 3 (16 pages), <https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/bitstream/handle/18452/21474/Paradowska.pdf> (2021-08-01), and the articles by EADEM mentioned in footnote 3. Studies on Poznań have been published by HANNA GRZESZCZUK-BRENDEL, see for instance: “Made to Human Measure”: Nazi Architecture in Poznań, in: kunsttexte.de/ostblick (2019), 3 (11 pages), <https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/bitstream/handle/18452/21475/Grzeszczuk-Brendel.pdf> (2021-08-01). For a historical take on the Wartheland, see EDWARD SERWAŃSKI: *Wielkopolska w cieniu swastyki* [Greater Poland in the Shadow of a Swastika], Warszawa 1970.

¹⁴ Other than the designs, the main model here was the only *Gauforum* ever built, created in Weimar. KARINA LOOS: *Die Inszenierung der Stadt: Planen und Bauen in Weimar in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, Weimar 2004, <https://e-pub.uni-weimar.de/opus4/frontdoor/index/index/docId/48> (2021-09-15).

DEUTSCHE BAUZEITUNG

Wochenschrift für nationale Baugestaltung • Bautechnik • Raumordnung und Städtebau • Bauwirtschaft • Baurecht

Heft 38 75. Jahr

17. September 1941

Der Bezugspreis beträgt monatlich Reichsmark 3,40, bei Bezug durch die Post einschließlich 9,92 Pfennig Zeitungsgebühr, zuzüglich 6 Pfennig Bestellgeld



Wettbewerb über die Gestaltung des Innenblocks des Alten Marktes der Gauhauptstadt Posen

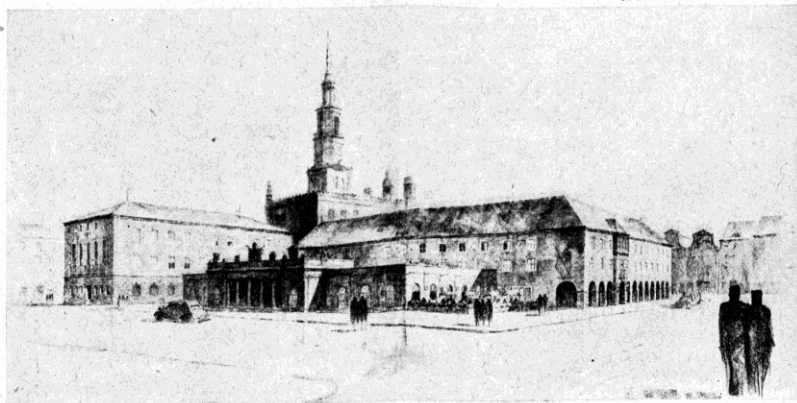
Wenn der Oberbürgermeister von Posen den Versuch unternahm, einen Wettbewerb für die Neugestaltung des Alten Marktes auszuschreiben, zu dem allein die in der Hauptstadt des Warthegaues ansässigen Architekten zugelassen waren, so muß dieses Unterfangen zunächst als ein großes Wagnis bezeichnet werden, da die Zahl derjenigen, die für eine derartige Aufgabe die erforderliche Befähigung und Reife besitzen, in Posen begreiflicherweise zur Zeit sehr begrenzt ist, zumal sich ein größerer Stamm ortsansässiger deutscher Architekten erst im Lauf der nächsten Jahrzehnte heranbilden kann. Berücksichtigen wir weiter, daß die während der letzten beiden Jahre aus dem Reich übersiedelten Architekten zumeist den jüngeren Jahrgängen angehören dürften und die beamteten sowie angestellten Architekten der Stadtver-

waltung von der Teilnahme ausgeschlossen waren, so braucht es nicht weiter zu verwundern, wenn nur insgesamt 14 Arbeiten eingereicht wurden.

Dennoch wäre es verfehlt, die Bedeutung dieses Wettbewerbs zu unterschätzen, da er eine Anzahl sehr beachtlicher Lösungen gebracht hat, die über den örtlichen Bereich hinaus Aufmerksamkeit verdienen. Dies ist nicht zuletzt auf die gut vorbereiteten Ausschreibungsunterlagen zurückzuführen, die die Aufgabe eindeutig festlegten und in Verbindung mit einem Rahmenentwurf den Teilnehmern die Arbeit nicht unwesentlich erleichterten. Auch die gemeinsame Besprechung, die 14 Tage nach Veröffentlichung des Wettbewerbes an Ort und Stelle und am Modell abgehalten wurde, verdient in dieser Hinsicht Erwähnung, da sie geeignet

Erster Preis: Dipl.-Ing. Herbert Soffner und Architekt Konrad Sasse, Posen

Schaubild zum Entwurf Soffner-Sasse



Deutsche Bauzeitung Heft 38 v. 17. 9. 1941

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Fig. 2: "Competition for Rebuilding the Middle Part of the Old Market Square in the Gau capital Posen." Front cover of Deutsche Bauzeitung from 1941-09-17, p. 648, with the winning project design by Konrad Sasse

announces, while also making reference to architectural traditions that were deemed local.

The stated objective in the competitions was always broadly defined, while at the same time responding to current priorities—i.e., rebuilding cities and transforming rural areas. The two largest contests in the first category were devoted to the modernization of town squares in Poznań (Posen) and Jarocin (Jarotschin). Announced almost simultaneously in 1941, they focused on similar issues, including central historical spaces of power. Redefining them, in fact, meant giving the entire city a new German face. The competition in Poznań was of a smaller scale, as it only invited architects who had their own design firms in the city, whereas in the case of Jarocin, professionals from other eastern administrative units of the Third Reich were allowed to participate.

In the Poznań competition, announced by city authorities in 1941, the main task was to design a new block adjacent to the city hall as headquarters for German craftspeople.¹⁵ Individual houses were supposed to reflect the industry to which they were devoted. The opening call was related to the works, already underway, to make the frontages of the Old Town Square uniform: “The renewal of the Old Town Square, deformed strongly in the Polish period, has begun immediately after the Wartheland had been returned to the Reich, and the rebuilt frontage will show its pure face soon.”¹⁶

The above words were reflected in the page layout of newspapers discussing the contest. The reproduced designs on the pages of *Ostdeutscher Beobachter* (Fig. 1) and *Deutsche Bauzeitung* (Fig. 2) take up proportionally more space than the text. In the former, the victorious design was highlighted by being placed in the top right corner. The two *ex aequo* designs were placed across the middle of the page. It is worth noting the adjacent article with a telling title, providing a good summary of the content: “Jewish and Polish profiteers hanged publicly in Włocławek and Kutno.” The article was placed directly beneath the report on the competition and constituted a visual frame. The creation of an architectural order was thus linked symbolically with the creation of a social order.

In its report, the *Deutsche Bauzeitung*, as a more specialized newspaper directed at professionals all over the Reich, emphasizes different aspects of the competition. The winning project is positioned at the bottom of the title page,

¹⁵ The competition is mentioned by: GRZESZCZUK-BRENDEL, “Nowy Ratusz”, pp. 232–233; KLAUSE, *Próba nowego spojrzenia*, p. 453.

¹⁶ “Mit der Sanierung des zu polnischen Zeiten stark verunstalteten Alten Marktes wurde alsbald nach der Rückgliederung des Wartlandes ans Reich begonnen, so dass die Randbebauung bereits in Kürze ein sauberes Gesicht zeigen wird.” Wettbewerb über die Gestaltung des Innenblocks des Alten Marktes der Gauhauptstadt Posen, in: *Deutsche Bauzeitung* from 1941-09-17, pp. 645–651, here p. 648; Wettbewerb zur Gestaltung des Alten Marktes, in: *Ostdeutscher Beobachter* from 1941-07-10, p. 159.

as a kind of answer to the photographs showing the current state of the buildings; these are placed above the title, depicting the diversity (and, by implication, the chaos) of the existing buildings. The images in the upper portion show a distortion characteristic for architecture photography, where a tower is not fully straight, but slightly curved. In the bottom image the distortion is corrected. The design is thus placed in the context of real space, which the readers—who were design specialists—saw as clearly being in need of improvement.

5 out of 14 entries were awarded. A verdict with so many awards allowed the promotion of names that had not been known to the general public until that moment and could now be featured in public awareness. Posen Mayor Gerhard Scheffler and city architect Gerd Luers presented the results of the competition at a special press conference and the contest entries were presented at an exhibition in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum. The winners were Herbert Soffner and Konrad Sasse, and the second prize, *ex aequo*, was awarded to Peter Langner and Paul Lemmel as well as Wolfram Vogel. The committee also decided to purchase works by Walter Naumann and Emil Lenz (Fig. 3). Only the latter architect's work was not featured in the press. None of the above had any spectacular productions in the Wartheland under their belt and the only one who had name recognition was Lenz, who had operated in Greater Poland before the war and who worked mostly on reconstructions.¹⁷ The contest was a great opportunity to publicly present one's craft and promote one's talents, in hopes of furthering one's career.

The guiding idea behind all the projects, stated explicitly as the essential criteria of the competition, was to standardize construction and give more emphasis to the Renaissance building of the city hall. Additionally, the aim was to adjust the buildings to new townhouses, which were being standardized aesthetically.¹⁸ The goal was met with solutions modeled after residential architecture, kept in the spirit of the *Heimatschutz* (homeland protection). Characteristic was the recurrence of arcades, an element widely perceived by Germans as part of the local German heritage, referring to an older form of the middle part of the town square—the so-called budnicze houses, a series of

¹⁷ The existing research has not provided more information on the designers. Lenz's biggest commission was the transformation of a modernist bank building on Wolności Square in Poznań. PIOTR KORDUBA, ALEKSANDRA PARADOWSKA: *Na Starym Grunwaldzie: Domy i ich mieszkańcy* [In the Old Grunwald District: The Houses and Their Inhabitants], Poznań 2012, p. 129.

¹⁸ The plan to rid the townhouses of nineteenth- and twentieth-century traces was being put into action already when the competition for rebuilding the middle part was announced. *Wettbewerb über die Gestaltung des Innenblocks*, p. 648.



Fig. 3: Wolfram Vogel: Competition project design for rebuilding the middle part of the Old Market Square in Poznań (second prize), in: Deutsche Bauzeitung from 1941-09-17, p. 650

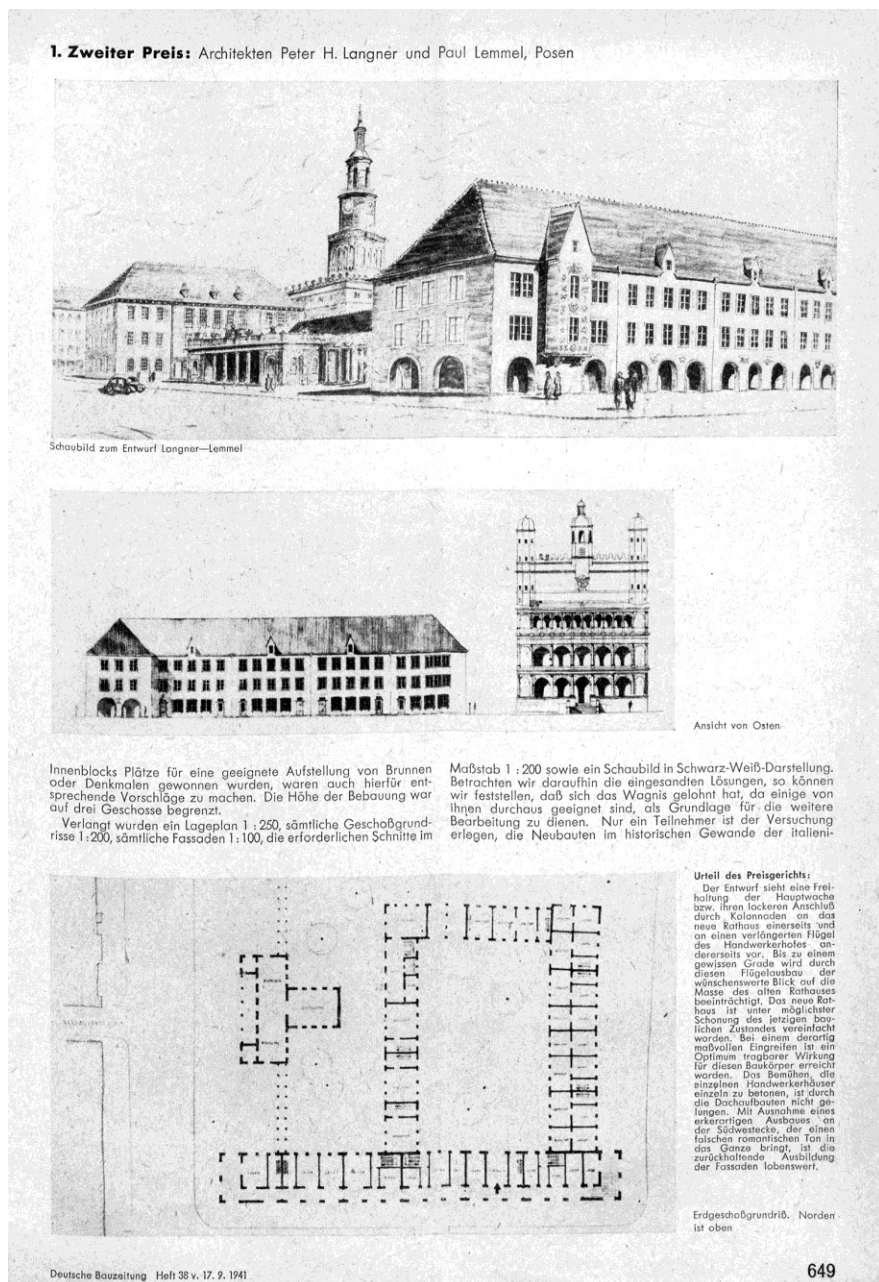


Fig. 4: Peter H. Langner, Paul Lemmel: Competition project design for rebuilding the middle part of the Old Market Square in Poznań (second prize), in: Deutsche Bauzeitung from 1941-09-17, p. 649

small townhouses inhabited by various craftspeople in the past.¹⁹ The only work that stood out among the entries was the project by Vogel (Fig. 3), offering arched windows instead of arcades. The main differences between the entries revolved around the proportions and location of particular parts. In the winning design by Soffner and Sasse, the buildings seemed more monumental against the backdrop of others and lacked façade breaks. The entry that was the closest to this design was one of the *ex aequo* second places, a project by Langner and Lemmel (Fig. 4). With its bay and roof windows, the design had a lightweight character, while also resembling the construction in the quarters of the so-called Weststadt, outlined by today's Dąbrowskiego and Szamarszewskiego Streets in Poznań.

The press commentators found the competition results insufficient, arguing that the entries did not include solutions that would give the Poznań town square an "East-German city" feel (while also not specifying what characteristics such a city ought to have).²⁰ They did emphasize, however, that the designs offered good inspiration for the future. And so, for instance, they pointed to the harmonious composition of the new construction in the winning sketch by Soffner and Sasse, which included the historical guardhouse buildings and an exposed city hall, as a virtue of the project. Most likely, the award decision was at least partly motivated by non-substantive reasons. This is visible in the clearly flawed design sketch by Vogel, where the guardhouse is drawn out of scale compared to the proposed new construction. Presumably, the architect was recognized because of his personal connections to the members of the jury.

The Poznań competition ought also to be seen against the backdrop of similar events staged in smaller towns, such as the Jarocin contest for the rebuilding of the town hall and the frontages of the town square.²¹ The criteria included the condition that both "the town square frontages and the town hall should be rebuilt so that the view of the houses form an architectural and spa-

¹⁹ Walled-in columns were discovered in the buildings after the war. For more on the topic, see GABRIELA KLAUSE: Wybrane problemy ochrony zabytków początku XX wieku i odbudowa Poznania po II wojnie światowej [Selected Problems in Preserving Historical Monuments of the Early Twentieth Century and the Reconstruction of Poznań after the Second World War], in: TERESA JAKIMOWICZ (ed.): Architektura i urbanistyka Poznania XX wieku, Poznań 2005, pp. 262–326; The City [RE]constructed, online exhibition at ICHOT in Poznań, 2020, part 2, p. 25, <https://bramapoznania.pl/files/city-reconstructed-p-2.pdf> (2021-05-04).

²⁰ Wettbewerb zur Gestaltung des Alten Marktes.

²¹ Die baukünstlerische Neugestaltung eines ostdeutschen Kleinstadtmarktes: Der Wettbewerb der Stadt Jarotschin für die Erweiterung des Rathauses und den Umbau des Marktplatzes, in: Bauwelt from 1941-08-12, p. 584. The competition was also discussed in: Umgestaltung des Marktplatzes in Jarotschin und Erweiterung des Rathauses, in: Baugilde (1941), 32–33, pp. 519–522. The documentation of the competition can be found in the collection of the Regional Museum in Jarocin.



Fig. 5: Competition for the rebuilding of the town hall and the frontages of the town square in Jarocin. Front cover of *Bauwelt* from 1941-08-12, p. 584, with the winning project design by Wolfram Vogel



Fig. 6: Wolfram Vogel: Competition for the rebuilding of the town hall and the frontages of the town square in Jarocin (winning project design), in: Baugilde (1941), 32–33, p. 519

tial unity with the town hall, in its current or rebuilt shape, befitting a small East-German town."²² The final words are particularly significant here, characterizing Jarocin as part of a group of Eastern "small towns," a group with a separate identity within the Third Reich. The subtext, then, was still the search for a new, unique face—while still undefined, it was presented as a lofty goal to be achieved. Small towns were supposed to act as important centers for the villages surrounding them—centers of power as well as craft.²³

Although the solutions closely resembled one another, the press featured most of them. Both construction magazines that discussed the Jarocin competition (*Bauwelt* and *Baugilde*, both specialty magazines) constantly foregrounded images of the town hall, accompanied by drawings of the frontage with aligned cornices (Fig. 5; Fig. 6). Similarly to *Deutscher Bauzeitung's* reports on the Poznań competition, the article in *Bauwelt* contrasted the then-current state (depicting buildings of diverse height and decoration complexity) with the unified planned result. The newspaper pages with reports on the contest featured the projection of the main building of the Jarocin town hall, with a clear division of chambers, inscribed into a square shape.

There was a diversity of solutions among the entries. The winning project came from Vogel, who offered a clearly weaker project than the other contestants had done, just as he had done in the Poznań competition. His drawing lacks a grounding in reality and does not depict correctly the scale and character of the existing buildings of the town hall and guardhouse, two buildings that needed to be included in any contest entry. The second place went *ex aequo* to Lemmel, based in Berlin and Poznań, and Siegfried Wolf from Wrocław (Breslau), while the third place was awarded to Hans Schäfer from Ostróda (Osterode i. Ostpr.) (Fig. 7; Fig. 8; Fig. 9). The works of other architects in the competition were purchased,²⁴ including most likely Sasse from

²² "Es sollen die Platzwände und gegebenenfalls das Rathaus einer Umgestaltung unterzogen werden, und zwar so, dass die Ansichten der Häuser in Verbindung mit dem jetzigen oder umgestalteten Baukörper des Rathauses ein einwandfreies architektonisches und räumliches Gesamtbild ergeben, das dem Charakter einer ostdeutschen Kleinstadt gemäß ist." Umgestaltung des Marktplatzes, p. 519.

²³ For more on Christaller's theory with reference to eastern territories, see for instance: KARL R. KEGLER: *Deutsche Raumplanung: Das Modell der "Zentralen Orte" zwischen NS-Staat und Bundesrepublik*, Paderborn 2015; cf. also: TREVOR J. BARNES: *A Morality Tale of Two Location Theorists in Hitler's Germany: Walter Christaller and August Lösch*, in: PAOLO GIACCARIA, CLAUDIO MINCA (eds.): *Hitler's Geographies: The Spatialities of the Third Reich*, Chicago 2016, pp. 198–217.

²⁴ The architects whose works were purchased were Georg Michalek from Gliwice (Gleiwitz), Rudolf Sack from Podjuchy (Podejuch) near Szczecin (Stettin), Georg Graff and Helmuth Schuth from Gdańsk (Danzig) and Weyher and Rath, first names unknown, from Poznań. Their signed works have been preserved in the collection of the Regional Museum in Jarocin. The collection also includes three unsigned pieces.

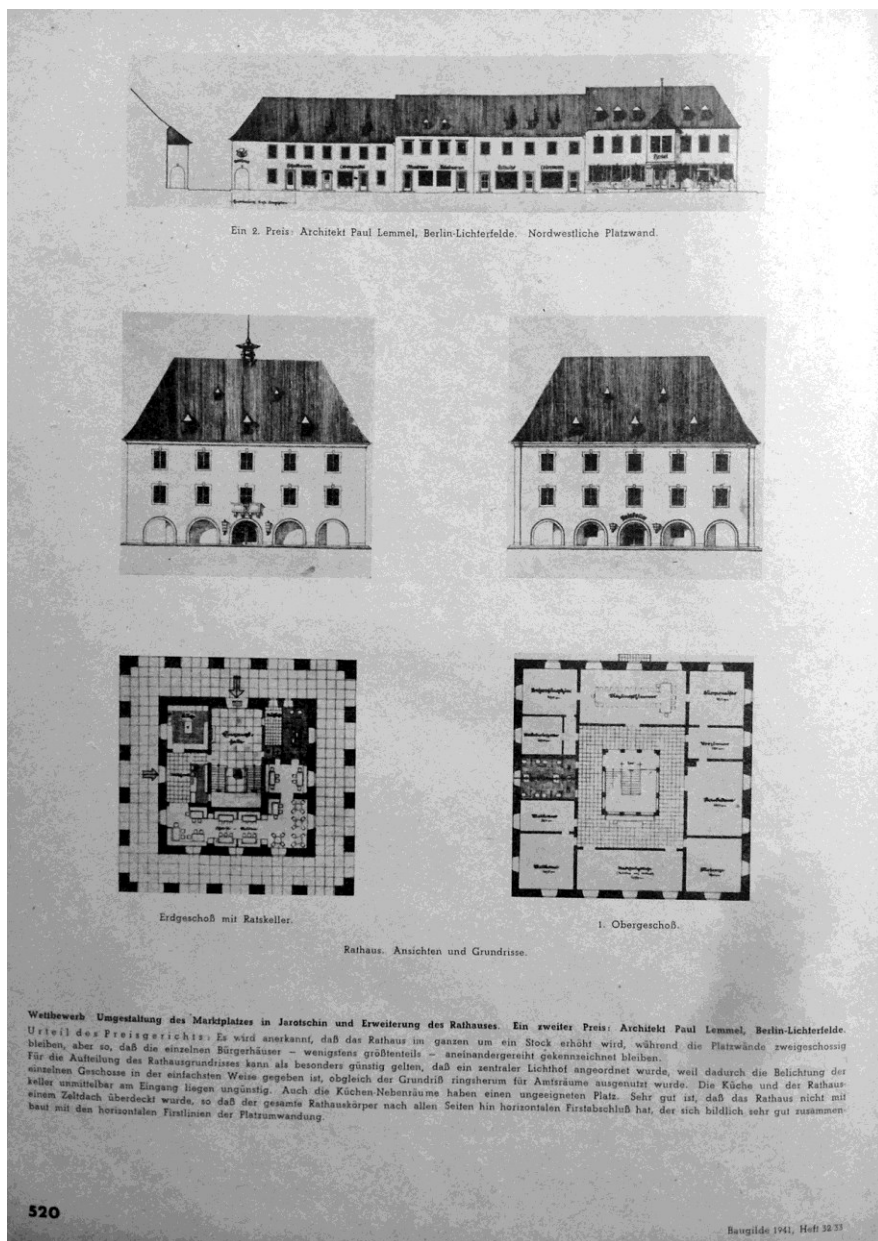


Fig. 7: Paul Lemmel: Competition project design for the rebuilding of the town hall and the frontages of the town square in Jarocin (second prize), in: Baugilde (1941), 32–33, p. 520

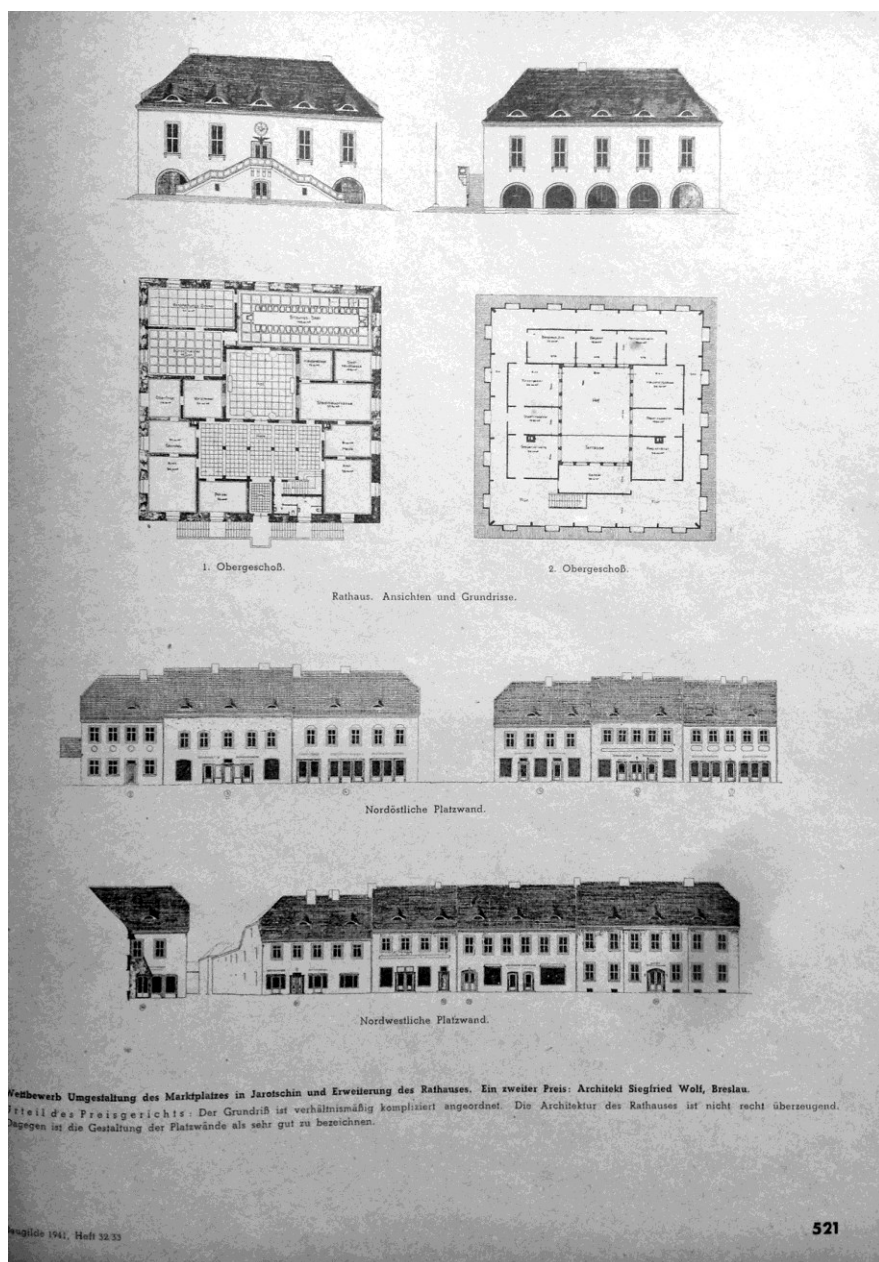


Fig. 8: Siegfried Wolf: Competition project design for the rebuilding of the town hall and the frontages of the town square in Jarocin (second prize), in: *Baugilde* (1941), 32–33, p. 521

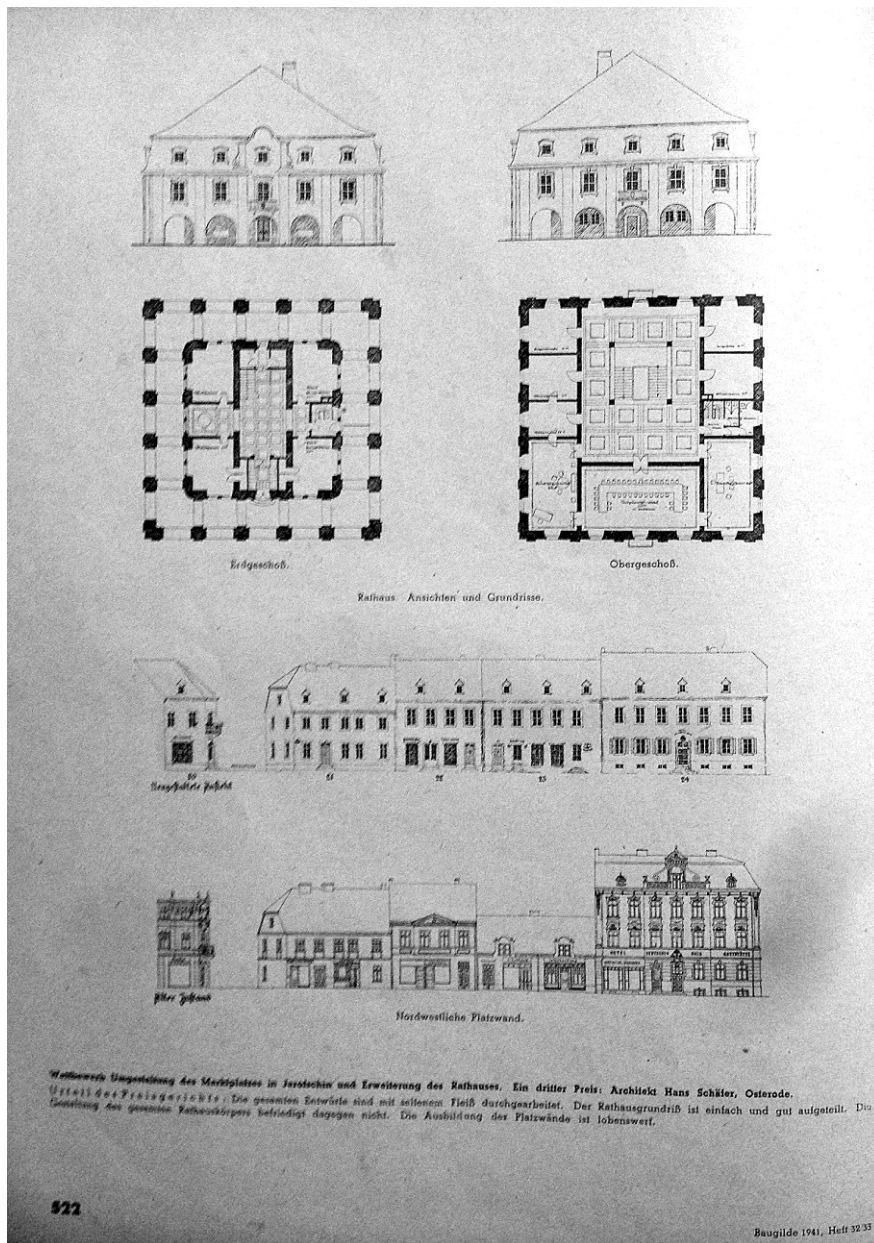


Fig. 9: Hans Schäfer: Competition project design for the rebuilding of the town hall and the frontages of the town square in Jarocin (third prize), in: Baugilde (1941), 32–33, p. 522

Poznań.²⁵ The participants interpreted the guidelines in different ways, but most of their works were conservative in nature. All designers proposed the raising of the town hall's roof, which made the building stand out as a symbol of power. The ground-level arcades remained a characteristic element in all entries except in the winning project by Vogel and the work by Sack, selected for purchase, in whose designs they were to be demolished. The frontages of the town square were similarly unified in all designs. The goal was to standardize the height of all townhouses and align cornices, window openings, and doors.

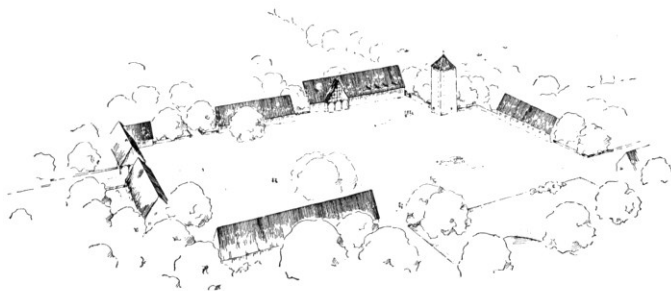
Vogel was the closest in his vision to the original shape of the town hall, which had been built in 1799–1804. In this way, he symbolically restored the memory of German rule immediately following the annexation of the Polish territory by Prussia—the golden years of the South Prussia province. The two stories dating back to that period were restored in the project, just as German power over the territory, a change to which the architect directly contributed.

The architect circles, including the participants in both contests, were decidedly small. The competition participants in Jarocin included three architects who also entered the contest in Poznań.²⁶ In addition to Vogel and Lemmel, Sasse also presented his work here. The participation of some entrants in both contests proves the prestige with which both events were perceived. Merely submitting a bold proposal and promoting it later in the press guaranteed broad publicity among specialists. The possibility of having one's design implemented was real, as confirmed by construction undertaken in the area. In Poznań, it was the aforementioned reconstruction of the houses that formed the town-square frontages. In Jarocin, propaganda touted the building of a residential settlement near the railway station, as well as the construction of Wilhelmswalde village (Radliniec), located just 12 kilometers from the city.²⁷ These examples are exceptions, however, as shortly after the competition was decided, the situation changed at the front, which led to a ban on new construction.

²⁵ As evidenced by the resemblance to the drawings prepared by the architect for the contest in Poznań.

²⁶ For a broader discussion of the Jarocin contest, see ALEKSANDRA PARADOWSKA: Niemieckie plany przebudowy Jarocina z okresu II wojny światowej i propagandowe wykorzystanie architektury w Kraju Warty [German Plans for the Reconstruction of Jarocin during the Second World War and the Propaganda Use of Architecture in the Wartheland], in: *Zapiski Jarocińskie* 31 (2019), 1, pp. 38–50. The article focuses on different designs for rebuilding Jarocin during the occupation and the role of local authorities in initiating construction activities. The issue of the competition is one of the discussed topics.

²⁷ For a broader discussion of the circumstances of the village's creation, see EADEM: "Stara niemiecka wieś" Wilhelmswalde (Radliniec) w świetle tradycji germanizacji ziem polskich [The "Old German Village" of Wilhelmswalde (Radliniec), in Light of the Tradition of Germanization of Polish Lands], *ibidem*, pp. 19–37.



13. Schaubild der Gemeinschaftsbauten
1. Preis: Diplombgärtner Sachs und Landschaftsgestalter Voigt, Posen

Dorfplanung im Wartheland

Ein Wettbewerb des Arbeitskreises

Der Aufbau ganzer neuer Dörfer ist eine für die Mehrzahl der Architekten völlig neue Aufgabe. Sie läßt sich nicht auf das rein siedlungstechnisch-architektonische Gebiet beschränken, sondern sie muß die Landschaft der gesamten Dorfllur mit ihrer Feldaufteilung, den notwendigen Aufforstungen und Windschutzpflanzungen, sowie die wasserwirtschaftlichen Maßnahmen einbeziehen. Darüber hinaus ist noch die übergeordnete Planung zu berücksichtigen. Das Dorf muß sich organisch in den größeren Rahmen des Hauptdorfes und in das auf diese neue Ordnung bezogene Wegenetz eingliedern. Der „Dorfplaner“ muß sich für diese Aufgabe ein umfassendes Wissen auf den verschiedensten Fachgebieten und ein besonders feines Gefühl für die Landschaft aneignen. Es wird seine Aufgabe sein, die auf den verschiedenen Teilgebieten bisher schon tätigen Spezialfachleute zu einer engen Arbeitsgemeinschaft zusammenzufassen, um zur Bekrönung der geleisteten Einzelarbeit durch eine schöpferische Gestaltung des Ganzen zu gelangen.

Der hier veröffentlichte Wettbewerb, der vom „Arbeitskreis für Baugestaltung und Baupflege im Reichsgau Wartheland“ in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Beauftragten des Reichskommissars für die Festi-

gung deutschen Volkstums und der Hauptabteilung Siedlung und Umlegung beim Reichsstatthalter ausgeschrieben war, hatte in erster Linie die Aufgabe, die hierfür befähigten Kräfte zu erkennen.

Das Ergebnis hat bewiesen, daß unter den gauansässigen Fachleuten geeignete und entwicklungsfähige Kräfte zu finden sind. Es ist von diesem Gesichtspunkt aus erfreulich, daß sich unter den eingegangenen 25 Arbeiten ein großer Teil von einer unerwartet guten Durchschnittsleistung befindet. Auf Grund dieses guten Ergebnisses hat das Preisgericht über die Zahl der vorgesehenen Ankäufe hinaus 2 weitere Arbeiten zum Ankauf empfohlen. Ein dritter zusätzlicher Ankauf wurde noch vorgeschlagen für eine im Fronteinsatz vor Leningrad entstandene Arbeit in Anerkennung der von den Verfassern unter besonderen Schwierigkeiten vollbrachten Leistung.

Reg.-Bmstr. a. D. Vogel, Posen.

Das Preisgericht beurteilte die einzelnen Arbeiten wie folgt:

1. Preis (RM 2600); Verfasser: Dipl.-Gärtner Hans Sachs, Posen, und Gartengestalter Gerhard Voigt, Posen (vergl. Bild 13 und 14).

Fig. 10: “Village Planning in the Wartheland,” in: Dorfplanung im Wartheland, p. 47

The second group of competitions—those staged in rural areas—was very different in terms of organization. A larger group of participants was allowed here, and they could come from different parts of the Reich and represent various design fields. As in the case of larger cities, the main goal was to standardize the layout, which again meant the need to find solutions that were both broadly German and local. The goals were formulated in a more general way, compared to the contests staged in cities. The most prominent competition was “Village Planning in the Warthegau”²⁸ (Fig. 10). The architects were tasked with comprehensively drafting the model of a village. The contest was open to architects employed in state institutions, as well as licensed gardeners. First place went to representatives of that latter group—Hans Sachs and Gerhard Voigt from Poznań. The second place went to engineers Alfred Beidatsch and Willi Schwartz, and the third to an engineer called Schlott (first name unknown). Most likely, none of the above had the opportunity to realize major commissions on the occupied territories, as their names cannot be found in archives or other press releases.

Other participants whose works were to be purchased included experienced architects, such as Wolfgang Rauda, well-known in the Wartheland,²⁹ but also a design prepared at the front by two privates fighting in the Leningrad battle. The absence of the last work in press releases suggests that its artistic value was probably very low. The very fact that a soldier-architect was recognized, however, raised the prestige of the contest and allowed the figure of the architect to be identified with that of the hero fighting for a new future. The architect became a hero-colonizer who could play an important role in asserting dominance over the new territories, as described in propaganda materials as the “New German East.”

There were several similar competitions on a smaller scale, including contests for village centers (Dorfmittelpunkte) or those for the development of particular areas, such as setting the layout of farms in villages within a projected large settlement area (Siedlungsraum) near Uniejów.³⁰ The drawings, printed next to each other on the pages of the *Wartheland* magazine and in book-length albums,³¹ constituted a kind of a visual alphabet, describing the German countryside. Similarly to the case of the Poznań and Jarocin town

²⁸ Dorfplanung im Wartheland: Ein Wettbewerb des Arbeitskreises, in: *Wartheland* 2 (1942), 4/6, pp. 47–52.

²⁹ A book on Wolfgang Rauda’s activities by Stefanie Brünenberg is scheduled to be published in 2021/22, <https://leibniz-irs.de/personen-karriere/mitarbeiterinnen/person/stefanie-bruenenberg-0717> (2021-05-04).

³⁰ Das Dorfgemeinschaftshaus in den neuen Dörfern des Warthelandes, in: *Wartheland* 2 (1942), 10/12, pp. 27–42; Planung und Aufbau im Osten: Erläuterungen und Skizzen zum ländlichen Aufbau in den neuen Ostgebieten, Berlin 1942; MICHAEL HARTENSTEIN: Neue Landschaften: Nationalsozialistische Siedlungsplanung in den eingegliederten Ostgebieten 1939 bis 1944, Berlin 1998, pp. 182–197.

³¹ Planung und Aufbau im Osten.

squares, it was the sketches themselves that shaped a new reality in the minds of the readers.

Competition rivalry was a common element for architects in the Wartheland, including those in training. Seminars organized in Poznań (the so-called “Landbaumeisterseminar bei der Gauselbstverwaltung im Reichsgau Wartheland”), consisting in educating and helping construction workers and architects adjust to independent work in the field, included mandatory participation in contests staged every six weeks.³² Both the students and teaching assistants from the program participated in the competitions. It was argued that drawings prepared during seminars and entered into contests eventually had to replace the limited implementation options. Beginning in February 1942, guidelines only allowed a reconstruction of existing buildings.³³ In order to introduce more savings, plastering was banned as well.

The idea of holding competitions, which could reach audiences through the press, gained new significance during the war. Both the images and the figures of the architects became tools of propaganda. Although mere participation in a contest did not guarantee that one’s vision of the future would come true, it came with an important promotional aspect. The possibility of presenting one’s proposal to the professionals and the general public was rewarding enough. The task itself was no less significant: visualizing a reality that, although fictional, would become real in the future, in the same way as German rule over Polish lands for over a hundred years of the partitions. To that end, German designers emphasized connections with the past. As evidenced by the very similar projects from different competitions, the dominant aesthetic was that of the *Heimatschutz*, put into practice and popularized in German cities, mostly in residential architecture since the turn of the twentieth century.³⁴ General references to the past, such as arched windows, arcades, and decorative cornices suggested a connection to the legacy of German design work on Polish territories—including mainly during the South Prussia period (1793–1807). At the same time, designing in the spirit of *Heimatschutz* enabled the assimilation of Polish cities to German cities, thereby giving them a “German face,” as referenced at the beginning of the article.

³² Aufbauarbeit des Landbaumeisterseminars bei der Gauselbstverwaltung im Reichsgau Wartheland, in: Wartheland 2 (1942), 7/9, pp. 37–52.

³³ HEINRICH SCHWENDEMANN, WOLFGANG DIETSCHKE: Hitlers Schloß: Die “Führerresidenz” in Posen, Berlin 2003, p. 125.

³⁴ Cf. JOANNA NOWOSIELSKA-SOBEL: Od ziemi rodzinnej ku ojczyźnie ideologicznej: Ruch ochrony stron ojczystych (Heimatschutz) ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Śląska (1871–1933) [From Family Land to Ideological Homeland: The Homeland Protection Movement (Heimatschutz) with a Particular Focus on Silesia, 1871–1933], Wrocław 2013; MARCO KIESER: Heimatschutzarchitektur im Wiederaufbau des Rheinlandes, Köln 1998.



Fig. 11: Kazimierz Ulatowski: Project design for the reconstruction of the middle part of the old market square in Poznań (1946), in: Archive of the Office for the Preservation of Historical Monuments in Poznań, collection of inventory cards, no sign.

Coming from a *longue durée* perspective, before I conclude I would like to mention the history of post-war Poznań. The topic of the reconstruction of the central part of the town square, broached by German authorities in 1942, resurfaced in competitions organized in 1948 and 1952.³⁵ Again, in the new Polish reality, none of the projects was realized. The contest was valuable for the architectural milieu, however, despite the lack of implementation that followed. The existing state—in this case, that of near-total ruin, following the conclusion of war activities, gained a new shape in the visions of the designers. Paradoxically, almost all projects prepared by Polish designers after the war closely resembled the German war-time proposals in their character, visible mainly in the similar ideas for building layouts and the proposed aesthetics (Fig. 11).

Common to both sets of projects was the need to standardize buildings, which had until then been very diverse. They were supposed to be replaced with buildings referring to a particular moment in time, the same period of the turn of the nineteenth century. While in the German projects it was a reference to the time of the South Prussia province, the Polish projects referred to the classicism identified with the rule of Stanisław August Poniatowski, the

³⁵ KLAUSE, Wybrane problemy, pp. 262–265.

last King of Poland.³⁶ The main difference between the projects came down to differently-placed compositional emphases: German designers replaced vertical lines with horizontal ones, in order to accentuate the Renaissance city hall. At the level of the ideas, then, both projects returned to a time more than a century earlier—a past that was not remembered by contemporaries, and could therefore be presented in any interpretation. What is clear is that all architects, regardless of their nationality, used historical forms with ease in order to fit the ruling ideology of their time. The post-war competitions were not covered by the press, which meant that the general public was not informed about them. From the point of view of the new, communist Poland it was more important to announce the progress of lifting the city from its ruins, rather than the backstage of the discussion surrounding the different ideas for reconstruction.

The example of competitions and their coverage in the press clarifies how many aspects of the history of German rule over Polish lands requires more research, a fact which has only been hinted at here. This includes the issue of style and its ideological dimension, the propaganda impact of architecture, and architects' activities on occupied territory. The starting point for this research can be found in the images of architecture. By understanding them as "quasi-agents" and "go-betweens," we can emphasize their role as sources on the one hand and stand-alone research objects on the other hand, on par with other types of documents, including written and oral testimonies. They allow us to not only fill in the gaps in the study of the history of German design work, but also to delve deeper into the daily reality of the occupation. In this way, the history of the Second World War begins to appear in a new light.

Translated from the Polish by Krzysztof Rowiński

³⁶ The period was widely promoted in the interwar years and remained an important point of reference also during the post-war reconstruction of Polish cities. ALFRED LAUTERBACH: *Styl Stanisława Augusta: Klasycyzm warszawski wieku XVIII* [The Style of Stanisław August: Warsaw Classicism in the Eighteenth Century], Warszawa 1918; WŁADYSŁAW TATARKIEWICZ: *Rządy artystyczne Stanisława Augusta* [The Artistic Rule of Stanisław August], Warszawa 1919.

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