

Propaganda and Ideology: The Architecture of the Third Reich

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“In a solemn ceremony, representatives of four Arizona Indian tribes, resentful at Nazi ‘sets of oppression,’ foreswore use of the swastika design in native basket and blanket weaving. The Indians placed a blanket, a basket, and some hand-decorated clothing, all bearing swastikas, in a pile, sprinkled them with colored sand and set them afire.”¹

This simple example illustrates how the trademark of Nazism, the swastika, became an international symbol for hatred and autocracy. Even today, more than fifty years after the fact, our sensibilities still recoil at the mere mention of the word. Yet, for millennia, the swastika was seen as a “token of good fortune” and various groups such as architects, militarists, and the scientific community used the symbol to signify peace and/or luck.² This being the case, it is curious how such a benign image could transform into something that causes worldwide revulsion.³ In fact, our disgust has nothing to do with the actual design of the swastika; the form and figuration of the emblem have not changed throughout its long history. The only element of the swastika that altered after 1920 was the ideology affiliated with it. Thus, our aversion to this four-armed charm is not its depiction but the ideology it has come to represent.⁴

In like manner, National Socialist architecture is regarded by many as unnatural, adverse, and/or grotesque. Some fear to describe it with any “unwarranted luster” and refuse even to study Nazi buildings, considering the subject matter “menacing.”⁵ The question posed here is why—why does the architecture of the Third Reich produce such

censure? Many in the art community claim that the buildings are just “extremely bad” architecture.⁶ Yet, when the architecture of the Third Reich first emerged, it was praised as “impressive”⁷ and “noteworthy.”⁸ A second argument scholars pose is that the architecture of Hitler is flawed due to the propaganda inherent within it.⁹ However, in almost every country in the world one can find civic buildings being used for didactic purposes. Thus, if these claims are invalid, what is the reason why scholars look on Nazi architecture with disregard? This paper will argue that, ultimately, it is not Hitler’s propaganda or architecture that causes abhorrence to National Socialist buildings; rather, it is Hitler’s ideology that offends us.

To establish the above claim, this paper will discuss three themes. First, it will look at the stylistic elements of Nazi architecture, including a description of the similarities between National Socialist structures and other well-known buildings throughout the Western world, especially those of ancient Rome, buildings generally considered some of the greatest architecture of all time. This appraisal will show that the architecture of Hitler does not diverge significantly from a majority of structures labeled as ‘good architecture.’ Second, this paper will discuss the propaganda associated with Nazi architecture and will highlight similar applications of structural propaganda used elsewhere to dispel the myth that we are offended by the Nazi’s implementation of propaganda. Finally, the third section of this paper will show how the ideology of the Third Reich affected National Socialist architecture and will demonstrate how it has influenced our perception of Nazi architectural elements. Ultimately, these assessments will illustrate that what truly affronts those who dislike Hitler’s architecture is not the

style nor the propaganda but the ideology that lies behind the stone and metal façade of the buildings.

The foundation of this argument is grounded in demonstrating that Hitler's ideology has prejudiced scholars in their opinions towards the architecture of the Third Reich. Thus, my argument will draw on a conglomerate of resources, utilizing as primary sources both Nazi-era writings as well as more recent evaluations from critics and scholars. The National Socialist buildings themselves will also be employed as primary sources. In addition, my argument hinges on the terms 'propaganda' and 'ideology.' The term 'propaganda' as it is used in this paper constitutes an action taken or representation created to motivate people to achieve ideological goals. I use 'ideology' to connote ideas, goals, and desires that motivate action. In the case of the National Socialist Party, Hitler defined ideology as "the mission of struggle for the victory of the Aryan man, and, by the same token, the victory of the idea of creative work, which as such always has been and always will be anti-Semitic."¹⁰ Of course, Hitler's definition does not explicitly say but strongly infers a vision of German world domination and the death of millions.¹¹

Studies examining the structures of the Third Reich, while gaining in prevalence, are still few and far between. Where scholars have considered the National Socialist building program, they usually have done so in one of two ways. First, the majority of scholars who tackle the topic of Nazi architecture focus strictly on the structures.¹² While some may include a description of National Socialist politics, their discussions center on the artistic qualities of the architecture. For instance, Alex Scobie treats Hitler's building plan as remote from the other terrors of the Third Reich, never even mentioning the Holocaust directly.¹³ Secondly, some scholars, such as Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, have

refused to see Hitler's architecture in any light other than propagandistic.¹⁴ These analyses do not incorporate a formal or technical discussion of the architecture. Instead, they only consider the correlation between the buildings and Nazi propaganda.

Evonne Levy is the only scholar who discusses some reasons for the aversion to architectural structures of the Third Reich. However, while her examinations are thorough and thought provoking, the main focus of her argument surrounds Jesuit and not Nazi architecture. As of yet, no scholarly work focuses solely on the causes behind post-war attitudes and opinions of Hitler's architecture.¹⁵ Hence, this paper will fill a large gap in Nazi architectural literature.

The dearth of sources concerning this subject should not minimize its importance. The building plan Hitler proposed to implement was not a mere periphery in his ultimate design for world domination. In fact, for most of his life, Hitler considered himself primarily an architect and only secondarily a statesman. In his first book, *Mein Kampf*, Hitler called politics an "aside" to his professional work as an artist.¹⁶ He also stated in 1918 that he intended to engage in politics "in addition to" his chosen profession in artistry.¹⁷ Hitler's rent contract in 1929 states his profession as an "artist and writer."¹⁸ Hence politics, at least until 1929, always took a backseat to Hitler's love for art.

In the specific field of architecture, Hitler was no amateur. In addition to having read almost every book available on the subject, he showed a natural command for drafting and design. His childhood friend, Adolf Kubizek, said that on one visit to the ruins at Lichtenhag, Hitler measured the broken walls, recorded each dimension in the sketchbook he always carried with him, and soon afterwards had drawn a faithful reproduction that included the castle, moat, drawbridge, pinnacles, and turrets.¹⁹

Hitler's love of architecture by no means lessened when he came to power; neither did his building plan play an insignificant role in his designs. In fact, if it had been executed, the suggested Industrial and Construction Administration of the Third Reich would have constituted the government's largest agency by far.²⁰ The construction division would have been overseen primarily by the SS, which in July of 1943 was given control of concentration and extermination camps as well as factories seized by the regime.²¹ This jurisdiction gave the SS the manpower and the means to logistically carry out Hitler's building plans. Indeed, the Nazi regime built many concentration camps for the direct purpose of quarrying stone and other elements that would aid in the building process.²² From 1940-1942 alone, two of these camps, Flossenburg KL and Mauthausen KL, quarried a minimum of 12, 201,005 cubic meters of stone in order to fulfill the demands of Hitler's urban developments.²³

Albert Speer provides additional evidence of the importance architecture played within the Third Reich. Describing his "special assignment for which vast amounts of raw material must be put aside for the construction of larger-scale buildings [in Berlin and Nuremberg],"²⁴ Speer quotes the monetary figures of his work. Speer claims that for his construction of civic buildings, the Nationalist Socialist government allocated 550 million marks annually.²⁵ The enormity of funds allocated for the construction of buildings makes obvious the ardor Hitler felt towards architecture.

This devotion is also demonstrated by the extremes to which Hitler was willing to go to realize his dreams of architectural grandeur. As far as obtaining the manpower for his plans, Hitler would have had plenty of resources to draw from. It was estimated that 20 brigades of 4,800 prisoners would be needed to complete the proposed projects within

the Reich, bringing the total number of workers to 96,000.²⁶ While these figures may seem impossibly exorbitant, they appear minimal when one realizes that the planned number of concentration camps solely within the area of the Third Reich could have held 4,016,000 prisoners.²⁷

Of the buildings projected to be constructed by this massive labor force, most were never realized. Two of the biggest projects, the Berlin *Volkshalle* and Triumphal Arch, both personally designed by Hitler, were never even started.²⁸ However, the Nazi regime did initiate and even complete many structures, most notably the Reich Chancellery, the Olympic Stadium, and the Party Grounds at Nuremberg. It is with these buildings, relics that still proclaim the National Socialist past of Germany, where the greatest controversy lies.²⁹

The Architecture

The majority of scholars who study the style and design of National Socialist architecture criticize it. Some claim that the aesthetics of Hitler's buildings are deficient in their originality and are mere copies, or "perversions," of more lasting and beautiful structures.³⁰ They state that the Nazis did not create culture but, instead, were "consumers of culture," extracting a variety of stylistic elements from the architecture of other civilizations without bringing anything new to the table.³¹ Yet, National Socialist architecture should not be construed as devoid of innovation. German scholar Rolf Badenhausen argues, "To call [Nazi architecture] classicist is not enough. Something new has been created."³² The conglomeration of cultures and styles shares "a specific handwriting which makes them instantly recognizable as the product of the Third

Reich.”³³ Some of these unifying elements include stripped-down porticoes, stark rectilinear lines with a focus on heavy horizontals, rows of windows inset in heavy walls, an obsession with symmetry and repetition, and above all the element of simplicity. Hitler often remarked, “To be German means to be clear.”³⁴

Still, it cannot be denied that, along with his use of these modern elements, Hitler did have a penchant for imitating ancient edifices such as those found in Italy. This replication stemmed from his admiration of classical architecture. The first time Hitler traveled to Rome, he could only exclaim, “Rome bowled me over!”³⁵ Hitler could hardly admire a city as deeply as he did Rome and not want to emulate it or even surpass it in beauty and mass. Thus, he began to strive for a Roman Germany, declaring in his first speech as Chancellor, “...each politically historical epoch searches in its art for the link with a period of equally heroic past.”³⁶ He found his in Rome.

Consequently, the new buildings erected across Germany possessed aspects of modern as well as ancient architecture, using simplicity to create a contemporary look but not show a disruption from the Latin past. Hence, “the Nazi building program was no *revolution* in style. To the contrary, buildings were to serve as symbols of secure old values and national pride and power.”³⁷ Accordingly, the classical Altar of Pergamum inspired the Zeppelinfeld Stadium. Nero’s *Domus Aurea* influenced the Chancellery in Berlin and mosaics seen at Pompeii prompted the mosaic room inside of the Chancellery. The ancient stadium of Herodes Atticus inspired the monumental *Deutsche Stadion* and the *Kongresshalle* traces its origins back to the Flavian Amphitheater, more commonly known as the Coliseum.

While in Rome, Hitler was shown Hadrian's Pantheon. This edifice soon became his favorite Roman structure. He said of it, "From the time I experienced this building-no description, picture or photograph did it justice-I became interested in its history.... For a short while I stood in the space-what majesty!-I gazed at the large open oculus, and saw the universe and sensed what had given this space the name Pantheon-God and the World are one."³⁸ Thus, Hitler determined to pattern his *Volkshalle*, what would have been the largest building in Berlin, after the Pantheon. It also would have had many of the same characteristics of the Pantheon, including a coffered dome, a pillared zone, and oblong shallow recesses above the pillars.

Because Hitler used these types of classical motifs in his architecture, many scholars overlook his innovations and perceive his style to be purely second-hand. In his book on Nazi architecture, Robert Taylor claims, "In architecture, Hitler lacked originality. Just as he rarely tried to paint an original picture, usually copying photographs or other paintings, so his critical opinions were rarely his own."³⁹ As seen above, it would be correct to say that many of Hitler's most prominent state buildings were modeled after earlier structures. However, Hitler was following a well-established architectural tradition by utilizing ancient models. Peter Adam, a scholar of Nazi art, remarks of the classical tradition, "Neoclassicism has long been the language of political power. It was by no means exclusive to Germany or to totalitarian systems. It was the official style of many countries. France, Russia, Italy, and the United States had all used it for their town halls, public libraries, universities, railway stations, and museums. In the nineteenth century a system of codes was invented by architects and architectural

theorists that echoed a general nostalgia for a stable world, a world of historical continuity. Classical...elements satisfied these longings.”⁴⁰

Indeed, the Classical archetype has been employed in some of the most famous and lasting monuments in history such as Jefferson’s Monticello, Thornton’s Capital Building, Wren’s Cathedral of Saint Paul, and Chalgrin’s Arc de Triomphe. The Parthenon was the model for the Bank of Pennsylvania and the Virginia State Capital in Richmond was patterned after the *Maison Carree*, an ancient Roman temple in Nimes, France. Early Americans considered these appropriations of the classical style to emit “social status” and “good taste.”⁴¹ In fact, the great majority of government buildings built before 1920 in the United States were patterned in a classical style.⁴²

This classical tradition was also prevalent in Germany. E. M. Butler stated, “The Germans have imitated the Greeks more slavishly; they have been obsessed by them more utterly...than any other race. The extent of Greek influence is incalculable throughout Europe; its intensity is at its highest in Germany.”⁴³ This is perhaps a bit of an exaggeration, yet the basic idea rings true. While it cannot be denied that the modernist art movement of the Bauhaus was well underway by the 1920’s and some architects at the time were “rejecting historicism” in architecture,⁴⁴ it is unquestionable that the Weimar Republic was still powerfully attached to “traditional art forms.”⁴⁵

Germans were, throughout the nineteenth century, deeply influenced by the classical and neo-classical style and many buildings in the prewar period assimilated classical elements.⁴⁶ The Reichstag in Berlin is a paramount example. With its neo-classical form and façade of columns, the building embodies traditional civic architecture. Another instance of classical incorporation in prewar German architecture is

the *Gefallenendenkmal gegen Osten*, a memorial built in 1930 and dedicated to 10,000 Nuremberg citizens who lost their lives in WWI.⁴⁷ The design of the memorial includes two rows of columns and an arcade. Due to its classical style, so similar to the type employed in National Socialist architecture, the Nazis readily adopted the memorial when they came to power and it became a prominent part of the Nuremberg Rally Grounds. Buildings such as these show that classical architecture was not considered 'bad' in Germany. Indeed, when the National Socialist Olympic Grounds were constructed "the editor of the government publication on the Reich sport field wrote that the building...was a 'conservative deed' which was based on traditional ideas."⁴⁸ Thus, it seems safe to say that, in drafting civic buildings in the neoclassical fashion, Hitler was not only reproducing a structural design he greatly admired, but was also following an aesthetically recognized tradition.

The Propaganda

A second reason many scholars insist on parading the architecture of Hitler as adverse is the propaganda so apparent in it. They consider the artistic design nothing more than a "deceptive gloss" among the more opaque meaning of the structures.⁴⁹ Writing in 1954, Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt stated, "To call these [Nazi buildings] good architecture would require an almost superhuman degree of detachment..."⁵⁰

Nazi Germany's use of propagandistic devices in architecture cannot be denied. Hitler called this type of propaganda representational architecture (*Repräsentationarchitektur*) and German psychologists referred to it as "psychological warfare."⁵¹ Speer perceived that, of the architecture he was helping to produce, "a good

measure of propagandist calculation underlay all [their] simplicity.”⁵² However, the use of propaganda “should not be written off merely as a National Socialist oddity. Dig past the Nazi façade and you find similarities to things happening elsewhere, even in the democratic West.”⁵³ In fact, the majority of Hitler’s propagandistic devices were patterned after well-known symbols of power used by other nations. Thus, again, as with his architectural style, Hitler’s propaganda followed a well-established tradition.

The use of architecture as propaganda is not new. Every urban civic space contains some element of propaganda, some design for what it wishes to convey to its audience. Yet few recognize the symbols around them and, as Ernst Cassirer has stated, “Man no longer questions his environment; he accepts it as a matter of course.”⁵⁴ Perhaps those who live in self-proclaimed “free” countries simply do not look for propaganda because they see no reason for the search. Or perhaps it has become unrecognizable due to its commonality. In a 2004 free-forum discussion regarding the concrete expression of ideology, one participant stated:

It is telling that so very few ‘revolutionary’ currents...even mention urban space in their critique. I suppose this is due in part to our acquiescence to the conventions instilled through upbringing and general conditioning, particularly a conditioning within and by the urban environment. The urban and suburban environment like every other aspect of capitalism is a conscious product of the ruling economic system. It seems an obvious statement but [I] really wonder how many people actually consciously consider the role of the commodity in shaping the spaces we inhabit. Every inch of the urban environment is designed with our central roles as passive consumer/worker in mind, ease of movement, open spaces for the deployment of troops/resting spaces, architecture which induces submissiveness and despondency, palatial and patrolled shopping centers, imposing advertising etc.⁵⁵

While our inborn ethics may deceive us into thinking the civic space we habituate everyday remains pristine and does not contain propaganda, the commercialism and public proselytism remain whether we recognize it or not. Even Speer understood that

with modernity comes the technology capable of indoctrinating, for good or bad, an entire population, stating in 1981, “Every state in the world is now in danger of being terrorized by technology. But this seems inevitable.... Hence: the more technological the world becomes, the more necessary the [demand for the]...self-awareness of the individual.”⁵⁶ Speer’s conclusion is not dependent on the ideologies of state, but merely the inevitable presence of propaganda in all governments.

Numerous examples of architectural propaganda can be given that range from the ancient to the contemporary. The pyramids of Egypt symbolized the greatness of the pharaohs. Augustus’ Temple of Caesar deified his adoptive father as well as himself. The Palace at Versailles demonstrated the wealth and power of Louis XIV. More recently, the United States has used the Statue of Liberty to portray itself as a democratic society. In 1889, France showed the world its prominence when it built the Eiffel Tower, at the time the tallest structure in the world.

It is from ideas such as these that Hitler molded his propaganda. For example, the Champs Elysees in Paris was the archetype for Hitler’s building plan in Berlin, the only difference being that Hitler’s avenue would have been “two-and-a-half times the length of Haussmann’s Champs Elysees, and 70 feet wider.”⁵⁷ Designed in a T-cross section style, the enormously large roadways intersected at Hitler’s *Volkshalle*. The main avenue that led up to this structure was to have been arrayed by a huge triumphal arch and, just as the Arc de Triomphe unifies the streets of Paris and demands one’s attention, Hitler’s arch would have created a linear perspective and focused the eyes of its viewers on the *Volkshalle*, thereby confronting its audience with a view of the colossal strength and power of the National Socialist government.⁵⁸ This type of propagandist device can be

seen in America as well. A superlative example is the Washington D.C. Federal Triangle. This roadway, although much smaller than the one planned by Hitler, is still a powerful piece of propaganda. With the United States Capital Building resting at the intersection, Maryland Avenue stretches off at a 40-degree angle to the southwest while Pennsylvania Avenue terminates to the northwest at the White House. The Capital Building acts as the focal point between the two. In this way, the Federal Triangle is constantly directing the view of spectators, whether driving or walking on the Mall, towards the chief building of the United States Government.

Another example of Hitler's assimilation of propagandistic devices is his Berlin Chancellery. Desiring monumentality, Hitler made visiting diplomats traverse several long corridors, a total of 725 feet, before coming to his office door.⁵⁹ The last of these hallways was a grand marbled passage. Patterned after the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, Speer's "Hall of Marble" was over double the length.⁶⁰ The immensity of the room and the elevation of the ceilings were meant to illustrate the insignificance of guests and to herald the immense power of the Reich. Thus, just as Louis XIV demonstrated his supremacy as a ruler through the Hall of Mirrors, Hitler's "Hall of Marble" established the Nazi's as a world power.

Comparisons such as these show that Hitler's use of architectural propaganda is not exceptional and therefore cannot be the cause of distrust towards the architecture of the Third Reich.⁶¹ If such were the case, the majority of civic buildings would be considered flawed. Yet, a difference between Nazi propagandist structures and those of other Western countries remains, in that "[Nazi] propaganda could not proceed like the propaganda of the democracies and appeal to the understanding of its audiences; it had to

attempt, on the contrary, to suppress the faculty of understanding which might have undermined the basis of the whole system.... This propaganda aimed at psychological retrogression to manipulate people at will.”⁶² Why could Hitler’s propaganda not “appeal to the understanding of its audiences” as the propaganda of other countries had? The answer is the ideology behind that propaganda.

The Ideology

The mistake most scholars make when inferring that propaganda is what deters our appreciation of Nazi architecture resides primarily in their terminology. Many fail to distinguish the difference between the term ‘propaganda’ and ‘ideology.’ Ideology, as it has been defined above, connotes ideas, goals, and desires that are the motivation behind action. Propaganda constitutes an action taken to motivate people to achieve these goals. Interestingly, the distinction between the two terms can most readily be seen by looking at the etymology of the word ‘propaganda.’

The term ‘propaganda’ originally referred to the Congregation of the Propaganda, a committee of Catholic Cardinals who were responsible for foreign missions. Pope Gregory XV formed the congregation in 1622.⁶³ By the eighteenth century, the term had taken on a more general meaning. Propaganda became any organization that promoted and propagated a particular doctrine. This definition of propaganda continued through the nineteenth century.

In Germany, the term first appeared in the 1910’s in relatively neutral terms. The *Meyers Lexikon*, published in 1928, defines propaganda merely as “the spreading of certain teachings in a religious and political context.”⁶⁴ However, after the incalculable

“moral consequences of Nazi propaganda, the term, while not neutral before, became much more inflammatory” and “almost exclusively a term of debasement.”⁶⁵

This shift is best illustrated by Leonard Doob, an analyst of propaganda. In Doob’s 1935 work, *Propaganda: Its Psychology and Technique*, he defined the term as “a systematic attempt by an interested individual (or individuals) to control the attitudes of groups or individuals through the use of suggestion and, consequently, to control their actions.”⁶⁶ In 1948, Doob published his *Public Opinion and Propaganda* in which his definition of the term had changed drastically. Propaganda had become “the attempt to affect personalities and to control the behavior of individuals towards ends considered unscientific or of doubtful value in a society at a particular time.”⁶⁷ Thus, it was only after the rise of Nazi ideology that the term ‘propaganda’ became “morally polarized.”⁶⁸

This variation in pre-war and post-war thinking was not due to the use of propaganda but to *Hitler’s* use of propaganda. Just as attitudes regarding the swastika of the Native Americans were transformed due to a change in its affiliated ideology, National Socialist ideology infected the neutrality of the term ‘propaganda.’ It is this same ideology that was the fuse behind the explosion of aversion to Hitler’s architecture.

A simple yet powerful example of this transformation through affiliation is revealed in a discussion from 1973 between renowned American architect Philip Johnson and Heinrich Klotz, a German art historian. As the conversation proceeded, Johnson mentioned his frequent use of travertine, a common building material most famous for its use in construction of the Coliseum. To his statement, Klotz responded vehemently:

HK: Don’t you hesitate to use travertine?

PJ: Michelangelo used travertine!

HK: Hitler, too—it was his favorite material.

PJ: Well, does one dismiss a material because Hitler used it?

HK: For the Europeans, or at least for Germans, even material can acquire a certain meaning—travertine, for instance, reminds us of a fake monumentality.⁶⁹

The distrust and dislike illustrated by Klotz as well as his explanation of that aversion aptly show how the ideology of the Third Reich can condemn the objects associated with it.

Similarly, some artists today who create Holocaust memorials are fearful to use monumental forms that are “still redolent of a Nazi past.”⁷⁰ Many have instead designed “antimonuments,” forming memorials that produce thought rather than awe. Jochen and Esther Gerz’s *Monument against Fascism* was a column covered in lead that encouraged the public to inscribe their names on its surface before it slowly sank into the ground and disappeared.⁷¹ Horst Hoheisel’s “*Negative Form*” *Monument to the Aschrott-Brunnen* is another “antimonument.” The memorial is an inverted replica of a Jewish designed fountain destroyed by the Nazis during the war. Hoheisel’s replica sinks 12 meters into the ground and creates a negative-form almost invisible to the public.⁷² Both of these “non-forms” dispense of monumentality due to the National Socialist ideologies associated with such a method.⁷³ Of course, this is not to say “that National Socialism ‘had’ ideology while Weimar and postwar Germany—or contemporary European and American societies—did not, but rather that the extremity of the case may be precisely what exposes the difficult relationship between ideological superstructure and everyday living.”⁷⁴

Hitler’s ideology offends us for many reasons. One of the largest is the lack of scruples inherent within it. Hitler was unconcerned about the manner in which he completed his plans and is recorded as stating, “We need not feel any pangs of conscience....It makes absolutely no difference to me what posterity will say about the

methods I had to use.”⁷⁵ These methods included employing architecture as a means of promoting his solution to the “Jewish problem.” Hitler’s building plan emphasized his tyrannical leadership, encouraged Aryan supremacy, and eliminated the significance of the individual. Uncomfortable with dogmas such as these, our senses react negatively towards the objects that have come to symbolize them. “When art sends an unappealing message, we respond judgmentally, placing the art and the thoughts expressed through it on the edge or periphery of social and cultural acceptance.”⁷⁶

Examples of this symbolic ideology can be seen in all National Socialist architecture. By creating an empire of buildings that were massive in size, Hitler could publicize the greatness and power of a potent ruler as well as demonstrate the irrelevance of the individual. Hitler’s *Deutsche Stadion* which, at capacity, was to have held 405,000 people, shows the type of monumentality inherent in the majority of Nazi architecture.⁷⁷ In addition to vast arenas and immense edifices such as this, the proposed ‘monumentality’ in the *number* of buildings that were to be produced would serve to remind people of the presence of the government and to demonstrate the authority of politicians in all aspects of everyday life. Most importantly, “the architecture always emphasized Hitler’s position and the all-pervasive presence of the Führer.”⁷⁸

Hitler’s structures were also meant to teach the principles of *Gemeinschaft* (community) as well as *Volk* (people, nation, or race) through their configuration.⁷⁹ While these two ideas may not appear to be adverse values to promote, when paired with their associative ideology, community and unity of one Aryan race, they suddenly become less innocent. For instance, the party grounds at Nuremburg were built so that the walls of stone encircled the people within. There, “architecture and *Volk* were to merge in

a spiritual communion of all ‘Aryans,’ living and dead, above and within the soil which bred them.”⁸⁰

Ideological expressions such as these cause scholars to distrust the architecture of the Third Reich. If purely a matter of production, Hitler’s architecture as well as his proposed building plan perhaps would be thought of in quite a different light. However, Hitler’s Holocaust went far beyond a mere cityscape. In a speech given on 22 January 1945, Otto Ohlendorf, deputy director general of the Reich Ministry of Economic Affairs, stated “...I might just point out that this war is not only a war of production but also a war of ideas, and that there are many examples in history where ideas have turned out to be more powerful than production....”⁸¹ It is the ideology behind an innovation and not the innovation itself that is the formative factor in determining whether something is good or bad, right or wrong. For example, when Earnest Rutherford “split the atom,” he was lauded by the scientific community. When the Manhattan Project created the nuclear bomb from the same technology, the world held its breath in terror. Similarly, the columns and arcades of ancient Rome are considered some of the finest architecture on earth. Yet, when paired with the prevailing Nazi ideologies of anti-Semitism, tyrannical leadership, and apathy for the individual, this same architectural style ultimately “offends our sense of social justice.”⁸²

Thus, the architecture of Hitler should not be placed on trial by scholars who claim the style to be deficient or who argue about the propaganda employed in the structures. The architectural design follows a well-established tradition and propaganda has been used by groups and governments for millennia. Hence, our distrust and dislike of National Socialist architecture does not grow out of its use of propaganda nor the

architectural elements employed therein but instead stems from the ideology affiliated with it. Whether conscious of it or not, academic aversion tends to follow the line of thought of one writer who described the creations of Hitler as “lightweight works which any young art student could have produced. Any young art student, that is, who was devoid of any exceptional gifts or any artistic talent. Thus may the matter be quickly disposed of. Nor, on the other hand, could it be otherwise: Hitler is what he is, as we all know him. Anything further such as we are about to say is idle reflection, ‘degenerate’ fantasy.”⁸³ Quick to judge harshly, many forgo a critical examination of Hitler’s style and method, preferring to blame inability and propaganda for their opinions. Thus, the works of Hitler are blatantly assessed not on their style but solely on their maker and the dogmas he professed.

Endnotes

- ¹ Steven Heller, *The Swastika: Symbol beyond Redemption* (NY: H. Holt and Company, 1948), 2.
- ² Heller, 4.
- ³ It should be noted that Finland and many countries in South Asia, particularly India, still find the swastika to be an auspicious symbol and continue to use it. For example, a swastika within a white circle adorns the flag of the Finnish Air Force.
- ⁴ Hitler specifically stated that, for National Socialists, the swastika represented creativity and anti-Semitism. For more on this see volume 2, chapter 7 of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971).
- ⁵ Ernst Eichhorn, et al., *Kulissen der Gewalt: Das Reichsparteitagsgelände in Nurnberg*, (Munchen: Hugendubel, 1992), 11.
- ⁶ John W. Cook and Heinrich Klotz, eds., "Philip Johnson," *Conversations with Architects* (NY: Praeger, 1973), 36-37. Interestingly, Johnson wanted to become a member of the National Socialist Party in the early thirties due to his admiration of Hitler and his ideas. Yet, even though he deeply admired him, Johnson still considered Hitler to be a very bad architect. This, compounded with the fact that Johnson did not believe people could use architecture didactically, makes his opinion, in contrast with many others, seem to be purely based on aesthetics.
- ⁷ "New Nazi Quarters in 'Prohibited Mile,'" *New York Times*, Nov. 6, 1932, E4.
- ⁸ "Herr Hitler on Nazi Architecture: A National Style," *The Times*, Dec. 12, 1938, 16.
- ⁹ Evonne Levy, *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 70. The term "Hitler's buildings" or "Hitler's architecture" is not a generalization. Hitler had complete and ultimate control over every building, architect, and stylistic decision in the Third Reich. For more on this, see Paul Jaskot, *The Architecture of Oppression: The S.S., Forced Labor and the Nazi Monumental Building Economy* (NY: Routledge, 2000), 84; Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (NY: The Macmillan Co., 1970), 30. Specifically concerning Hitler's role in the Berlin building plan, see Stephen D. Helmer, *Hitler's Berlin: The Speer Plans for Reshaping the Central City* (MI: UMI Research Press, 1985), 285.
- ¹⁰ Adolf Hitler as quoted in Steven Kasher's "The Art of Hitler," *October* 59 (Winter 1992): 50.
- ¹¹ Scott Spector defines Nazi ideology as "official doctrine or dogma, contrary to nature or objective truth." He goes on to state that "the historical study of ideology needs to set out not only to identify what it was that a regime or age demanded be believed but how it did so, what it demanded that it did not necessarily say...." See Spector's article "Was the Third Reich Movie-Made? Interdisciplinarity and the Reframing of 'Ideology,'" *American Historical Review* 106 (April 2001): 461.
- ¹² See Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (NY: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992).
- ¹³ Alex Scobie, *Hitler's State Architecture: The Impact of Classical Antiquity* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990).
- ¹⁴ Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, *Art under a Dictatorship* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1954). See also Barbara Miller Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany: 1918-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).
- ¹⁵ The chronological boundaries of this study are defined as 1945-present because it was only in the post-war period that a complete understanding of National Socialist ideology and its effects came about.
- ¹⁶ *Mein Kampf*, 127.
- ¹⁷ *Mein Kampf*, 175.
- ¹⁸ Robert R. Taylor, *The Word in Stone: The Role of Architecture in the National Socialist Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 19.
- ¹⁹ Taylor, 24.
- ²⁰ While the construction brigades, as they were called, were never formally instigated, Heinrich Himmler drew up projections and budget summaries for their development that reveal radically extensive, though realistic, blueprints for the construction of the Third Reich.
- ²¹ Albert Speer, *Infiltration*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1981), 296.
- ²² Jaskot, 1.
- ²³ Jaskot, 41.
- ²⁴ *Infiltration*, 296.
- ²⁵ *Infiltration*, 296.

²⁶ *Infiltration*, 299. This figure is only indicative of building plans within the Reich itself. Millions more workers would have been needed to complete the extensive plans proposed for other parts of Europe.

²⁷ *Infiltration*, 301.

²⁸ Because of the immensity of Hitler's Triumphal Arch (it was to be 117 meters high, 170 meters wide, and 119 meters long) tests had to be done to assure that the ground was solid enough to hold such a huge weight. This testing was done by what is now known as the Large Load Body. These cylinders that tested the subsoil, and ultimately found that the Triumphal Arch could never have logistically been built in its projected location, are the only things that attest to the planned arch. The Large Load Body cylinders still remain near the center of Berlin. For more on this, see Steven Lehrer, *The Reich Chancellery and the Fuhrerbunker Complex: An Illustrated History of the Seat of the Nazi Regime* (London: McFarland and Company Inc., 2006), 60.

²⁹ Levy, 234-235.

³⁰ Eichhorn, 18.

³¹ Adam, 225.

³² Rolf Badenhausen, "Betrachtungen zum Bauwillen des Dritten Reiches," *Zeitschrift für Deutschkunde*, 1937, p. 222 as quoted in Adam, 233.

³³ Adam, 225.

³⁴ For a full discussion of the stylistic elements of National Socialist architecture, see Adam, 225-227.

³⁵ Scobie, 34. Hitler loved Rome so much, that he once said, "My dearest wish would be to be able to wander about in Italy as an unknown painter." For this quote, see Adolf Hitler, *Hitler's Table Talk, 1941-1944: His Private Conversations*, trans. Norman Cameron and R.H. Stevens, (NY: Enigma Books, 2000), 11.

³⁶ Scobie, 16.

³⁷ Victoria Jane Willis, *Architecture and Politics: Building as a Means to a National Socialist Identity* (Monticello: Council of Planning Librarians, 1977), 2.

³⁸ Scobie, 109.

³⁹ Taylor, 18.

⁴⁰ Adam, 225.

⁴¹ William Richards, "The Style of Power: Building a New Nation," *CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship* 4 (winter 2007), http://crmjournal.cr.nps.gov/08_rexhibit_sub.cfm?issue=Volume%204%20Number%201%20Winter%202007&seq=2 (accessed 2 November 2007). The Palladian architectural style was absorbed by Americans through books such as "Daniele Barbaro's 1567 *M. Vitruvii Pollionis De Architectura Libri decem*, the 1715 edition of Giacomo Leoni's *The Architecture of A. Palladio*, the 1759 edition of William Chambers's *A Treatise on Civil Architecture*, Johann Joachim Winckelmann's 1764 *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, and Antoine Babuty Desgodetz's 1779 *Les édifices antiques de Rome*. These texts, of course, have individual histories and a much broader reach than the United States, but to see them together under the aegis of a specifically American pursuit of classicism underscores just how high the new nation was willing to aim and how deeply in European history it was willing to dig to activate its lofty intentions."

⁴² Charles T. Goodsell, *The Social Meaning of Civic Space: Studying Political Authority through Architecture* (KA: University Press of Kansas, 1988), 53-54.

⁴³ As quoted in Marion Deshmukh, review of *German Architecture and the Classical Ideal*, by David Watkin and Tilman Mellinghoff, *German Studies Review* 11 (1988): 137. Since Butler made this statement in the 1950's, it may reflect some influence from the great amount of classical motifs used in Germany by the National Socialist regime. However, there is still plenty of evidence that the Germans, even before Hitler's time, were imitating the Romans and the Greeks.

⁴⁴ Jennifer Jenkins, *Provincial Modernity: Local Culture and Liberal Politics in Fin-de-Siecle Hamburg* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 269.

⁴⁵ Lane, 70-71. The Bauhaus debate, today termed 'the battle over the Bauhaus,' is one event that demonstrates the German tendency toward classical forms. Occurring in the mid-1920's, the contestation against the modern art of Gropius and others stemmed mainly from Germany's desire to "return to [the] older cultural traditions of the German nation or the German 'race.'" Indeed, the opinion that the modernist Bauhaus movement went against traditional "German culture" was widely held by politicians and the public alike. For a complete description of this debate, see Lane.

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- ⁴⁶ For more information, see David Watkin and Tilman Mellinghoff, *German Architecture and the Classical Ideal* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987).
- ⁴⁷ Eichhorn, 23.
- ⁴⁸ Taylor, 271. It should be noted that the staff writer quoted by Taylor worked for the government and, in 1936, the politics of the day could very well have prejudiced his views of the architecture.
- ⁴⁹ Levy, 9.
- ⁵⁰ Lehmann-Haupt, 123.
- ⁵¹ Levy, 61.
- ⁵² *Inside the Third Reich*, 30.
- ⁵³ Helmer, 7-8. Examples of architectural propaganda are also apparent in Germany around this time. In the early 1900's with the economy in a downward slump and unemployment rates skyrocketing, many cities utilized urban planning policies as a means of "pacifying the working class and negotiating the political and social effects of industrialization.... Architecture and urban planning had become tools for tackling the social problems of the modern city. They could be used to design a new form of social order."⁵³ See Jenkins, 262-263.
- ⁵⁴ Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946), 286.
- ⁵⁵ Comment from "The Concrete Expression of Ideology," comment posted 13 April 2004, <http://libcom.org/forums/thought/the-concrete-expression-of-ideology> (accessed 2 November 2007).
- ⁵⁶ *Infiltration*, 84.
- ⁵⁷ Lehrer, 60.
- ⁵⁸ Helmer, 21.
- ⁵⁹ Taylor, 133-137.
- ⁶⁰ Lehrer, 75.
- ⁶¹ Claudia Koonz describes a most interesting example of civic propaganda. While examining a Holocaust memorial dedicated to the prisoners who dared to revolt against their guards in the Buchenwald concentration camp, she remarks, "Just in front of the bell monument, there are eleven bronze statues of gaunt men in defiant postures. As I wandered alone through the deserted monuments, I felt the eerie affinity between the outsized scale embodied here and in Albert Speer's models for Nazi Berlin. What would become of the tons of concrete and granite in this shrine? Would it be bulldozed as inappropriate or preserved as a memory of GDR antifascism?" See "Germany's Buchenwald: Whose Shrine? Whose Memory?" in *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*, ed. James E. Young (NY: Prestel, 1994), 113.
- ⁶² Siegfried Kracauer, "Propaganda and the Nazi War Film," *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 278.
- ⁶³ Interestingly, the term 'propaganda' was dropped from the title after the end of World War II when the committee officially became known as the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.
- ⁶⁴ Levy, 60-61.
- ⁶⁵ Levy, 6.
- ⁶⁶ Leonard W. Doob, *Propaganda: Its Psychology and Technique* (NY: H. Holt and Company, 1935), 4.
- ⁶⁷ Leonard W. Doob, *Public Opinion and Propaganda* (NY: H. Holt and Company, 1948), 240.
- ⁶⁸ Levy, 61.
- ⁶⁹ Cook, 12.
- ⁷⁰ Young, 35.
- ⁷¹ Built in 1986, the column disappeared shortly after 1993.
- ⁷² Young, 36.
- ⁷³ For a more detailed discussion of Germany's "flight from the past," see Lambourne 187-188.
- ⁷⁴ Spector, 461.
- ⁷⁵ *Infiltration*, 304. Interestingly, on this same occasion, Hitler stated, "I love people so much.... I find it insufferable when a car drives through puddles, splashing people along the road. It is especially mean when it splashed peasants in their Sunday best.... I wouldn't want to see anyone suffering or to hurt anyone.... Beauty should have power over people. We want...to avoid as far as humanly possible anything that harms our fellowmen.... I never enjoyed maltreating others, even though I realize that is it impossible to assert oneself without violence...." As quoted in *Infiltration*, 305.
- ⁷⁶ Peggy A. Loar, "Pondering the Products of Propaganda: Art and Thought on the Periphery," in *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* (1990): 41.

⁷⁷ Currently, the largest stadium on earth is the Indianapolis Speedway, which holds 250,000 people at capacity.

⁷⁸ Jochen Thies, "Nazi Architecture-A Blueprint for World Domination: The Last Aims of Adolf Hitler," *Nazi Propaganda: The Power and the Limitations*, ed. David Welch (New Jersey: Barnes & Noble Books, 1983), 50.

⁷⁹ Willis, 2. The term *volk* is difficult to define since its meaning was somewhat changed by the Nazis. Before the rise of National Socialism, the term referred to a cultural entity. Later, however, it shifted to implicate a biological entity and was used in terms of racial unity; Jews were not of the same *volk* as Germans. For a detailed discussion of *volk*, see Joseph W. Bendersky, *A History of Nazi Germany* (Chicago: Burnham Inc., 1956), 33-35.

⁸⁰ Taylor, 12.

⁸¹ As quoted in *Infiltration*, 82.

⁸² Helmer, 5.

⁸³ From "The Water Colours of Hitler" exhibit text of 1984, as quoted in Kasher, 68.